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**A present but non-existent immigration: Japanese-Brazilian  
return to their ethnic homeland**

**Supervisor**

Ch. Prof.ssa Rosa Caroli

**Co-supervisor**

Ch. Prof. Luis Fernando Beneduzi

**Graduand**

Linda Mazzoni  
860849

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## Abstract

L'idea per il seguente progetto di tesi nacque poco più di un anno fa, grazie allo svolgimento di un programma di studio in Brasile, all'Università Federale di Santa Catarina. Ritengo di aver intrapreso un percorso universitario abbastanza vario, che mi ha permesso di fare preziose esperienze. Perciò, se volessimo definire la tesi di Laurea Magistrale come un "tributo" a quanto si è appreso nell'arco di cinque anni di studio, credo che questo mio lavoro rappresenti appieno i frutti del mio percorso. Fino ad allora, non ero a conoscenza del fatto che la più grande comunità di giapponesi residenti all'estero si trovasse proprio in Brasile. Lo scoprii poco prima di recarmi a São Paulo, dove attualmente risiedono circa seicentomila Nippo-Brasiliani, o *Nikkeijin*, dei circa due milioni di giapponesi e discendenti sparsi perlopiù nel Sud-Est del Paese. Nel cuore della metropoli Paulista, infatti, si trova un quartiere chiamato Liberdade, che credo si possa descrivere come una piccola Japantown. Vi sono infatti piccoli ristoranti di cucina giapponese, templi buddisti, negozi di alimentari che vendono prodotti tipici giapponesi e altri che vendono oggetti folcloristici, tutti gestiti da membri della comunità nippo-brasiliana. Sembra un luogo rimasto fermo nel tempo, incontaminato dai palazzi, le industrie e i ritmi accelerati della metropoli circostante. A dire il vero, non sembra nemmeno di essere in Brasile. Come era possibile, dunque, che due culture apparentemente incompatibili, perlomeno a mio avviso, fossero venute a contatto, parzialmente mescolandosi tra loro? Ricordo che rimasi particolarmente colpita dal *Museu Histórico da Imigração Japonesa*, che raccontava la storia dell'immigrazione giapponese in Brasile fin dagli albori, con una serie di reperti storici, giornali dell'epoca, libri, filmati e documenti che accompagnavano le testimonianze di una migrazione ben più che passeggera. Fu lì, proprio in quel museo, che alcune risposte iniziarono a prendere forma, sebbene gran parte della storia dei *nikkeijin* sia ancora da scrivere e includa un complesso fenomeno migratorio transnazionale. Me ne resi conto poco tempo dopo, quando incontrai Matheus, un ragazzo nippo-brasiliano che vive a Curitiba, nello stato di Paraná. Matheus ha tratti somatici abbastanza pronunciati e fisicamente, se non fosse per l'altezza, sarebbe indistinguibile da un qualsiasi altro giapponese. Eppure aveva qualcosa di diverso, che in Brasile definirebbero *jeito brasileiro*, un modo di fare che non rispecchiava minimamente l'etichetta giapponese. Inconsciamente, mi resi conto successivamente che fui proprio io la prima ad avere determinate aspettative su Matheus, basate su caratteristiche etniche proprie del popolo nipponico. Sottovalutavo che, sebbene fosse cresciuto all'interno di una famiglia giapponese (mi raccontò che fu il nonno ad emigrare in Brasile al compimento della maggior età), era circondato da un ambiente totalmente alieno alla sua cultura di origine. L'unico suo legame con la madrepatria erano i racconti del nonno e alcune tradizioni che lo stesso aveva cercato di trasmettergli mentre lui cresceva con amici Brasiliani, imparava il portoghese e gradualmente prendeva le distanze da quella cultura di

cui aveva sempre e solo sentito parlare (infatti, nonostante fosse un suo grande desiderio, non aveva ancora avuto l' occasione di visitare il Giappone). Ricordo che Matheus diceva di sentirsi completamente integrato in una società multi-etnica come quella brasiliana, sebbene molto spesso gli sia capitato che alcuni connazionali si rivolgessero a lui come *Japonês*, evidenziando una sottile categorizzazione razziale che cela un sintomo di percepibile diversità, da cui talvolta può emergere un senso di non-appartenenza (come rivelerà in seguito in un' intervista a cui ha gentilmente accettato di prendere parte, insieme ad altri suoi tre conoscenti appartenenti alla comunità *Nikkeijin*). E' grazie alla storia di Matheus, e di tanti altri nippos-brasiliani che sono tornati nella terra dei loro antenati, riscoprendo i paradossi derivanti dalla loro identità transnazionale, che la mia ricerca ha trovato il suo scopo ultimo ed è potuta essere realizzata.

Nel primo capitolo, ripercorrerò la storia dell' immigrazione giapponese in Brasile, a partire dalla prima spedizione di migranti che attraccò nel 1908 nel porto di Santos, a bordo dell' imbarcazione *Kasato Maru*. Prima di focalizzarmi sul caso brasiliano, però, farò una breve introduzione sul processo di modernizzazione che il Giappone intraprese durante l' era Meiji, volto a proiettare il Paese verso il modello Occidentale, dopo secoli di chiusura al mondo esterno dettati dalla politica del *Sakoku*. Cercherò di analizzare le cause scatenanti dei primi movimenti migratori e di delineare un profilo generale del migrante giapponese alla fine del diciannovesimo secolo, prendendo in considerazione altri casi di emigrazione giapponese dello stesso periodo, evidenziandone i tratti divergenti. Come sosterrò durante la mia ricerca, ho voluto risaltare il fatto che l' incontro tra la cultura giapponese e quella brasiliana non è stato altro che il concatenarsi di una serie di fenomeni che hanno permesso che le esigenze dei rispettivi Paesi si sincronizzassero. Difatti, se l' immigrazione giapponese non fosse stata ostacolata da ordinanze restrittive in altri Paesi, e se il Brasile non fosse stato costretto a valutare la possibilità di introdurre manodopera "non-europea" nelle sue piantagioni di caffè, probabilmente oggi lo Stato di São Paulo non ospiterebbe la più numerosa comunità nipponica residente all' estero. Infatti, non si deve sottovalutare che i primi lavoratori giapponesi introdotti in Brasile hanno fatto parte di un progetto sperimentale, nel contesto di una società che si era da poco lasciata alle spalle un passato schiavista e che stava gradualmente ricostruendo una propria identità nazionale, inizialmente mirata allo "sbiancamento" razziale, considerato sinonimo di civilizzazione. Sicuramente i giapponesi non rientravano nel quadro di purezza etnica delineata dai dirigenti della società brasiliana, ma erano apprezzati per la loro indole stacanovista e diligente. Nonostante il primo tentativo di integrazione risultò fallimentare, successivamente molti giapponesi hanno iniziato a comprare appezzamenti di terra con i miseri guadagni messi da parte con il faticoso lavoro nelle piantagioni di caffè, diventando piccoli proprietari. Hanno creato comunità etniche, le cosiddette *coloniâs*, fondate su principi di fiducia e cooperazione.

Hanno fondato scuole e associazioni per mantenere un legame con la loro patria, sebbene ogni forma di espressione culturale verrà duramente sanzionata durante il governo nazionalista di Getúlio Vargas. Parlerò di come la sconfitta del Giappone nel secondo conflitto mondiale provocherà un senso di smarrimento tra i membri della comunità *Nikkeijin*, che costituirà per molti l'abbandono della speranza di tornare alla madrepatria.

I discendenti dei primi giapponesi emigrati in Brasile, che oggi formano una comunità socialmente affermata e rispettata, hanno perso molti tratti della cultura giapponese. Molti non sanno più parlare la lingua e si sono inconsciamente "brasilianizzati" caratterialmente. Eppure, sono visivamente distinguibili dai Brasiliani nativi, che continuano ad evidenziare qualche preconceito etnico, sebbene positivo, dall'appellativo "giapponese" alla supposizione che i nipponici eccellano nelle materie scientifiche. In altre parole, per quanto integrati all'interno della società, rimangono comunque "diversi", e di conseguenza molti iniziano a dubitare della propria identità etnica. A partire dalla fine degli anni '80, molti giapponesi emigrati in Brasile e i loro discendenti sono tornati in Giappone, spinti dal desiderio di guadagno reso possibile dall'apprezzamento dello *yen* e dai forti legami culturali. Sebbene si possa presumere che il ritorno alla terra d'origine avesse finalmente risolto i dubbi relativi all'identità transnazionale dei *Nikkeijin*, il secondo capitolo della mia ricerca dimostrerà che, al contrario, solleverà altre situazioni paradossali. Pare che i media giapponesi abbiano contribuito a dipingere i *Nikkeijin* come "figli" del Sol Levante, educati da famiglie giapponesi e rispettosi delle tradizioni. Per cui, non c'è da stupirsi se molti giapponesi sono rimasti sorpresi di scoprire che in realtà i nippo-brasiliani erano stati "contaminati" dagli elementi del mondo esterno e non avevano preservato una certa purezza razziale. Di conseguenza, il privilegio concesso loro rispetto ad altri stranieri in nome di una presunta affinità etnica, non è bastato a esentarli da discriminazioni a livello sociale, spesso trattati come qualsiasi altro *gaijin*. Ho esaminato vari ambienti di interazione sociale, tra cui scuole, comunità locali e fabbriche (dove la maggior parte dei nippo-brasiliani lavora grazie all'estrema facilità di assunzione mediata da agenzie di collocamento sorte appositamente per inserire *Nikkeijin* nelle compagnie giapponesi). Sarà interessante analizzare le dinamiche per cui, maggiore sarà l'inserimento dei *Nikkeijin* all'interno della società, più gli stessi si ritroveranno intrappolati in un circolo migratorio che impedirà loro di appartenere completamente a nessuno dei due Paesi, vivendo in una sorta di "limbo" tra Brasile e Giappone.

Nell'era della globalizzazione, si è registrato un progressivo "indebolimento" delle delimitazioni geografiche tra Stati, che ha permesso alla diversità culturale di trascendere i confini nazionali per confluire in società multi-etniche. Il Giappone vantava di un'omogeneità razziale e di un'autosufficienza che sono stati messi duramente in crisi da tali cambiamenti sociali. Dalla fine degli anni '80, infatti, il Paese si è ritrovato ad affrontare una grave carenza di

manodopera in determinati settori, minacciata ulteriormente da un rapido invecchiamento della popolazione. Inizialmente, il governo giapponese, per sopperire a tale deficit, tentò di potenziare le proprie risorse domestiche, che si rivelarono però insufficienti a placare la grave mancanza di forza-lavoro. Nell' arco degli ultimi anni il Paese ha attuato una serie di politiche per agevolare l' ingresso di lavoratori stranieri, nonostante i settori più carenti di manodopera siano proprio quelli che richiedono lavoro non-qualificato, che di norma gli stranieri non potrebbero svolgere. Proprio per questo, dal 1990, una revisione delle politiche migratorie ha permesso non solo ai *Nikkeijin* e ai relativi discendenti fino alla terza generazione di entrare in Giappone senza limitazioni sulle attività da intraprendere, ma ha creato anche abili vie secondarie per travisare permessi di lavoro destinati a scopi differenti da quanto dichiarato. D' altronde, le minoranze etniche in Giappone hanno sempre mantenuto una certa "invisibilità" sociale. La disponibilità di servizi offerti alla comunità straniera dipende in particolar modo dalla specifica località e dal suo livello di esperienza nel ricevere immigrati. Dal momento che non esiste un piano di integrazione nazionale, l'accoglimento di stranieri rimane ampiamente a discrezione di autorità locali e ONG, che hanno creato vari gruppi di supporto negli ultimi anni, mirati a dare voce ai diritti di una parte della società spesso ignorata. In un Paese che contempla l' immigrazione come un fenomeno prettamente temporaneo, non è facile inculcare una cultura di coesistenza, soprattutto se ciò dovesse implicare considerare gli immigrati come cittadini futuri. Non è facile prevedere se il Sol Levante sarà costretto a seguire le orme del Brasile nella creazione di una società multi-culturale, a causa della minacciosa crisi demografica nazionale, quel che è certo è che dovrà riconoscere l' "esistenza" di residenti stranieri, e la possibilità che questi ultimi, un giorno, diventino parte della società a tutti gli effetti.

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## Introduction

About one year ago, I was walking down the street in Liberdade district of São Paulo, a little Japanese-town in the heart of a metropolitan area of Brazil. Since it is unusual to come across Asiatic faces in Brazil, and if so, it is almost impossible to pass unnoticed, the first impact with the neighbourhood is quite astonishing. Liberdade is immersed in an Eastern atmosphere, full of Japanese restaurants and groceries shops run either by Japanese or Japanese-Brazilians. It seems a place frozen in time, “uncontaminated” from the chaos of the surrounding metropolis. For a moment, you may even forget to be in Brazil. Liberdade, today, is reported to host the biggest Japanese community living outside of Japan. The purpose of my research stems from a very spontaneous question: how is it possible that two apparently antithetical populations such as Brazilians and Japanese happened to melt?

My curiosity towards Japanese-Brazilian population living in Brazil, the *Nikkeijin*, rose when I met Matheus, a third-generation Japanese-Brazilian who lives in Curitiba, in the State of Paraná. Like many other Brazilian *Nikkeijin*, Matheus is absolutely Brazilian in demeanour and can barely speak a word of Japanese. I remember that I was quite surprised to hear that he has never had the chance to go to Japan, since I immediately assumed that a mixed-race individual would feel the need of discovering his ethnic origins. I had the same reaction every time I realised that many Brazilians I knew, who asserted to be Italian descendants, were barely informed about their degree of kinship with their Italian ancestors (“*Na verdade, não lembro*”, “actually, I do not remember”, was the most common remark). Although at the beginning this apparent indifference about their lineage was unconceivable to me, now I can better grasp their point of view. The boundaries of ethnic identity, in Brazil, are quite blurred because national identity is the outcome of a long-decades mixture of races. Brazil has been defined as a “raceless society”<sup>1</sup>, since individuals are not categorised on the basis of their ethnic diversities. Brazilian society, indeed is a *melting pot* of different cultures, and thus it is very difficult to attribute someone a racial identity, either because physical differences might have mixed until disappearing throughout the centuries or because there are not pronounced hierarchical distinctions between black, white, Indios or Asian people.

Of course, a Brazilian who meets a Japanese-Brazilian for the first time might tend to assume that he would speak Japanese because of his Asian facial traits, but this naive assumption fades away as soon as they interact. I would highlight that having expectations about a person from a first approach, especially if this person is racially different, is not discriminatory but rather spontaneous. Let’s take a child who, for the very first time in his life, comes into contact with racial or physical differences, coming across a black person, or a

<sup>1</sup> Adachi N., “Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?”, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (May 2004), p. 51.

bald person, for instance. Comments such as “look, he is black” or “look, he is bald” would likely cause his parents' embarrassment but they would not be prevented to emerge from his innocent voice, since feelings of curiosity for someone who is different from us are just instinctive. However, as we grow up, we become aware of what is socially acceptable and we learn to put some filters to our emotions, even though we will never erase that innate feeling of curiosity. Nevertheless, sometimes our mistaken assumptions might lead to backlashes, that, if persistent, could easily turn into actual discriminations and social exclusion. Therefore, what I am going to take into analysis is not the discriminatory attitudes towards Japanese-Brazilians in Brazil, but rather the social exclusion of Japanese descendants in Japanese society. Contrarily to Brazil, indeed, Japan founds its Nation on the principle of racial homogeneity and its xenophobia is largely fuelled by a centuries-old seclusion that drawn to the bridging of a culture of “uniqueness”. The main difference between the perception of the *Nikkeijin* in Japan and Brazil is that, whereas in Brazil Japanese-Brazilians are expected to behave Japanese, in Japan they are often assumed to maintain a Japanese conduct as well, because of their descent, creating a quite paradoxical situation.

However, the first chapter of my research aims to provide a historical background of Japanese emigration at the end of the XIX century, analysing significant social changes occurred during the Meiji era, that contributed to erase the last traces of a past of century-old seclusion from the external world. The first evidences of emigration, indeed, have to be considered within the context of a modernisation process that Japan started looking at the Western powers as a model to emulate. Therefore, I retained it was worth to provide a generic profile of Japanese migrant at the end of XIX century and to explore the triggering causes of emigration. Although Japanese emigration cannot be described as a proper *diaspora* since it concerned a relatively small outflow of people, the few first emigrants scattered across different Countries. Before taking into consideration Japanese emigration to Brazil, I will briefly examine Japanese presence in the Hawaiian Islands (both before and after their annexation to the US in 1898) and in the United States, which I consider interconnected since Brazil has been claimed to be a “second choice”<sup>2</sup> to these destinations, especially after the ban imposed on Japanese immigration by the American government (1924). We will see that Japanese emigration's experiences diverged with respect of their destination Country, both for working conditions and integration process into the society, severely hampered in the United States by a series of racist behaviours. The last two paragraphs are dedicated to Japanese emigration to Brazil, which is a peculiar phenomenon that entailed different phases and thus a progressive evolution of the migratory features. First of all, my analysis enhances the initial hurdles that Japanese faced on Brazilian soil, where the “ghost” of the former abolished slavery seemed to be reflected on the migrants, whose working conditions embedded all the blanks deriving

<sup>2</sup> Woortmann, E. “Japoneses no Brasil, Brasileiros no Japão: Tradição e Modernidade”. *Revista de Antropologia*, Vol. 38 n. 2 (1995), p. 12.



from the “experimental” feature of their migration. The initial failure in adapting to a hostile climate and conforming to the unwritten norms of a completely different culture were overcome when the first migrants began to settle in Brazil in the early 1920s. Therefore, I will examine the emergence of Japanese communities, organised according to Japanese traditional relational schemes, that promoted an active associational life and the construction of Japanese schools. I will discuss the importance of cultural education among a community of migrants, still uncertain about whether to consider the host Country their future home or not. Then, I will focus on the discriminatory policies adopted by the Brazilian government towards ethnic minorities roughly at the outburst of World War II, and on the subsequent disillusionment provoked by the defeat of Japan, which drew many Japanese to abandon the idea of a future return to their ethnic homeland. The last part of the chapter will shed light on the gradual “Brazilianisation” of Japanese-Brazilians, triggered by their progressive detachment from Japan. Today, although Japanese-Brazilians in Brazil might still be referred to as “different”, many of them have graduated in Brazilian Universities and undertaken a considerable social upward mobility in Brazilian society. Therefore, the *Nikkeijin* are generally respected and regarded as a “positive” ethnic minority in Brazil. However, a significant part of my work will investigate whether Japanese-Brazilians have the same reputation back to their ethnic homeland. As a matter of fact, it is important to highlight that many *Nikkeijin*, regardless of their successful social incorporation in Brazil, continue to feel more “Japanese” with respect to locals, and tend to assume that they would easily assimilate in Japanese society.

These certainties are dismantled in the second chapter, focused on Japanese-Brazilian inverse migratory phenomenon, which began in the late 1980s and led many descendants of the first Japanese emigrants to Brazil back to Japan. Although it might be assumed that, being Japanese descendants, the *Nikkeijin* would be treated as pure Japanese, the situation is slightly divergent. At the end of the 1980s, indeed, Japan experienced a significant economic growth that gradually revealed several social weaknesses and a consequent decrease of domestic workforce. Thus, Latin American *Nikkeijin* have been encouraged to migrate back to discover the land of their ancestors by Japanese government. Although official authorities passed off this concession as a sign of benevolence towards the co-ethnic *Nikkeijin*, it quickly disclosed its opportunistic aim: filling the demand of the national crippling labor shortage. Indeed, Japanese-Brazilians were usually preferred rather than other foreign workers due to an innate sense of familiarity stemmed from their shared racial origins, based on the assumption that, being Japanese descendants, they would retain some Japanese features. However, it has been found out that the majority of the *Nikkeijin* could barely speak Japanese and that they behaved differently from native Japanese. In order to understand Japanese feeling towards Japanese-Brazilians, and foreigners in general, the second part of my work will

demonstrate that Japanese homogeneity is actually founded on several internal differences, due to the presence of marginalised co-ethnic minorities. Internal divergences have likely contributed to foment Japanese xenophobia, until creating the tendency to consider foreigners as a simultaneous source of beneficial and disruptive power, dichotomy reflected in several Japanese cultural symbols. In other words, the potential disruptive power emanated by aliens have to be channeled in the right direction so as not to trigger social disorders. In this perspective, it might be easier to understand why Japanese government had incentivised foreign migration as long as it was temporary. However, despite the first Japanese-Brazilians were *dekasegi* migrants who intended to remain in Japan for a short period of time in order to take advantage of the significant wage differential with their Country, single-males migration was quickly replaced by familiar migration, and many migrants started to extend their length of stay. However, we will see that, as a consequence, Japanese-Brazilians will increase their level of commitment to Japanese society, but their gradual involvement in community life make their return always more unrealistic. On the other hand, those who managed to return to Brazil have often found themselves unable to readjust economically in their home Country and therefore eventually came back to Japan. Moreover, despite the privileged position conferred to Japanese-Brazilians in Japan than other foreign nationalities, we will see that they have to cope with various obstacles along their adaptation process and that they are not exempted from discriminatory behaviours. Indeed, in order to attain my purpose, different environments of possible discrimination will be explored, such as factories, schools and the community itself, shedding light on several paradoxical situations. Among the outcomes of my research, we will see that at workplace, often Japanese-Brazilians suffer from a double marginalisation both by the members of their same ethnic group and their Japanese colleagues. The reason is that, in order to be accepted by Japanese, some *Nikkeijin* attempt to optimise their job performances so as to please their Japanese superiors, causing an involuntary marginalisation from their ethnic peers. Another paradoxical situation occurs in *Nikkeijin*'s children, who, attending Japanese schools in Japan, began to develop a Brazilian mindset and gradually detach from their *Nikkeijin* parents, laying the foundations for generational conflicts. We will also see that Japanese medias had played a role in sway Japanese perception of the *Nikkeijin*, stimulating a certain surprise among Japanese individuals every time that their behaviour did not conform to Japanese conduct. Discrimination might entail different reactions in Japanese-Brazilian community. It is interesting to point out that Japanese-Brazilians might be subjected to a proper crisis of identity in Japan, since although they had always thought to be too "Japanese" in Brazil, they are not recognised as such in their ethnic homeland, realising that their conception of "Japaneseness" was distorted and eventually re-discover their true Brazilian self.

Finally, my work would not be complete without a general overview on Japanese current immigration policies, whose analysis might help to understand why the issue of foreigners is so significant to the future of Japan. Nowadays, Japan is coping with a sharp ageing population, beyond a severe drop in birth rates, and this situation will likely turn into a dramatical lack of national workforce in a few decades. In sight of this prevision, Japanese government has tried to compensate the lack of labor for domestic resources, empowering the position of women at work and implementing changes in the labor system. However, the self-sufficiency that marked Japan for years this time has not worked. Although the introduction of foreign workers has been depicted as a way to save Japan from economic failure, there are still a lot of debates whether accepting immigrants, and, if so, until what extent should the government grant them equal rights to nationals. As a matter of fact, despite foreign workers have turned out to be a feasible solution to balance out the national lack of workforce, the easiest way to introduce immigrants into Japan is to let them engage in unskilled jobs, albeit the law does not contemplate the engagement of foreigners in unskilled labor. With the 1990 amendment of the Immigration Law and Refugee Recognition Act, indeed, the government has achieved its goal to import cheap labor in the Country, releasing visa categories designed for different purposes through disguised “side doors”<sup>3</sup>. Some of the most precious resources have been the *Nikkeijin* up to the third generation, who have been granted special permissions of residence without restriction on activities, and technical trainees, who were supposedly given the chance to acquire knowledge to bring back to their undeveloped Countries. I will also highlight the limits of the privileged status conferred to the *Nikkeijin*, promptly treated as “non-existent” when their presence was no longer required. Furthermore, I will focus on the strict requirements set to obtain Japanese citizenship, which discourage many foreign residents to apply. It has been argued that, in Japanese perspective, only those people who hold citizenship make part of the society<sup>4</sup>. In fact, there are generational foreigners who are still excluded from being effective citizens, lacking suffrage and other rights conferred only to nationals. I will point out that, contrarily to national government, local communities and NGOs have been active promoters of foreigners’ rights, extending aid and social services both to legal and illegal migrants. However, these entities cannot replace the fundamental role of national government, which is the only authority that can issue a national even integration plan for foreigners. It strikes me that the trend of treating foreign workers simply as they would not exist will not work forever. As a matter of fact, in order to improve some current crippling policies, Japanese government needs to look at the future: what would be the destiny of Japan? Will it become a Nation of immigrants in the following years? Even though Japan has imposed strict conditions in order to obtain citizenship, it will have to admit that society is not

<sup>3</sup> Takeyuki T., “Local Citizenship and Foreign Workers in Japan”. *The Asia Pacific Journal*, Vol. 6, (May 2008), p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Takaku J., “Japan treats 1 million foreign workers as ‘non-existent’”. *The Asahi shimbun*, 27 July 2017; 20 January 2018 <<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201707270006.html>>

made only of those people connected by right of blood. Society includes native Japanese people as well as foreigners, as long as they consider Japan their home. Thus, the current situation leaves room for different possible scenarios. Many people, indeed, wonder whether Japan will become a multicultural Country in the near future, or whether the government will succeed in finding some feasible alternatives to a measure that seems almost inevitable, that is a greater introduction of foreign workers into Japan and the concession of further rights to ethnic minorities. I would clarify that my research does not intend to be disapproving, but rather unbiased, attempting to explore the limits of Japanese immigration policies and analysing possible grounds for improvement.

# **CHAPTER 1**

The dawn of Japanese emigration at the end  
of the XIX century: focus on Brazil

## 1.1 Historical background of Japanese immigration to Brazil: the Meiji Restoration

The history of Japanese immigration to Brazil is a complex phenomenon that entangled a broad array of causes and inevitably triggered some changes in both Countries.

However, in order to understand the context that fuelled the conditions for the first Japanese migrant workers to leave their native homeland, it is worth to analyse a specific period of Japanese history, that is the Meiji period (1868-1912).

As a matter of fact, 1868 is a crucial date for Japanese government, since the old feudal system that ruled the Country for roughly three centuries was abolished to restore the Imperial power<sup>5</sup>.

Since 1603, in fact, Japan has been considered a feudal Country administrated by the Tokugawa family, who ascended to power when Tokugawa Ieyasu became *shogun*<sup>6</sup>.

Under the Tokugawa administration, the power was centralised and fragmented in a pyramidal social hierarchy with the Emperor at the top, followed by the *shogun*, and the *daimyo*, landlords subordinated to the *shogun*.

The *daimyo* were bound to the *shogun* by a relation of loyalty, embodied in the code of ethics of the *bushidō*<sup>7</sup>, and had the role to administer the feuds, granted with some decisional and bureaucratic power as well.

Finally, there was the military nobility caste composed by the *samurai*, warriors directly subordinated to the *daimyo*, who were constantly in a state of war before the shogunate in order to conquer new lands, and were entrusted with the defence of *daimyo*'s properties.

However, during the Tokugawa shogunate, peace was restored over the Country, delimiting properties and conceding more autonomy to landlords in administering their feuds, under the control of the central power.

Therefore, even though the *samurai* kept their warrior's prestige, they remained without a specific role, and started to dedicate to literature, arts and commerce<sup>8</sup>. The most of the population was composed by peasants, who had the role to cultivate the landlords' feuds.

Peasants, usually little farmers, were also the main source of national income, asked to pay taxes intended to support the social structure created by the shogunate and collected by local associations.

<sup>5</sup> Caroli, R., Gatti, F., *Storia del Giappone*, Gius. Laterza & figli, updated first edition 2006, chapter V, p. 137

<sup>6</sup> Since 1192, throughout Kamakura period, Japanese military power was entrusted to head-warriors, called *shogun*, who were in charge of the national military government, called *bakufu*. *Bakufu*'s role gradually acquired also political power. As a result, during Kamakura period, the Imperial government ruled the Country jointly with the *bakufu*. However, in 1338, the effective power will be entrusted to the warriors class to the detriment of the Imperial Court, that will completely lose control over the administration of the feuds.

<sup>7</sup> Akasawa, K. "Some of the Contributions of Feudal Japan to the New Japan", *The Journal of Race Development*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1912), p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17.

Since social prestige was conferred according to the relevance of the role played by individuals, rewarding those who were more useful in supporting the hierarchical structure, it entailed that artisans and merchants ranked right below the peasants, since they did not detain any political power or function related to the administration of the feuds.

Thus, despite this system lasted almost three centuries, I would argue that its end might be very predictable, since it relied on precarious principles that bound the upper levels on the hierarchical scale to the lower ones by mere relationships of trust and loyalty. Moreover, the centralisation of power intrinsic to the Tokugawa feudal system, implicitly isolated the Country in economic, diplomatic and territorial terms<sup>9</sup>.

*"A centralização do poder através do modelo do shogunato Tokugawa coincide com a ausência de relações com os países vizinhos, quer na esfera econômica, diplomática ou territorial". (SAKURAI, 2000, p. 31)*

However, the limitation of international relations under Tokugawa's government might be seen as an enhancement of the *sakoku*, a close-door policy issued at the beginning of the 1630s to isolate the Country from the external world, a severe measure taken after the exacerbation of the intolerance towards foreigners who expected to introduce elements of Christian religion into the Country. In 1635, Japanese were prohibited to leave the Country and those already abroad were ordered to repatriate. In 1639, the Portuguese were definitely banned from the Country and Catholic worship was prohibited<sup>10</sup>.

Two years later, in 1641, Dutch and Chinese were confined in a little artificial island called Dejima in the bay of Nagasaki, that became the unique harbour of the Country authorised to trade with the exterior<sup>11</sup>. Despite Tokugawa government managed to maintain peace and self-sufficiency for roughly three hundred years, the latest years of Tokugawa regime were characterised both by an emerging internal crisis stemmed from deep social tensions and external pressures to open up the Country to trade.

9 Sakurai, C., "Imigração tutelada. Os japoneses no Brasil". UNICAMP, Campinas (SP), 2000, p. 31.

10 Shipper W.A., "Criminals or Victims? The Politics of Illegal Foreigners in Japan", *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2, The Society for Japanese Studies (2005), p. 302.

11 Caroli, R., Gatti, F. *Storia del Giappone*, Gius. Laterza & figli, updated first edition 2006, chapter IV, pp. 104-105.

The United States actually played a relevant role in accelerating Japanese path to modernisation and re-opening to the external world. In 1854, basically, Japan had to decide whether to keep on with her close-door policy, or to open up her borders to US, preventing them from declaring war.

In 1854, Japan officially accepted to allow some concessions to the United States, regarding the establishment of peaceful relations, by signing the *Kanagawa Treaty*<sup>12</sup>.

The Treaty granted the US navies provisions and shipwrecked persons' assistance at Shimoda and Hakodate harbours, beyond the positioning of an American consul in Shimoda.

However, those concessions were expanded some years later, in 1858, with the signature of the *Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Trade*, that shed light on the inequalities of mutual rights granted to the two parties.

In fact, the Treaty hampered Japanese protectionist policy with a limitation of duties on exportation's goods, conferred extra-territoriality rights to American resident citizens, implicitly delimiting Japanese sovereignty, and last but not least, US achieved the status of most-favourite nation<sup>13</sup>.

Therefore, it might be argued that, despite the stipulation of these unequal Treaties contributed to exacerbate a shared sentiment of xenophobia throughout Japanese society, those agreements were actually fundamental in shaping Japanese future policies towards a process of modernisation and a major involvement on the international sphere.

As time went by, in fact, the contradictions intrinsic to the Tokugawa feudal system drawn to its collapse, and in 1868 the restoration of the Imperial power, also known as Meiji restoration as it officially started the Meiji regime, took place.

As I mentioned before, the Meiji government marked a dramatic change in Japanese society. It was the beginning of a renewal process entailing some transformations of the former political and socio-economic systems.

This process of restoration embedded the desire for a rapid West-oriented modernisation. Each member of the society was asked to give his own contribution to realise the new government's goal: *fukoku kyohei*, which had to be understood as a collective effort to "enrich the Country and strengthen the army", as the definition itself says.

In order to meet these purposes, it was issued the Charter Oath of the Five Articles (*Gokajo no seimon*), which laid the groundwork for the draft of a first national Constitution and the promotion of some government's purposes, such as social classes unity to ensure the welfare of the Country, the adoption of international laws, a major participation to the decisional

<sup>12</sup> Caroli, R., Gatti, F., *Storia del Giappone*, Gius. Laterza & figli, updated first edition 2006, chapter V, p. 131.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 133-134.



process through the foundation of local assemblies and public debates, and the acquisition of knowledge abroad to enhance the competences of the Empire<sup>14</sup>.

The re-openness to the external world gave Japan the opportunity to start a modernisation process so as to catch-up with the Western superpowers.

The Western model was inspiring for the interventions made at the industrial sector level to create efficient firms, and for the readjustment of the military defence, for instance. Therefore, it might be pointed out that the “restoration” process had stemmed from the same nationalistic spirit that firstly caused a reaction of closure among the Meiji authorities<sup>15</sup>.

The gradual abolishment of the old feudal system started a national process of modernisation, or I would assert “Westernisation”, that aimed at the creation of a new Japan, able to compete with the more advanced Western powers.

However, it has to be pointed out that the sudden Japanese transition from feudal society to capitalistic system did not occur without negative implications.

Although the Country strived for a quick modernisation to reach their Western counterparts, that transitional period was characterised by a deep lack of expertise in the entrepreneurial sector that compelled the government to import foreign technicians and professional figures to adjust Japanese “delays”<sup>16</sup>.

On the other hand, this “race” towards modernity played at the expenses of some components of the old social class, especially peasants. It is worth to mention that, despite in the early 1600s the socio-economic condition of the peasants had quite improved, they were strictly bound by severe restrictions in the administration of lands.

Although peasants were the “practical owners” of the lands they farmed<sup>17</sup>, they could not choose the crops to grow on it, and they were forbidden to sell the land beyond a certain quota<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, not only they were expected to cultivate their lands all their life long, unable to move elsewhere, they were also compelled to give forty percent or more of their crops to their landlord.<sup>19</sup>

This did not mean that they were believed to detain an inferior social status, but rather that, considering the whole feudal era, peasants’ economic condition was often claimed to be abject<sup>20</sup>.

14 Caroli, R., Gatti, F. *Storia del Giappone*, Gius. Laterza & figli, updated first edition 2006, chapter V, pp.137-141.

15 Ibid, p.147.

16 Ibid, p. 143.

17 Akasawa, K. “Some of the Contributions of Feudal Japan to the New Japan”, *The Journal of Race Development*, Vol. 3, No. 1, (July 1912), p. 18.

18 Ibid.

19 Kramer, I. “Land Reform and Industrial Development in Meiji Japan”, *Land Economics*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (1953), p. 315.

20 Hewes, L. “On the Current Readjustment of Land Tenure in Japan”, *Land Economics*, Vol. 25, No. 3, (Aug. 1949), p. 247.

Therefore, even though it might be assumed that the abolishment of the old feudal system further improved peasants conditions, they had been proved to be the most “discontented mass”, or the most disadvantaged target of the Meiji’ s reforms<sup>21</sup>.

As it has been already mentioned, the Meiji restoration endeavoured to change any social aspect that threatened to be detrimental to national unification and economic development. As a consequence, it was proposed a revision of the agricultural system, that targeted especially the agrarian and the fiscal fields.

The measures promised to be implemented by the new land reform were:

*(1) “to separate the daimyo from their hereditary source of income and power and, therefore, to insure that their economic and social base for any move against the government would be weakened; (2) to obtain a source of stable revenue; (3) to achieve a greater equity in the distribution of the tax burden; and (4) to institute a system of private property ownership that would assign individual tax responsibility and help to improve the economic performance of the nation”. (NAKAMURA, 1966, p. 429)*

Thus, both agrarian and fiscal measures that aimed at transferring a significant part of national income to the agricultural sector were implemented within a few years of the Meiji restoration. However, although the *daimyo* were expropriated of the revenue stemming from the land’ s outcome, the government compensated their loss with pensions or, in other words, actual salaries.

Afterwards, the lands’ administration was assigned directly to the farmer, whereas the central government substituted the *daimyo* as the recipient of payments.

The reform also hit the *samurai* class, who was compensated with pensions lower than their previous Tokugawa’ s salaries.

Moreover, this new system implied that peasants were not bound by lands anymore and that they could choose their own employment without regard to the class they belonged, besides that every individual was provided with freedom of movement<sup>22</sup>.

However, according to Huizer<sup>23</sup>, after the Meiji restoration the peasant class kept on living under similar conditions to those they got used during the former Tokugawa feudal system.

<sup>21</sup> Hewes, L. “On the Current Readjustment of Land Tenure in Japan”, *Land Economics*, Vol. 25, No. 3, (1949), p. 315.

<sup>22</sup> Nakamura, J. “Meiji Land Reform, Redistribution of Income, and Saving from Agriculture”, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Jul., 1966), p. 429.

<sup>23</sup> Huizer, G. “The Role of Peasant Organisations in the Japanese Land Reform”, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 6, No. 3, (October 1977), pp. 40-41.

As a matter of fact, peasants' conditions had been even worsened with the Land Tax Revision Act of 1873, that introduced a revolutionary system of taxation.

First of all, the import tax value was subordinated to the value of the land and fixed at the three percent of its legal price. Secondly, it was the single owner to be responsible for the payment, instead of the rural community, and the revenue had to be paid directly to the central government.

Moreover, although before the Meiji restoration it was the direct producer to pay a tax on the land, the reform conferred this duty to the landowner, no matter whether he was an independent producer or an absent figure.

Last but not least, the previous taxation by nature was replaced by a payment by money, which inevitably had serious consequences on tenants. In fact, tenants found themselves severely dependent on the market, whereas under the Tokugawa regime they could enjoy a relative condition of independence. On the other hand, the liberalisation of land sale caused both the concentration of lands under the administration of enriched landlords, and the growth of expropriated peasants<sup>24</sup>.

Hence, not only were peasants deprived of the relatively security they could benefit under the Tokugawa shogunate, most of them also became tenants after being nominated free-holders at the beginning of Meiji period. By the end of the century, roughly forty percent out of the total cultivable land was administered by tenants, who often got into debts in order to pay the excessive rent imposed on their plots<sup>25</sup>.

This situation drawn to tensions among the former tenants, who started to see their rights exploited by the emerging new class of enriched landlords, fomenting several protests throughout the Country. By the end of XIX century and the beginning of XX century, the class of tenants, composed mostly by peasants who found themselves landless, began to unite into organisations in order to ensure their rights.

*"The first local tenant organisations were reported around 1916 in the prefectures of Aichi, Gifu and Mie, soon to be followed by those of Osaka, Hyogo, Okayama, and a few years later in several prefectures of Kyushu, where there were many former industrial workers from the city of Fukoka". (HUIZER, 1977, p.43)*

According to Yoshida<sup>26</sup>, it is not a chance that the same prefectures showed evidence of the highest number of people who emigrated to find better conditions abroad at the end of XIX century.

<sup>24</sup> Caroli, R. Gatti, F., *Storia del Giappone*, Gius. Laterza & figli, updated first edition 2006, chapter V, pp. 144-145.

<sup>25</sup> Hewes, L. "On the Current Readjustment of Land Tenure in Japan", *Land Economics*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Aug., 1949), pp. 248-249.

<sup>26</sup> Yoshida, Y., "Sources and Causes of Japanese Emigration" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 34, No. 2, (September 1909), pp. 162-163

## 1.2 Causes of Japanese emigration: a general outline of Japanese migrant at the end of XIX century

Emigration is a natural trend. Since ancient times, people from all over the world have decided to move abroad, pushed by reasons of different nature and assorted goals.

Thus, it is difficult to delineate the word “emigration” with a universal definition. On the Oxford dictionary, for instance, the word “emigration” sends back to the synonym “immigration” and it is defined as follows<sup>27</sup>:

*“The process of coming to live permanently in a Country that is not your own.” (OXFORD DICTIONARY, 2005, p. 776)*

Hence, it is assumed that emigration involves the necessity of moving to a new place. I would argue that this definition is too generic and incomplete, especially because migratory flows concern different periods of world history, triggered by a vast array of factors that make difficult to establish either the movement’s nature or its actual purpose. It has been reported that around 750.000 Japanese emigrated between 1868 and 1941, under the conditions established by the Empire<sup>28</sup>.

Indeed, at the end of the 1880s, Japan has assisted to a national outflow of migrants whose goal was not to move permanently abroad, but rather to work in a foreign country only for a relatively short period of time in order to save as much money as possible and come back to their native homeland eventually, enriched enough to live with ease<sup>29</sup>. As a matter of fact, as argued in the article *The theory of emigration*:

*“What are commonly alleged as immediate causes of emigration political and religious oppression, economic misfortune, and even social misery - produce but greater or less fluctuations [...] The real cause of emigration in our time is the temptation to better one's economic position; and this cause works not only in times of depression at home, but also in times of prosperity”. (SMITH, 1891, p.250)*

There are several theories about the nature of migrations. Many sociologist and philosophers have tried to analyse this always current phenomenon, until exhibiting various conclusions.

27 Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 7th edition 2005, p. 776

28 Morris-Suzuki T., *Borderline Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 33

29 Yoshida, Y., “Sources and Causes of Japanese Emigration” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 34, No. 2, (September 1909), pp. 157-167

According to Richmond Mayo Smith (1854-1901), an American economist<sup>30</sup>, migratory flows are mainly determined by the individual seek of opportunities, rather than miserable conditions at home.

Therefore, the spread assumption that masses are mostly moved by poverty is not always granted. Indeed, there are other significant push-factors that cause migration such as the desire of discovering new places and the longing for economic benefits. We will see that this is not only the case of Japan between the end of XIX century and the beginning of the XX century, it is also the case for Japanese-Brazilian who started to migrate back to Japan since the 1980s<sup>31</sup>. However, it might be asserted that throughout the whole Meiji era until the First World War, Japan enjoyed a period of general welfare and prosperity, even though economic development has been claimed to evolve quite slowly until the Great War, when the greatest economic progress has been recorded<sup>32</sup>.

Anyway, although there was no evidence that Japan faced a period of proper recession during the Meiji regime, it is undeniable that living conditions in rural areas were more precarious with respect to the main cities.

As a matter of fact, the agricultural and fiscal reforms put into effect during the Meiji regime worsened especially the conditions of farm laborers and tenants, who could either find themselves expropriated from their lands or, whether they maintained the ownership of their lands, subjected to a significant taxation<sup>33</sup>. Focusing on the period which goes from the last years of 1890s to the early 1900s, there is enough evidence to assert that the rural prefectures showed a higher rate of emigration. According to Ernst Georg Ravenstein (1834-1913), a cartographer mainly known for his researches and hypothesis on migration<sup>34</sup>:

*"The natives of towns are less migratory than those of the rural parts of the country." (RAVENSTEIN, 1885, p.199)*

Once clarified that rural areas might tend to trigger more outflows of people rather than urban centres, usually because it is in the countryside that we might find the highest rate of poverty and dissatisfaction, it has to be point out that, indeed, a strong demographic pressure was registered in rural areas of the Country at the end of XIX century.

<sup>30</sup>Smith, M. R., "The theory of emigration", *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 5, No. 2, (1891) p. 250.

<sup>31</sup>Higuchi, Naoto. "Migración brasileña a Japón. Tendencias, modalidades e impacto", Universidad de Tokushima (2007), pp. 131-133.

<sup>32</sup>Caroli, R. Gatti, F., *Storia del Giappone*, Gius. Laterza & figli, updated first edition 2006, chapter VI-VII, pp. 169-175.

<sup>33</sup>Hewes, L., "On the Current Readjustment of Land Tenure in Japan", *Land Economics*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Aug., 1949), p. 248

<sup>34</sup>Ravenstein G. E., "On the Laws of migration", *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*. Vol. 48. No.2., (1885), p 199.

On the other hand, often migration is mistakenly treated as a direct consequence of a general widespread population density. As a matter of fact, despite the misleading assumption that often the more populated districts tend to generate the greatest rate of emigration, actually overpopulation, or population density, does not spur people to move abroad, especially if the economic conditions are advantageous in one's native Country<sup>35</sup>.

In fact, if we examine closer the first proofs of emigration in the late 1880s, we might assert that the prefectures of origin of those migrants did not match with a national widespread overpopulation, but rather with a significant demographic spillover concentrated in rural areas. According to some researches, from 1899 to 1903, the highest number of passport have been reported to be issued in the prefectures of Hiroshima (21.871), Kumamoto (12.149), and Yamaguchi (11.219), areas of Japan whose local population might be considered on the average. In addition, in 1898, Japan's overall population counted 45.403.041 people, the most of them reported to settle in rural areas (40.068.478).

Only a few prefectures, those which contained the biggest industrial centres, such as Tokyo, shown the inverse tendency of population clustering in urban areas.

As reported by the Statistic Bureau, Tokyo was indeed the most populated prefecture (2.101.784 people) with 1.440.121 people living nearby the main cities and 661.663 inhabiting rural areas, followed by Niigata prefecture (1.745.625) and Hyōgo (1.717.634), which showed a higher rate of population density in the countryside (Statistic Bureau, 1898)<sup>36</sup>.

Therefore, it has been demonstrated that the greater part of the migratory flows were fuelled by members of the peasant class who inhabited Southern rural areas, that is the part of the population who suffered the most economic pressure<sup>37</sup>.

As I stated before, those people were not pushed by reasons of extreme poverty, they were rather in seek of better opportunities abroad. In fact, almost none of them wished to move permanently, their goal was mainly to "make money" in a relative short period of time in order to come back to their Country enriched enough to buy a new house, for instance, or to shift their social status upward.

*"When a European emigrant is bidding farewell to his home, his intention is, perhaps, to go to a new land where he can start a new life [...]. The contrary is true of the Japanese whose only desire is to build up a new home, not upon American soil, but in his native land" (YOSABURO,1909,p.165)*

<sup>35</sup> Yoshida, Y. "Sources and Causes of Japanese Emigration" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 34, No. 2, (September 1909), p. 159

<sup>36</sup> Statistic Bureau, 2-7 Population, Population Density, Population of Densely Inhabited Districts and Area by Prefecture, *All Shi and All Gun* (1898–2005) <<http://www.stat.go.jp/english/>>

<sup>37</sup> Yoshida, Y., "Sources and Causes of Japanese Emigration" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 34, No. 2, (September 1909), p. 160

Therefore, now we might have the competences to outline a general profile of Japanese migrant at the end of XIX century: basically, the most of them came from the Southern Japanese prefectures and belonged to the peasants class.

For many peasants, their annual income was scarce, thus often they saw no other option than emigrating to provide their whole family with better living conditions.

I believe that it is also worth to make another distinction according to the migrants' s land of destination. In fact, various patterns of outflow occurred from the late 1880s to the early 1900s, causing different migratory experiences.

Japanese workers who emigrated to Hawaii since 1885 were mainly reported to be peasants expropriated of their lands, since they were no longer able to pay their own duties after the Japanese Tax Reform of 1873 entered into force. They had been the victims of a huge economic deflation that triggered the drop of the rice' s price and thus, they were mainly pushed by the primary need of earning money.

On the other hand, Japanese migrants who have been sent to Brazil in 1908, were mainly peasants remained unemployed after the Russo-Japanese war.

In fact, little and middle landowners found themselves deprived of their lands after the war, due to the heavy taxation imposed on rural means, which passed to be the property of bigger landowners. In that context, it had also been recorded an outburst of peasants' movements, unsatisfied with their unfair working conditions<sup>38</sup>.

Furthermore, it has been asserted that Japanese emigration at the end of XIX century can be also read as the output of the system of "unique heir", introduced with the Meiji Restoration. According to this hierarchical system, the firstborn is conferred with a higher hierarchal status, thus he is expected to realise an endogamic marriage, take care of his elderly parents and remain close to his parental house.

Indeed, this new disposal caused serious issues to the traditional country-dweller families, concerned about the future of their younger sons.

As a matter of fact, according to the traditional Japanese system, whose basis stemmed from the concept of "home" (*Iê*) and to the Civil Code that was legally abolished during McArthur period:

<sup>38</sup>Handa T., *O Imigrante Japonês. História de sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo, T.A. Queiroz Editor/Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros, 1987, p. 74

*[...] "é dever do filho mais velho sustentar os pais na velhice, continuar seu empreendimento mantendo a propriedade ancestral, e da esposa deste, cuidar dos sogros. [...] a propriedade ancestral relaciona o lêm ao culto dos ancestrais, não podendo, portanto, ser fracionada ou vendida." (WOORTMANN, 1995, p. 10)*

Thus, it was the older son and his wife's responsibility to take care of his elderly parents and the ancestral property, ensuring the continuity of the *lêm* and contributing to find an occupation to his younger siblings.

Despite this view, which prohibited to divide or sell the ancestral property, did not contemplate a separation of the family, the crisis that during the Meiji period especially hit farm labourers and tenants compelled the most impoverished individuals to seek fortune abroad in the attempt to ensure themselves a stable future. It is interesting to notice that the specific roles entrusted to the progeny of the "home" according to the birth order, might have affected the migratory process itself<sup>39</sup>.

The firstborns Japanese were mainly those who emigrated abroad to face the harsh situation, since it was unrealistic to think about the continuity of the family relying on the outstanding scarceness of resources.

It is the case of Japanese who went to work in the South of Brazil in order to enhance their condition of peasants with the income accumulated abroad, with the aim of returning to their ancestral property in Japan. On the other hand, the non-successors sons migrated mainly to acquire properties so as to settle nearby the parental dwelling of their groom or bride once they came back to Japan.

We will see that the hierarchical principle of first-birth triggered consequences even inside the reverse migration of Japanese-Brazilians to different Brazilian cities or back to Japan.

In other words, usually the firstborn Japanese or Japanese descendants inherited lands or family-run shops, whereas the younger siblings were sent to different cities to find employment. In other words, according to Woortmann<sup>40</sup>, often the "number-two" son in Japanese-Brazilian families revealed to embed a "culture of migration", migrating back to Japan as temporary worker.

<sup>39</sup> Woortmann, E. "Japoneses no Brasil, Brasileiros no Japão: Tradição e Modernidade". *Revista de Antropologia*, Vol. 38 n. 2, (1995), pp. 9-11.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.



Indeed, it has been argued that whereas the elderly sons mostly remained in Brazil, the same system opened new doors to the younger progeny (rigorously males), who had the chance to build their future in other cities or to seek for more qualified careers.

It is worth to highlight that emigration was strongly supported by Japanese government, that, after sending some experts abroad to verify the adequacy of the economic conditions in the possible host Countries, in the early 1900s issued a large amounts of passports to United States and Hawaii<sup>41</sup>.

It is important to point out that the promotion of emigration by Japanese government stemmed both from social and economic reasons. As a matter of fact, the Japanese transition from a feudal system to a modern one, subjected to the rules of capitalism, deeply affected rural communities. It could also be argued that Japanese emigrants, at the end of XIX century, were those figures who did not experience the benefits of the national modernisation, but rather found themselves overwhelmed by its power<sup>42</sup>.

Thus, although the prompt Japanese industrialisation launched a promising socio-economic development, it also displayed insufficient means to absorb the workers coming from rural areas, who mainly lost their lands or remained unemployed. That unstable transitional period caused two types of migratory flows among rural workers: some peasants moved to the main cities in order to find a job, whereas others directly emigrated abroad to earn “quick” money.

*[...] "se a industrialização de um país se mostrava insuficiente, incapaz de absorver os trabalhadores saídos do meio rural, então era imperioso deixar a família no interior e tentar ganhar dinheiro em outras localidades. Quando se ia para o exterior, emigração se caracterizava pelo objetivo de ganhar dinheiro". (HANDA, 1987, p. 72)*

However, both those who moved to the main cities and those who tried to make their fortune abroad faced various hurdles along their process of economic readjustment, and sometimes the final outcome was less advantageous than what they actually expected.

<sup>41</sup>Yoshida, Y., “Sources and Causes of Japanese Emigration” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 34, No. 2, (September 1909), p.165.

<sup>42</sup>Handa, T. *O Imigrante Japonês. História de sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo, T.A. Queiroz Editor/Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros, 1987, p. 71.

### 1.3 First evidences of Japanese emigration: focus on Hawaii and US

It could be asserted that Japanese emigration is a recent phenomenon, as it has been officially legalised by the Empire of the Rising Sun only in 1885, when Japan and Hawaii signed the *Convention on Immigration*, aimed at sending twenty-nine thousands Japanese contracted migrants to the Hawaiian Islands to work in sugar cane plantations for an established period of 3 years<sup>43</sup>.

As I have already mentioned, the United States played a relevant role in Japanese “conversion” to internationalisation while the Country was still under a strict policy of closeness during the *Sakoku* era. In fact, the 1858 *Treaty of Friendship and Trade* signed with the US displayed significant achievements both in Japanese internal and external policies<sup>44</sup>.

However, it might be argued that Chinese immigration, officially banned from US in 1882 through the Exclusion Act, had left a strong anti-Oriental feeling on the West Coast. The Exclusion Act was a proper 10-years halt to Chinese immigration, born from accuses of economic decline unfoundedly attributed to Chinese people<sup>45</sup>.

Therefore, since the early 1900s, several American figures exhibited pronounced racist stances against non-Western people. Valentine S. McClatchy (1857-1938), a journalist who became a leading figure of the Anti-Japanese movement in California, wrote an article asserting the *non-assimilability* of Japanese people. I quote the three main evidences pointed out by McClatchy to enhance his stance, that is the unlikeliness that Japanese people might become good American citizens<sup>46</sup>:

1. ***"The Japanese can not assimilate and make good citizens because of their racial characteristics, heredity and religion."***
2. ***"The Japanese may not assimilate and make good citizens because their Government claims all Japanese, no matter where born, as its citizens".***
3. ***"The Japanese will not assimilate and make good citizens. In the mass, with opportunities offered, and even when born here, they have shown no disposition to do so, but, on the contrary, pronounced antagonism". (MCCLATCHY, 1921, p. 29)***

43 Buell, L. R., "The Development of the Anti-Japanese Agitation in the United States", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Dec., 1922), p. 607.

44 Caroli R., Gatti, F., *Storia del Giappone*, Gius. Laterza & Figli, updated first edition, 2006, chapter V, pp. 131-133.

45 Torimoto I., *Okina Kyūin and the Politics of Early Japanese Immigration to the United States, 1868-1924*, McFarland & Company, 2016, p. 231.

46 McClatchy V. S., "Japanese in the Melting-Pot: Can They Assimilate and Make Good Citizens?", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 93, (Jan. 1921), p. 29

Thus, the non-assimilability features of Japanese culture were mainly connected with their racial characteristics, too different from the Western pattern and therefore, often misunderstood.

They were blamed for preserving an intimate relation with their ethnic homeland, a unique sense of loyalty to the *Mikado* (the Emperor), from which they could barely distance themselves. Finally, it was perceived a certain indifference, stemming from Japanese people, in taking part to the community life, proudly displaying their different origins. However, it is important to highlight that Japanese emigration to California occurred roughly during the first years of the Meiji Restoration, when emigration had not even been authorised by Japanese government yet<sup>47</sup>.

That type of migration mainly involved illiterate people coming from the poorest strata of the society, whose purpose was basically to earn as much money as they could to come back home enriched. However, we will see that the attitude of Japanese workers towards their land of destination will gradually change, especially in the case of the United States.

At the beginning of the XX century, indeed, Japanese authorities began to regard US' territory not only as a land to exploit, but also as great chance to release Japan from the image of "uncivilised" Nation, and to convey the world a positive reputation of the "renewed" Japanese Empire<sup>48</sup>.

Among the most relevant cases of Japanese emigration, it is worth to mention both the Hawaiian Islands and the United States' s cases, even though they involved migrations of different nature and divergent features.

The first evidence of Japanese emigration dates back to the first year of Meiji Era, when about forty Japanese workers were sent to Guam Island, an unincorporated territory of the United States in the North Pacific Ocean, one hundred fifty-three people to Hawaiian Islands and about forty workers to California one year later, in 1869. In 1868, in fact, the Hawaiian Consulate of Japan, in Yokohama, recruited more than a hundred Japanese workers in order to fill the labor needs of the sugar cane plantations<sup>49</sup>.

The native indigenous Hawaiian population, in fact, was blamed for being inadequate to carry out the significant amount of work, thus the government started to seek further workforce abroad.

47 Buell, L. R., "The Development of the Anti-Japanese Agitation in the United States", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Dec., 1922), p. 606.

48 Sawada, "M. Culprits and Gentlemen: Meiji Japan's Restrictions of Emigrants to the United States, 1891-1909", *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Aug., 1991), pp. 340-341.

49 Scudder, D. "Hawaii experience with Japanese", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 93 (1921), p. 101.

Although after the abolition of slavery in 1888, several attempts have been made to maintain native American purity, giving the priority to Americans and Europeans workers, the only suitable immigrant category turned out to be the Japanese population, according to Ladenson.<sup>50</sup> Japanese immigrants, in fact, were the only individuals willing to accept lower wages (since Hawaiian salaries for male labourers were expected to be around 10 dollars per month, against the 4 monthly dollars that they would earn in Japan<sup>51</sup>) and they were relatively more accessible and cheaper compared to the European labor force.

The majority of them were farmers coming from Southern Japan, which had lately suffered a series of national crop failures and were aware of the promising comparatively high wages in Hawaii. Despite the Hawaiian Consul Eugene M. van Reed had obtained the emigration permissions from the former feudal government to ship Japanese workers to Hawaii in the early 1860s<sup>52</sup>, the new Japanese government started in 1868 did not acknowledge the legitimacy of the migrants' passports at the beginning.

We have to remember that the negotiations to issue a treaty between Japan and Hawaii had started during critical years for the Tokugawa regime, which was about to collapse.

Anyway, Van Reed managed to bring around one hundred forty-nine Japanese to the Hawaiian Islands in May, 1868, without the approval of Japanese officials<sup>53</sup>.

Afterwards, the Hawaiian Immigration Bureau kept on persuading Japanese government to allow Japanese workers to migrate to the islands, providing them with free passage, both for them and their family.

However, as previously mentioned, no official negotiation was achieved until 1884, when Japanese government officially authorised the expedition of nine hundreds forty-three emigrants hired by the government, who arrived to Hawaii the following year<sup>54</sup>.

On the one hand, the longing for Japanese workers was also fostered by the government's wish to put some limitations to Chinese immigration to Hawaii<sup>55</sup>. Firstly, because Chinese salaries' expectations were quite ambitious, and secondly because Hawaiian authorities feared that they could monopolise the labor market.

<sup>50</sup> Ladenson, A. "The Background of the Hawaiian-Japanese Labor Convention of 1886", *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Dec., 1940), pp. 389-390.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392.

<sup>52</sup> Sakurai, C. "Imigração tutelada. Os Japoneses no Brasil.", Campinas, SP, 2000, p 62.

<sup>53</sup> Ladenson, A. "The Background of the Hawaiian-Japanese Labor Convention of 1886", *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Dec., 1940), p. 391.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 394.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 393.

Therefore, the authorities of Honolulu decided to turn to the Japanese immigrants, who were reported to be “a hardy and tractable”<sup>56</sup> class of labourers displaying almost the same reluctance as Hawaiians in working together with Chinese people.

Moreover, I would argue that the Hawaiian preference over Japanese might also be explained by the fact that the citizens of the Empire of the Rising Sun had shown no intent to settle permanently in the islands, resolute into accomplish their temporary mission to benefit from Hawaiian resources and come back to Japan afterwards. As asserted by Doremus Scudder, a clergyman commissioned missionary of American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to Japan in 1884, who was sent to Hawaiian Island at the beginning of the 1990s<sup>57</sup>:

*“In my round of the plantations in 1903-1904 I found a very few Japanese who really planned to make Hawaii their permanent home. Almost all who could do sent their children to Japan for education”. (SCUDDER, 1921, p. 111)*

The maximum number of Japanese registered occurred in 1904, with 32.000 Japanese foreigners, which was about seventy percent out of the total labor force at the plantations<sup>58</sup>. External observers noticed that the precarious conditions in which Japanese workers lived were very explanatory of the temporary purpose of their migration.

Despite the majority of the labor workers landed in Hawaii were single men, they were not willing to mingle with locals (they would rather marry Japanese women than local brides), or to allow their children to study in Hawaii. Again, it was with great astonishment that Hawaiian authorities ascertained the careless attitude of Japanese workers on the plantations, who lived in miserable quarters that they did not attempt to make more welcoming, due to their assumed temporary stay.

*“It has been a great surprise and shock to their countrymen to find how indifferent the laborers on the plantations had become to the ordinary amenities of life in marked contrast to their former habits in Japan. This was natural enough: they were in Hawaii to make money and then to go home and enjoy it as speedily as possible”. (RICHARDS, 1912, p. 401)*

<sup>56</sup> Ladenson, A. “The Background of the Hawaiian-Japanese Labor Convention of 1886”, *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Dec., 1940), p. 395

<sup>57</sup> Scudder, D. “Hawaii experience with Japanese”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 93,(1921), p. 111

<sup>58</sup> Richards, T. “The Future of the Japanese in Hawaii: Things Problematic, Things Probable, Things Potential”. *The Journal of Race Development*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Apr., 1912), p. 399.

Thus, it might be argued that the adaptation process to the new territory was not only hampered by the different climatic conditions but also by the same Japanese unwillingness to remain on the Hawaiian soil. Japanese' indifference towards their destination, as long as it was profitable, might be proved through their promptness to leave for the United States, since they were reported to be more advantageous in economic terms.

As a result, between 1902 and 1905, about 19.000 Western people, Japanese above all, left the unstable conditions of the Hawaiian Islands for America<sup>59</sup>.

Japanese interest towards US had arisen from the expectations of higher wages that became more feasible after Chinese workers have been rejected by the first Exclusion Act of 1882<sup>60</sup>, causing a sharp labor shortage in the Pacific Coast. However, the image of Japanese workers spread in Hawaii was in stark contrast to the one spread throughout the United States. As argued by Buell<sup>61</sup>, immigration had been the first cause of friction between Japan and US.

Although the first Japanese contract laborers had been shipped to the Pacific Coast earlier in 1851, the real boom of passports issued to US had been registered after 1886, when the Japanese government enacted the Emigrants Protection Law (*Imin hogohô*), which meant to design a sort of insurance to protect the emigrants' rights.

Afterwards, an elevated number of emigration companies appeared in the Japan, that boosted the emigration of Japanese to the United States. However, it is worth to mention that, first of all, US mainland, with the exception of California, was not seeking for labor force.

Then, I would argue that, even though some areas of the Pacific Coast could potentially hire Japanese workers, their image had been strongly "deteriorated" by their predecessors, the Chinese laborers, who were regarded with "fear and disfavour"<sup>62</sup> by their American peers. As a result, the discriminatory attitude to consider Asian people "all equals" among themselves played a significant backlash towards Japanese community.

Moreover, several happenings simplified the ploy to pass Japanese off as the culprits of national issues.

First of all, since the beginning of 1890s there had been an increase of Japanese prostitutes on the Pacific Coast of the United States<sup>63</sup>.

59 Richards, T. "The Future of the Japanese in Hawaii: Things Problematic, Things Probable, Things Potential". *The Journal of Race Development*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Apr., 1912), p. 400.

60 Buell, L. R., "The Development of the Anti-Japanese Agitation in the United States", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Dec., 1922), p. 606.

61 Ibid, 605.

62 Ladenson, A. "The Background of the Hawaiian-Japanese Labor Convention of 1886", *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Dec., 1940), p. 393.

63 Oharazeki, K., "Anti-prostitution Campaigns in Japan and the American West, 1890–1920. A Transpacific Comparison". *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (May 2013), pp. 177-178.

At that time, prostitution drawn a discrete number of Japanese immigration to US. Prostitutes were depicted as Japanese women coming from rural areas of the Northeast of Japan and neighbouring prefectures belonging to the lower social classes, spurred by reasons of misery and therefore, ready to accomplish their family's moral obligation in that way. However, if on the one hand, poverty was one of the main causes of the engagement in prostitution, on the other hand it has to be pointed out that these women received a minimal education, and ignorance was likely another cause of their journey<sup>64</sup>.

However, the first real discontents showed up when an outbreak of bubonic plague hit San Francisco in 1900<sup>65</sup>. Blaming the "dirty" Japanese for the outbreak of the plague had been a good device used by political parties in order to divert the public attention from other relevant issues, that is a weak and corrupted political administration.

Thus, in 1901, the first provisions of the "Gentlemen's Agreement" were put into force, prohibiting the issuing of passports to future Japanese who wished to ship to US. Here, it has to be highlight that the administration of Japanese passports was in charge of local officials, and therefore very easy to evade by emigration companies, which kept on bringing Japanese immigrants both in US and Hawaii, annexed to the United States in 1898, through devised "side-doors"<sup>66</sup>.

At the end of XIX century, Japanese immigration policy acknowledged two different passport categories: non-migrant, the so-called *hi-min*, and migrant or *imin*. *Hi-min* aimed at depicting those persons who did not mean to engage in any remunerated activity, because the aim of their trip was not to seek employment.

For instance, students and professionals could be included in this category. On the other hand, *imin* were properly laborers, who could either engage in skilled or unskilled jobs. However, the domestic policies have been proven to be inefficient in establishing whether a person might be defined as "workable" or not, since there was no evidence to state that at their arrival in US, *hi-min* would not have engaged in working occupations.

Thus, the category of *hi-min*, which should have prevented illegal immigration from happening, was actually the main promoter of unauthorised emigration in the years between 1891 and 1909<sup>67</sup>.

64 Oharazeki, K., "Anti-prostitution Campaigns in Japan and the American West, 1890–1920. A Transpacific Comparison". *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (May 2013) , pp. 179-180.

65 Buell, L. R., "The Development of the Anti-Japanese Agitation in the United States", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Dec., 1922), p. 608.

66 Mita C., *Bastos, uma comunidade étnica japonesa no Brasil*, Humanitas FFLCH/USP, Universidade de São Paulo, 1999, p. 25.

67 Sawada, M., "Culprits and Gentlemen: Meiji Japan's Restrictions of Emigrants to the United States, 1891-1909", *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Aug., 1991), p. 342

However, what contributed to exacerbate the already hostile attitude towards the Japanese in the United States was definitely the Russo-Japanese War bursted in 1904.

At that point, Japanese race started to be addressed as a threat to the entire Nation and several anti-Japanese campaigns exploded throughout the Country in the following years<sup>68</sup>.

Despite Japanese government had always tried to indulge the United States, voluntarily limiting its migratory flows imposing strict requirements to emigration in the attempt to be treated as a "civilised" Country and ceased the hostility, the situation worsen.

Despite American authorities' claims to treat the Japanese as any other European citizen, in 1906 all Japanese children were segregated and compelled to attend exclusive schools for Asian people<sup>69</sup>.

In 1907, an anti-Japanese bill prevented Japanese who were issued a passport for Hawaii or similar destinations to enter the territory of United States, and by 1908 Japanese emigration to US, Canada and Hawaii had been strictly limited through a further amendment of the Gentlemen's agreement<sup>70</sup>.

It might be argued that the divergence between Japanese emigration experience in US and Hawaii had been mainly due the migrants' different impact on the labour market. Indeed, Japanese workers in Hawaii used to engage only in unskilled labor, preventing the emergence of any kind of competitiveness with locals. By contrast, Japanese immigrants in US were often criticised for stealing job positions to native Americans, becoming the target of local resentment and feelings of rivalry.

68 Buell, L. R., "The Development of the Anti-Japanese Agitation in the United States", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Dec., 1922), p. 615-616.

69 Ibid, 623.

70 Buell, L. R., "The Development of the Anti-Japanese Agitation in the United States", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4, (Dec. 1922), pp. 632-636.



#### 1.4 The Brazilian case: experimental migration or new slavery?

The restrictions imposed by United States on Japanese immigration as a result of a widespread racial intolerance culminated into the Quota Immigration Act of 1924, which completely prohibited Japanese people to cross American national boundaries<sup>71</sup>.

At that point, Japanese government had to search for other viable options to channel its migratory outflows, until considering Latin America as a suitable destination, especially Brazil.

However, Brazil had been already eyed up since a few decades, during which Japanese officials had already set up some patrols in order to evaluate the adequateness of the territory. As a result, the first official contact between the two Countries occurred in 1908, when eight hundreds Japanese workers were drawn to Brazilian coasts on board of a vessel called *Kasato Maru*<sup>72</sup>.

The encounter between two different populations such as Japanese and Brazilians might be argued to be the result of mutual national challenges, that made the respective needs of Japan and Brazil coincide with perfect timing.

In other words, Brazil happened to be the answer to Japanese struggles in a specific historical moment, under the emergence of specific circumstances that made the two Countries' destinies intersect almost naturally.

Therefore, in order to understand why Brazil did embrace Japanese immigration in the early 1900s, and *vice versa*, why did Japan choose Brazil as emigrating destination, it is worth to analyse Brazilian context, first of all, which had recently freed from a national rooted culture of slavery.

Hence, in this paragraph, I will try to highlight the relevance of Brazilian past of human trafficking in building its national identity, aimed at the creation of a "modern State" watching at the European powers.

I will also emphasise how the concept of "race" has played a role in determining which population should have admitted into the Country and until what extent Japanese migrants' contribution was considered "desirable" throughout the process of national readjustment.

71 Okada, Y., "The Japanese Image of the American West", *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Oxford University Press, (1988), p. 157.

72 Handa, T., *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo: T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo- Brasileiros, 1987, p. 56.

Finally, I will examine the “experimental feature” of the first phase of Japanese emigration to Brazil, shedding light on the hurdles faced by the first Japanese *colonos* in the plantations, whose conditions resembled to the former slavery.

For almost three centuries, Brazil has been a slave-trading society where around 4.5 million enslaved Africans were deported<sup>73</sup>.

Until 1865, about the half of the total slave population was concentrated in the plantations of the North-east. Northern plantations’ administration was characterised by a hierarchical society, in which social disparities created a restricted market of slaves, considered both as a property and a good<sup>74</sup>.

However, in 1872 the situation reversed since the majority of national slaves moved to the coffee plantations of the South-east, due to a significant increase in coffee production in the areas surrounding São Paulo<sup>75</sup>.

In other words, contrarily to the North-eastern tillages, the *Oeste Paulista* was more prone to expand its extensive agriculture and more “open” to modernisation. Beyond geographic mismatches, in Brazilian society was gradually emerging the feeling that slavery was no longer beneficial to the economy, but it was rather an hindrance to national development.

This social change started to be perceived in 1831, when the government, under the pressured exerted by England, issued a Law (*Lei de 7 de Novembro de 1831*) that claimed the abolishment of slavery and prohibited the importation of new African slaves, requiring the release of those illegally introduced in Brazil after that date<sup>76</sup>.

However, despite the support of the English government to Brazilian independency, the ordinance was effective only in prohibiting the importation of new slaves, whereas the already existing slavery did not disappear completely but it was gradually sided by European migrants subsidised by Brazilian government.

The so-called *Oeste Paulista*, indeed, assisted to the creation of a new working regime named *colonato*<sup>77</sup>.

73 Adachi N., “Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?”, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (May 2004), p. 47.

74 Linhares M.Y. (organizadora) et. al, *História geral do Brasil*, 9 ed., Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1990, p.149.

75 Ibid., pp.162-164.

76 Ibid., p.285.

77 Ibid., pp. 164-165.

The first European migrants introduced to replace slaves were *de facto* colonists, who did not receive a proper salary but were given plots of lands for individual cultivation and possible sale of products for personal use. In other words, they were fostered to integrate their individual income with the scarce remuneration granted with their work at the coffee plantation.

On the other hand, the *fluminense* area of Rio de Janeiro remained extraneous to the use of Europeans but rather relied on slaves, who continued to work there even after the abolition as released national workers. In the North-east, the work regime was based on the principle of *parceria*, which means that farmhands and landowners created a sort of partnership. The farmhand was provided with a land where he cultivated his basic ailments for subsistence, and, at the same time, shared the coffee harvest with his landowner.

During cropping time, salaried seasonal workers were also hired to help with the harvest.

However, the effective abolition of slavery took place in 1888, when the government promulgated the *Lei Áurea*, which determined its definitive extinction.

The area surrounding São Paulo was the less affected by the Law, since slaves had already been almost completely backed up by European workers.

Although the Law released around seven hundred thousand slaves, it did not envisage any kind of institutional support and found themselves completely abandoned by the State<sup>78</sup>

*"O próprio movimento abolicionista desmobilizou-se logo em seguida, e não mais se preocupou com o destino daqueles por quem tanto lutaram" (LINHARES, 1990, p. 289)*

As a consequence, many ex-slaves were compelled to keep on working for their former employers, sided by European workers, under conditions that were very similar to those they were already used to as slaves.

Black population clustered in the North *fluminense*, where it was easier accessing to lands due to the severe shortage of labor, and many progressively became tenants. The landowners of *Vale do Paraíba* were also severed by the Law, since the loss of their slaves was barely compensated for an indemnity which was subsequently suspended<sup>79</sup>.

78 Adachi N., "Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?", *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (May 2004), p. 54.

79 Linhares M.Y.(organizadora) et. al, *História geral do Brasil*, 9 ed., Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1990, pp. 288-289.

One year later, in 1889, Brazil became a Federal Republic, a new form of government mostly supported by the major landowners of the Country. Until then, São Paulo had exclusively relied on a precarious subsistence agriculture, since the unique product cropped throughout its lands was coffee.

This agricultural system will quickly manifest its intrinsic failures, especially since 1894, when monoculture farms will be hit by a severe economic crisis, mainly to the detriment of the biggest landowners<sup>80</sup>.

However, it has to be pointed out that human trafficking was not abolished because retained immoral, but rather for economic and social reasons, that, respectively, were believed to be the causes of Brazilian backwardness and the contamination of *Brazilian race*, factors that impeded the formation of a pure national identity. Moreover, in political terms, slavery affected the image of the Country at the international level, beyond threatening national security<sup>81</sup>. Therefore, immigration started to be considered as part of a process of civilization<sup>82</sup>, which consisted into *whitening* Brazilian race through the miscegenation with European migrants.

*"No pensamento imigrantista do século XIX a escravidão não é percebida como um regime imoral ou ilegítimo, mas simplesmente adjetivada por seu caráter arcaizante, um modelo econômico retrógrado e impeditivo de imigração porque produz uma imagem negativa do país na Europa". (SEYFERTH, 2002, p.120)*

The European migrant had to be provided with a special treatment, whose arrival was expected to "clean" and renew Brazilian society<sup>83</sup>. In other words, the purpose of the government was to eliminate *negro* racial traits, associated with inferiority and backwardness, from Brazilian "pure" population within a few generations<sup>84</sup>.

80 Handa, T. *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo: T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros, 1987, pp. 201-202.

81 Linhares, M.Y. (organizadora) et. al, *História geral do Brasil*, 9 ed., Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1990, pp.285-286/ Seyferth, G., "Colonização, imigração e a questão racial no Brasil", *REVISTA USP*, São Paulo, n.53, (março/maio 2002), p. 118.

82 Seyferth, G., "Colonização, imigração e a questão racial no Brasil", *REVISTA USP*, São Paulo, n.53, (março/maio 2002), p. 118.

83 Sakurai, C., "Imigração tutelada. Os Japoneses no Brasil.", Campinas, SP, 2000, p. 31.

84 Adachi, N., "Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?", *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (May 2004), pp. 50-51.

It has to be stressed that Brazilian population stems from a *melting pot* of Portuguese colonizers, Índios aborígenes and Africans. However, according to the Brazilian *élite* of that time, history had widely demonstrated that the “white race” was destined to dominate, whereas *negros* and *coolies* could not aspire for high-ranking social positions.

Furthermore, European migrants were positively regarded as they showed a lower mortality rate, which means that they were more long-lived with respect to the former slaves. In other words, it was believed that national independency was achievable only increasing the presence of “white” individuals, through the gradual suppression of colored races<sup>85</sup>.

According to Daniela De Carvalho (2003), more than one and a half million Europeans were drawn to Brazil between 1880 and 1900<sup>86</sup>. In this view, it might be argued that the creation of Brazilian national identity had to be fulfilled through an accurate selection of “assimilable” races, which was not only aimed at the suppression of undesirable racial phenotypes, but also at the exclusion of those nationalities “infusible” for divergencies in ethnic behaviour. Terms as “racial depuration” and “fusibility” spread throughout the Country in the early 1890s<sup>87</sup>.

Thus, if racial “depuration” was the only solution to a Nation contaminated by undesirable ethnicities, who had to be intended as the “privileged” race, that is the one expected to clean Brazilian people from barbaric blood? Since 1824, many homogenous German colonies appeared throughout Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina.

German people were appreciated for their dedication to work, their patience and perseverance, and were considered “convenient” to the project of civilisation, since the first attempts of Germans’ settlement into colonies resulted to be successful. The ideal migrant, indeed, in order to conform to the general criteria established by the Brazilian government, had to demonstrate to be an “efficient agriculture” pertaining to the white race, possibly dragging his family with him<sup>88</sup>.

*"Nas regras de admissão de estrangeiros o imigrante ideal, o único merecedor de subsídios, é o agricultor; mais do que isso, um agricultor branco que emigra em família". (SEYFERTH, 2002, p.119)*

85 Adachi, N., “Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?”, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (May 2004), p. 53.

86 De Carvalho, D., *Migrants and Identity in Japan and Brazil: the Nikkeijin*, Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2003, p.5.

87 Seyferth, G., “Colonização, imigração e a questão racial no Brasil”, *REVISTA USP*, São Paulo, n.53, (março/maio 2002), pp. 133-135.

88 *Ibid*, pp. 119-120.

Under this category lied also the Italian migrant, who appeared in the *colônias* of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina during the 1870s, admired for his well-regarded behavioural features, such as tirelessness<sup>89</sup>. Despite “European” immigration seemed to be contemplated in generic terms, initially Northern Italians and Germans unfolded to be preferred ones over other geographic areas, since the racial features typical of the Mediterranean were reported not to be suitable to create the “Brazilian race”, thus Spanish and Portuguese tended to be initially excluded for mere aesthetic reasons<sup>90</sup>.

However, German migrants gradually revealed to be incompatible with Brazilian mindset, and their integration into the society faced several hurdles. Therefore, at the end of the nineteenth century, the definition of “ideal migrant” shifted to those nationalities who were more likely to be assimilated<sup>91</sup>. Italians, Portuguese and Spanish, in fact, being behaviourally similar to Brazilians, descendants of Latin ancestors, showed a higher degree of collaboration and gradually replaced their German peers. European migration did not have to be intended as a localised project of assimilation, but rather as an expanding phenomenon that would have excluded inferior races not only in South Brazil, but in the whole national territory, through the creation of mix-raced colonies<sup>92</sup>.

Although restrictions over inferior races had never been explicit, the Decree 528 of 1890 was the first legislation to target directly the Asian and African indigenous population as undesirable, hampering their entry<sup>93</sup>.

Asian immigration began in the second half of XIX century with the introduction of unmarried Chinese intended to work in coffee plantations and to build new roads.

However, that first approach to Asian culture constituted a failure, partly due to the oppositions raised by those who defended the “*branqueamento*”<sup>94</sup> process of Brazilian population.

89 Beneduzi, L.F., “Por um branqueamento mais rápido: identidade e racismo nas narrativas do álbum do cinquentenário da imigração italiana no sul do Brasil”, *Antíteses*, v. 4, n. 7, (jan./jun. 2011), p. 25.

90 Seyferth, G., “Colonização, imigração e a questão racial no Brasil”, *REVISTA USP*, São Paulo, n.53, (março/maio 2002), p. 121.

91 *Ibid*, pp. 128-129.

92 Beneduzi, L.F., “Por um branqueamento mais rápido: identidade e racismo nas narrativas do álbum do cinquentenário da imigração italiana no sul do Brasil”, *Antíteses*, v. 4, n. 7, (jan./jun. 2011), p. 25.

93 Seyferth, G., “Colonização, imigração e a questão racial no Brasil”, *REVISTA USP*, São Paulo, n.53, (março/maio 2002), p. 126.

94 Woortmann, E. “Japoneses no Brasil, Brasileiros no Japão: Tradição e Modernidade”. *Revista de Antropologia*, Vol. 38 n. 2, (1995), p. 12.

However, by the 1900s, the overproduction of coffee that hit the plantations of São Paulo compelled Brazilian farmers to cut labor costs, to the detriment of their employees. This caused many European migrants to demand to break their labor contract and return home<sup>95</sup>. As a consequence, for the first time it was considered the qualification of Japanese migrants, who might have a double-side effect: they were suitable for working in coffee plantations, but undesirable for racial mixture<sup>96</sup>.

Despite their assumed troublesome assimilation, several arguments in favour of Japanese immigration spread in the pre-war period: they were efficient agricultures, adaptable to adverse climatic conditions. Furthermore, not only they were expected to inhabit and cultivate abandoned lands in the South, but also to take advantage of the unexplored richness of the North. However, it has to be pointed out that Japanese migrants were considered suitable only in terms of “social assimilation”.

Indeed, Brazilian government did not wish to extend its “racial fusibility” project to the *raça amarela*, and, in the same way, Japanese were reluctant on exogamy. The “acceptability” of Japanese people was largely based on economic interests, since Japan, especially after the winning of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, was regarded as an emerging superpower on the international sphere<sup>97</sup>. Otherwise, we will see that Japanese people, as well as Germans, will return to be an “undesirable” presence in proximity of the Second World War, and especially under Vargas’ regime.

At the end of the XIX century, Japan was dealing with a renewed inexperienced society that recently faced the abolishment of the old feudal system. According to Woortmann (1995), the crisis arose during the attempt to modernise national economy in Meiji Restoration caused several *push factors* to migratory movements<sup>98</sup>.

Firstly, it was registered a rapid demographic growth, followed by a sharp decline of mortality rate, due to the improvement of health conditions and new political measures such as the prohibition of abortion.

95 Adachi, N., “Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?”, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (May 2004), pp. 54-55.

96 Seyferth, G., “Colonização, imigração e a questão racial no Brasil”, *REVISTA USP*, São Paulo, n.53, (março/maio 2002), p. 138.

97 *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145.

98 Woortmann, E. “Japoneses no Brasil, Brasileiros no Japão: Tradição e Modernidade”. *Revista de Antropologia*, Vol. 38 n. 2 (1995), pp. 8-9.

Another significant factor was the development of the heavy industry and the consequent selective measures of modernisation, that contributed to trigger unemployment and failures in that sector.

Last but not least, the concern of the small producers for the dip in the price of rice and the heavy taxes on the agricultural properties of the peasants, that could no longer be paid with goods, resulted in about 367.000 of the farmers losing their heritage.

Indeed, the Meiji restoration especially affected rural areas, where croppers and tenants found themselves in miserable conditions, leaving no choice to the most impoverished individuals but to seek fortune abroad in the attempt to ensure themselves a stable future.

As a consequence, in 1896, the Emigration Protection Law was issued as a first step to control emigration, since it authorised only migrants selected by official agents. Lately, in 1917, the all Japanese existing emigration companies were assembled into a unique agency, the *Kaigai Kōgyō Kabushiki Kaisha* (Overseas Industrial Company)<sup>99</sup>.

The official relation between Brazil and Japan began in 1895, with the signature of a *Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation* between mutual governments in Paris. Since 1894, in fact, there have been several attempts to bring Japanese immigrants to Brazil, but only in 1907 some results were effectively achieved.

Indeed, the situation exacerbated after a ban imposed in 1889 by the Italian Minister Francesco Crispi on Italian emigration to Brazil, whose presence composed the major part of European immigration, since he was informed about the severe labor exploitation carried out by Brazilian employers in the plantations<sup>100</sup>.

As a consequence, after some preventive visits to test Brazilian territory by representatives of the Japanese government, in a 1905 agenda, the Minister plenipotentiary Fukushima Sugimura, declared<sup>101</sup>:

*"Proibida a entrada na Austrália, discriminados nos Estados Unidos, perseguidos no Canadá e agora limitados também no Hawai e Ilhas do Pacífico, os nossos colonos trabalhadores encontrarão no Estado de São Paulo uma rara felicidade e um verdadeiro paraíso". (FUKASHI SUGUIMURA, 1905)*

99 De Carvalho, D., *Migrants and Identity in Japan and Brazil: the Nikkeijin*, Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2003, p.3.

100 Ibid, p. 5.

101 Saito, A.H., "O japonês no Brasil", *Ed. Sociologica e Política*, São Paulo, (1960), pp. 28-29.



Eager to send Japanese migrants to the land of “true happiness”, in 1907, the president of the Imperial Emigration Company, Ryu Mizuno, finally signed a convention with the secretary of Agriculture of São Paulo, Carlos Arruda Botelho, to authorise the introduction of Japanese workers in Brazilian coffee plantations.

One year later, in 1908, 800 Japanese people (781 contractual workers, 10 spontaneous migrants and others)<sup>102</sup> were drawn to Brazil on board of a vessel called *Kasato Maru*, that obtained the permission to dock at Santos harbour.

Unlike the previous migratory experiences to United States and Hawaii, emigrants were encouraged to arrive in “family-groups”<sup>103</sup>, who settled in several *colônias* (colonies) nearby the coffee plantations. Usually, dwellings were shared by two or three families, who were consequently distributed to six farms, *fazendas*<sup>104</sup>.

One of Japan’s goal was to convey a positive image of its migrants, ensuring that they would not hamper Brazilian economic development but rather contribute to achieve the national cornerstone of “*ordem e progresso*”, albeit remaining loyal to their ethnic Country<sup>105</sup>.

Japanese government suggested his migrants to convert to the local religion, Catholicism, for example, in order not to create hostility within Brazilian communities<sup>106</sup>.

The case of Japanese emigration to Brazil differed from the previous migratory experiences for several reasons, and it entailed different phases.

However, it could be asserted that during its first phase in the early 1900s (1908-1923), which drawn 14.983 Japanese people to Brazil, displayed countless blanks, due to its “experimental” feature.

In fact, not only has Brazil been claimed to be a second choice to United States<sup>107</sup>, but also a gamble of the Latin American government that found itself under very unstable conditions.

102 Handa, T. *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo:T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo- Brasileiros, 1987, pp. 35-36.

103 Dwyer, J., Lovell, P. “Earnings Differentials between Whites and Japanese: The Case of Brazil”, *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Summer, 1990), p. 187.

104 Handa, T., *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo:T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo- Brasileiros, 1987, pp. 36-37.

105 Dwyer, J., Lovell, P. “Earnings Differentials between Whites and Japanese: The Case of Brazil”, *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Summer, 1990), p. 187.

106 Adachi, N., “Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?”, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (May 2004), pp. 55-56.

107 Woortmann, E. “Japoneses no Brasil, Brasileiros no Japão: Tradição e Modernidade”. *Revista de Antropologia*, Vol. 38 n. 2 (1995), p. 12.

First of all, Japanese immigration was initially financed by Brazilian government, which supplied part of the migrant's traveling expenses in charge of his emigration company, whereas a part of the remuneration was owed to the *fazendeiros*, who will deduct their expenses from migrants' salaries afterwards. However, many complaints rose as the emigration company did not returned the money deposited by the migrants before the ship journey and salaries were lower than what expected<sup>108</sup>.

As mentioned earlier, another condition of this type of migration was its familiar feature, imposed by Brazilian government in order to incentive migrants to remain in the plantations in the long-term. Paulista government required "three arms" to be available to work on coffee plantations at least, that is three persons per unit, excluding weaker unproductive family components, such as elderlies and children under twelve years old. Brazilian government also imposed endogamic marriage as a condition to obtain further lands and subsidies. Thus, between 1908 and 1923, it has been recorder a consistent number of combined marriages among Japanese immigrants. Many migrants created fictive kinship in order to emigrate in the conformity with Brazilian requirements, adopting relatives or acquaintances<sup>109</sup>. Moreover, unlike other migratory experiences, Japanese emigration to Brazil distinguished for its long-term prevision of stay, since many migrants would have rather remain in Brazil than come back to Japan empty-ended<sup>110</sup>.

However, at the beginning, the miserable conditions of the *fazendas*, the excessive workload and the almost inexistent profit, not only discouraged but erase any desire to remain longer than the contract's deadline. Handa depicted the colonies' system as a *fracasso*", (failure)<sup>111</sup>, since 430 Japanese workers out of the total 772 distributed to the farms retired after barely six months from their arrival. After thirteen months, only 191 Japanese individuals had been proven to remain in the *fazendas*, enduring conditions that resembled to the former slavery system<sup>112</sup>.

*"The immigrants complained that they were treated like slaves, and that the working and living conditions were very different from those that had been promised in Japan". (DE CARVALHO, 2003, p.7)*

108 De Carvalho, D., *Migrants and Identity in Japan and Brazil: the Nikkeijin*, Oxfordsire, Routledge, 2003, p. 7.

109 Reichl, C., "Stages in the Historical Process of Ethnicity: The Japanese in Brazil, 1908-1988", *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Duke University Press, (1995), pp. 40-41.

110 Mita C., *Bastos, uma comunidade étnica japonesa no Brasil*, Humanitas FFLCH/USP, Universidade de São Paulo, 1999, p.39.

111 Handa, T., *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo:T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo- Brasileiros, 1987, p. 55.

112 Ibid, p. 56.

Thus, many workers moved to the city and tried to reinvent themselves starting autonomous professions. However, poverty spread throughout the plantations was due both to the old extortion system practised in the warehouses of the *fazendas* and to the inadequate wages to support family units, whose all “useful” members were asked to work on the coffee plantations, leaving no room for alternative ways of sustenance such as rearing livestock, for instance<sup>113</sup>.

If, on the one hand, plantation owners criticised the migrants’ lack of expertise in farming (there were a few actual farmers within the crew of the *Kasato Maru*), on the other hand, Japanese farmhands criticised the inadequacy of the structures provided to host multi-members families and their scarce earnings, proved to be higher for those who retired rather than for those who remained to work in the *fazendas*<sup>114</sup>.

In fact, the long-decades exploitation of the soil gradually made the old coffee plantations no longer able to yield a return.

Furthermore, as time went by, the miserable conditions under which the first Japanese immigrants were compelled to work in the Brazilian *fazendas* were feared to burst in riots and intense protests.

According to Katz (2012), slavery continued to exist after its official abolition, it had just been shifted to the new category of “contract migrants”<sup>115</sup>. Through a tacit stratagem, Brazilian government managed to intensify its coffee production, exploiting hundreds of foreign migrants. In fact, the binding contract that tied foreign workers to plots of land as croppers evidently limited their freedom.

***“Prerequisites for slavery in agriculture existed, [...] but the government refused the creation of official slavery, even if it was tacitly tolerated and recognised under a different name” (KATZ, 2012, p. 260)***

In 1914, after the arrival of new 906 contract migrants in 1910<sup>116</sup>, Paulista government was forced to break the first contract with Japan because of the low fixation rate of Japanese in the coffee plantations and their frequent attempt of escape from the farms<sup>117</sup>.

113 Handa, T., *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo:T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo- Brasileiros, 1987, pp. 56-57

114 Ibid, p. 58.

115 Katz, F., in Figueira, R. “Illegal Slavery and Human Trafficking in Brazil before and after the Abolition Law”, Review (Fernand Braudel Center) Vol. 35, No. 3/4, *STUDIES IN UNFREE LABOR*, University of New York, (2012), pp. 259-260

116 Handa, T., *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo:T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo- Brasileiros, 1987, p. 61.

117 Mita C., *Bastos, uma comunidade étnica japonesa no Brasil*, Humanitas FFLCH/USP, Universidade de São Paulo, 1999, p. 40.

In 1923, Brazilian government definitively suppressed immigration subsidies to Japan, since European were gradually returning and hence, Japanese were no longer needed<sup>118</sup>.

One of the strongest critics moved towards Japanese migrants was their unassimilable feature<sup>119</sup>, their unwillingness, or perhaps impossibility, to conform to Brazilian society. However, it has to be considered that the first migrants were drawn to Brazil with the promise of earning a fortune.

On the contrary, they experienced an enormous disillusionment at their arrival, quickly finding out that coffee farms were not the adequate place for a rapid enrichment.

As a matter of fact, Brazilian lands were barren and their salary would not allow to make any profit unless they carry out a parallel activity, condition that they were not legally allow to satisfy.

Moreover, the Brazilian experience was tackled with several difficulties in adaptation, not only because of the hostile climate and the miserable conditions of the farms, but also because of the frequent misunderstandings caused by the linguistic gap.

Japanese workers were provided with only one interpreter per *fazenda*, whose contribution was not enough to solve the uncountable problems emerged from an "experimental" project.

Eventually, many Japanese migrants blamed on their national government and emigration companies for having lied to them about the adverse conditions that they would face in Brazil.

They felt betrayed and abandoned by their own government, since what they actually found in Brazil was not wealth but a handful of unfulfilled promises<sup>120</sup>.

**"Mentiu quem disse que o Brasil era bom, mentiu a companhia de emigração; no lado oposto da Terra cheguei, fiado no Paraíso, para ver o Inferno". (HANDA, 1987, p. 155)**

118 De Carvalho, D., *Migrants and Identity in Japan and Brazil: the Nikkeijin*, Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2003, p. 6.

119 Sakurai, C., "Imigração tutelada. Os Japoneses no Brasil.", Campinas, SP, 2000, p. 20.

120 Handa, T., *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo: T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo- Brasileiros, 1987, p. 115.

## 1.5 The associational life of Japanese communities and the severe restrictions imposed under the *Estado Novo*

After the severe restrictions imposed to Japanese immigration by Countries such as US and Australia, Japan took on the responsibility to subsidise fees for national emigration to Brazil since 1924<sup>121</sup>. Immigration was encouraged since in the decade between 1920 and 1930 working opportunities in Brazil were increased.

As already mentioned, the farmhands who escaped by the *fazendas* had no alternatives but remaining in Brazil longer than expected, since coming back to Japan without profit would cause their ostracisation from the society.

However, many *colonos* managed to purchase lots with their savings, gradually turning into independent farmers<sup>122</sup>. Indeed, the former contract labourers gathered together and founded several colonisation units, named *colônias*, that reached their major expansion between the 1920s and the 1930s.

There were different types of *colônias*: communities founded with Japanese private capital, either supported by Japanese government, *iju chi* (immigration settlements) or by emigration companies, or communities set up in wild lands by the same migrants who assembled together according to their prefecture of origin or the ship they arrive on (*shokuminchi*)<sup>123</sup>.

The big advantage for emigrants who arrived in Brazil in the mid-1920s was precisely to find this already existent network of communities, that exempted them from committing to the phase of contract laborers since they could directly purchase lands in Japanese colonisation units<sup>124</sup>.

I would argue that the success experienced by Japanese colonists in shifting their socio-economic status upward since the early 1920s was mainly due to their spirit of cooperation, expressed both by the structural organisation of rural communities and their pronounced tendency to associate.

As migrants became stable residents in Brazil, many associations were formed. It is interesting that the participation to these associations was mandatory for the members of Japanese community, while strictly forbidden to non-Japanese<sup>125</sup>.

121 De Carvalho, D., *Migrants and Identity in Japan and Brazil: the Nikkeijin*, Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2003, p. 5.

122 Ibid., p. 8.

123 Ibid., p. 9.

124 Reichl, C., "Stages in the Historical Process of Ethnicity: The Japanese in Brazil, 1908-1988", *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Duke University Press, (1995), pp. 39-40.

125 De Carvalho, D., *Migrants and Identity in Japan and Brazil: the Nikkeijin*, Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2003, p. 17.

[...] "these associations were not voluntary, but rather compulsory. Anyone who rejected membership would be referred to as 'non- Japanese' and ostracised". (DE CARVALHO, 2003, p. 17)

By 1932, 223 different types of Japanese association had already been formed in Brazil. Among them, there were *tanomoshikō*, financial assistance associations based on mutual trust.

They were initially set up with the purpose of raising money for those migrants remained without plots of land or for those who faced hurdles in sending remittances back home because of the lack of banking services<sup>126</sup>.

In March 1929 was also founded the BRATAC, *Burajiru Takushoku Kumiai*, an agency established in São Paulo with the purpose to administer lands. Furthermore, during the 1920s, many co-operatives emerged in Japanese communities in Brazil.

Cotia Kumiai was founded in 1927 by a group of Japanese immigrants inhabiting the suburbs of São Paulo.

It was an agricultural co-operative created with the purpose of relieving farmers from the responsibility of sales, since the association took on the task of collecting products from farmers and distributing them to the market.

Moreover, it trained farmers to cultivate different types of plant, in order to provide them with various options to satisfy the market's demand<sup>127</sup>. According to De Carvalho (2003) co-operatives constituted an efficient tool to overcome linguistic gaps and to gain expertise in realising commercial practices<sup>128</sup>.

On the other hand, Reichl (1995) argued that voluntary associations are a mean to create a sense of ethnic identity, which is further enhanced through migration<sup>129</sup>.

Therefore, as already mentioned, between 1925 and 1935, Japanese immigrants have proved to found a collectivistic-oriented society.

The biggest number of associations were created during that period, based on the funding principles of Japanese traditional family, divided into villages organised and composed by familiar unities, and reflected into the the structure of Japanese colonisation units.

126 Adachi, N., "Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?", *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (May 2004), pp. 56-57.

127 Ibid., p. 57.

128 De Carvalho, D., *Migrants and Identity in Japan and Brazil: the Nikkeijin*, Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2003, pp. 17-18.

129 Reichl, C., "Stages in the Historical Process of Ethnicity: The Japanese in Brazil, 1908-1988", *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Duke University Press, (1995), p. 52.

Also in Japanese rural communities, indeed, social relations were based on a kinship ideology or, in the absence of actual blood relations, by “fake” kinship.

At the family unit level, the *iê* (household) attributed a specific role to every member of the household, where the oldest son is expected to be the successor, entitled with the duty of veneration of the ancestors, whereas non-successor siblings may either be given minor pieces of land to crop, or become migrant worker in case of inappropriate economic conditions.

However, the successor might be replaced by an adopted son in order to ensure familiar lineage<sup>130</sup>. It is worth to emphasise that kin ties continue to influence family members even after migration.

Firstborns compelled to emigrate can either renounce to their inheritance and duties before leaving or partially fulfil them sending remittances back home, defending their right for succession.

Shintoism and Buddhism, the main religions practised by Japanese people, gradually lost their significance in the host Country, since immigrants were encouraged by their government to convert to Brazilian official religion so as not to create conflicts<sup>131</sup>.

Furthermore, the first immigrants believed that the cult of the ancestors was the eldest son's responsibility, who usually remained in Japan, and thus they believed to be exempted from that practice. Religious activities, indeed, have not been recorded until the first households decided to settle, with the difference that the cult of the ancestors was replaced by the Emperor worship.

As a matter of fact, as argued by Reichl (1995), the image of the Emperor was the primary symbol to convey a form of ethnic attachment to Japan when ancestors' worship became meaningless, enhancing Japanese migrants' loyalty to their ethnic homeland<sup>132</sup>.

In the pre-war period, in fact, Japanese communities maintained a strong bond with their homeland, and they regarded any representative authorities of Japan, such as Consulates, BRATAC and KKKK as “paternalistic protectors”.

130 Reichl, C., “Stages in the Historical Process of Ethnicity: The Japanese in Brazil”, 1908-1988 , *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Duke University Press, (1995), p. 38.

131 De Carvalho, D., *Migrants and Identity in Japan and Brazil: the Nikkeijin*, Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2003, p. 16.

132 Reichl, C., “Stages in the Historical Process of Ethnicity: The Japanese in Brazil, 1908-1988”, *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Duke University Press, (1995), p. 42.

Japanese government' s commitment since the mid-1920s was also very appreciated. Japan used to provide subsidies to the colonisation units by means of Japanese Consulates, meant to support the construction of educational institutions for instance<sup>133</sup>.

Although during the mid-1910s, the teaching of Japanese language was not a priority, the *Koriango*, the language of the colony, a fusion between several Japanese dialects and Portuguese, was spreading, especially in rural areas. As a consequence, Japanese households were torn about the linguistic system they should based the education of their children on<sup>134</sup>.

On the other hand, the idea of returning to Japan with uneducated children who could speak only the coarse Japanese-Portuguese language of colonies did not suit them.

They dreamt of coming back to their native homeland with progeny worthy to step on it, as honourable Japanese citizens.

According to Mita (1999), the lack of educational institutions in the former colonies was one of the main cause of discontentment<sup>135</sup>.

Therefore, in 1915 the first Japanese school was founded in São Paulo. Initially, the members of Japanese communities used to gather in schools to discuss about issues regarding the colonisation units.

Thus, schools were not only the core of the educational system, but they also represented a fundamental reference for social meetings<sup>136</sup>.

*"Quando os europeus ou brasileiros formam uma comunidade, é certo que constróem uma igreja no ponto central da mesma. Os japoneses constróem uma escola". (MITA, 1999. p. 88)*

Japanese colonists worked hard in order to provide their children with education, even when family unities were very poor and lacked any sort of government support, since they were not expected to remain in Brazil for more than a few years<sup>137</sup>.

Everybody agreed that it was "better to improvise rather than nothing"<sup>138</sup>, thus schools were built with poor materials and financed by the members of Japanese communities themselves.

133 De Carvalho, D., *Migrants and Identity in Japan and Brazil: the Nikkeijin*, Oxfordsire, Routledge, 2003, p. 14.

134 Ibid., pp. 12-14.

135 Mita, C., *Bastos, uma comunidade étnica japonesa no Brasil*, Humanitas FFLCH/USP, Universidade de São Paulo, 1999, p. 88.

136 Handa, T., *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo:T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo- Brasileiros, 1987, p 282.

137 Ibid., p. 293.

138 Mita C., *Bastos, uma comunidade étnica japonesa no Brasil*, Humanitas FFLCH/USP, Universidade de São Paulo, 1999, p. 88.



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Anyway, it was very difficult to entrust qualified Brazilian professors with the teaching of Japanese language, especially those who lived in the city since it was more unlikely that they would accept to move to rural areas.

Thus, this task was assigned to Japanese members of the colonisation units, who barely owned a qualification to teach. Usually Japanese professors were asked to teach during the morning, and to work on the plantations in the afternoon.

Even though schools, later, started to be run by regional associations, teacher salaries’ continued to depend on parents’ generosity and thus it was very modest.

The main task of regional association, indeed, was not to provide money, but rather to coordinate cultural initiatives and social events.

There was an associations’ headquarter whose main tasks were to ensure communication among regional unites, to promote artistic events and to make sure that Japanese’s sons would get familiar with, or keep on practising, their native language and grow up with a “proper” Japanese education<sup>141</sup>.

Until 1924, however, the idea of “education” was meant to be successful only if taught in Japanese, so as to preserve the integrity of Japanese cultural values, and this nationalistic orientation was even strengthened under the New State of Vargas.

The decade of the 1930s was dominated by profound socio-political changes, aggravated by the economic breakdown following the Great Depression.

On the other hand, the internal fractures of the former oligarchic system caused a political disequilibrium that had to be solved.

139 Handa, T., *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo: T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros, 1987, p. 293.

140 Mita C., *Bastos, uma comunidade étnica japonesa no Brasil*, Humanitas FFLCH/USP, Universidade de São Paulo, 1999, p. 88.

141 Handa, T., *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo: T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros, 1987, pp. 295-296.

The decade of the '30s was marked by the constant presence of a political leader: Gétúlio Vargas, who held the reins of power for fifteen years. In 1930, Vargas established a temporary government that attempted to overcome the widespread climate of sociopolitical instability<sup>142</sup>. However, Vargas' political project moved away from the goals of the former oligarchic politics.

As a matter of fact, whereas the regional oligarchies strived for bridging the State under the "old" model, Vargas, supported by a military regime, aimed at the enforcement of a centralised power<sup>143</sup>.

I would highlight that my analysis will provide just a general overview on the political situation of the 1930s, lingering on the most salient outcomes of Vargas' s authoritarian regime, especially in relation to foreign minorities who lived in Brazil.

Gétúlio Vargas might be depicted as a clever strategist. Through his political reforms, he found many supporters who allow him to acquire always more power. First of all, he founded his government on a Catholic orientation, starting a mutual cooperation with the Church proved by the inauguration of the *Cristo Redentor* statue in Corcovado (Rio de Janeiro).

All the old governors were dismissed and substituted by the so-called "*interventores federais*", political representatives placed by Vargas on command of the Federal States.

Moreover, the political centralisation expanded to the economic sector, where it was created a federal agency to administrate the production of coffee (*Conselho Nacional do Café*), composed by representatives of the producer States (1931).

Vargas reformed the legislation on labor to the advantage of the working class, obtaining further approvals and trust<sup>144</sup>. Moreover, the temporary government put much emphasis on education, considered as a mean to shape new political leaders.

It was in the 1930s that the first Universities were created and that primary education was declared both free and mandatory, under the New Constitution.

142 Devoto, F., Fausto, B., *Argentina - Brasil: 1850-2000*, 1 ed., Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2008, pp. 220-222.

143 Fausto, B., *História do Brasil*, Edusp, 1996, pp. 331-332.

144 Ibid., pp. 334-336.

Indeed, after a gradual weakening of the military regime, Vargas gathered a Constitutional Assembly to proclaim a New Constitution in 1934, move that indirectly ensured his election as new constitutional president.

The process of democratisation ended in that moment.

Despite one of the purpose of the Constitution was to guarantee national security, many protesting movements headed by populists and communists emerged under the new regime and in 1936, the government created specific institutions to repress them.

In sight of the forthcoming elections set in 1938, Vargas and his supporters sought a pretext to reawaken a climate of "pro-coup"<sup>145</sup>. In 1937, indeed, a new authoritarian regime, named *Estado Novo*, was established.

The features of this new government and the context in which it was created clearly detached this new *golpe* from the former coup d'état of 1930.

Indeed, Vargas' authority was further empowered and gradually transformed into a proper dictatorship, which distanced his government from any democratic purpose.

It is important to stress that, whereas throughout the 1930s Vargas had maintained good relations both with the authoritarian regimes of Italy and Germany and the democratic regimes of England and United States, in the last years of the decade he has gradually changed his stance. Indeed, since the early 1940s Brazil started a process of alignment with the United States, that will culminate into the war declaration to the Axis powers.

As a consequence, severe measures against ethnic groups coming from Italy, Germany and Japan will be enhanced in that period.

However, the patriotic measures adopted by Vargas had already started to affect the cultural activities of the Japanese and other foreign minorities since the mid-1930s.

In 1934 the new government introduced a Law named *Lei das Cotas*, aimed at reducing the massive inflow of migrants to the two per cent out of the total who had entered the Country throughout the last fifty years<sup>146</sup>.

145 Fausto, B., *História do Brasil*, Edusp, 1996, pp. 362-363.

146 Endrica, G., "A "lei de cotas" de 1934: controle de estrangeiros no Brasil", *Cad. AEL*, v.15, n.27, Centro de Memória-Unicamp, (2009), p. 177.

The process of democratisation ended in that moment.

Despite one of the purposes of the Constitution was to guarantee national security, many protesting movements headed by populists and communists emerged under the new regime and in 1936, the government created specific institutions to repress them.

In sight of the forthcoming elections set in 1938, Vargas and his supporters sought a pretext to reawaken a climate of "pro-coup"<sup>147</sup>. In 1937, indeed, a new authoritarian regime, named *Estado Novo*, was established.

The features of this new government and the context in which it was created clearly detached this new *golpe* from the former coup d'état of 1930.

Indeed, Vargas' authority was further empowered and gradually transformed into a proper dictatorship, which distanced his government from any democratic purpose.

It is important to stress that, whereas throughout the 1930s Vargas had maintained good relations both with the authoritarian regimes of Italy and Germany and the democratic regimes of England and United States, in the last years of the decade he has gradually changed his stance. Indeed, since the early 1940s Brazil started a process of alignment with the United States, that will culminate into the war declaration to the Axis powers.

As a consequence, severe measures against ethnic groups coming from Italy, Germany and Japan will be enhanced in that period. However, the patriotic measures adopted by Vargas had already started to affect the cultural activities of the Japanese and other foreign minorities since the mid-1930s.

In 1934 the new government introduced a Law named *Lei das Cotas*, aimed at reducing the massive inflow of migrants to the two per cent out of the total who had entered the Country throughout the last fifty years<sup>148</sup>.

Therefore, it was not surprising that the proclamation of the *Estado Novo* will reflect a proper xenophobic regime. Under the new Constitution, a new decree prohibited the teaching of foreign languages to those aged under fourteen years old living in rural areas, measure that was interpreted as a ploy since nobody aged more than fourteen was reported to continue their studies in rural area's schools.

147 Fausto, B., *História do Brasil*, Edusp, 1996, pp. 362-363.

148 Endrica, G., "A "lei de cotas" de 1934: controle de estrangeiros no Brasil", *Cad. AEL*, v.15, n.27, Centro de Memória-Unicamp, (2009), p 177.

Furthermore, only native Brazilians were allowed to teach foreign languages, and no Japanese professor had adequate competences to teach anyway.

Between 1938 and 1939 the government put into effect the taxation of foreign schools and publications, and strongly limited educational and cultural activities of foreign nature<sup>149</sup>. Around 476 schools placed in the colonisation units were closed and Japanese education continued to be divulged in secret.

Although clandestine education was the only option in order not to be arrested, it was disadvantageous and difficult to realise. Restrictions to foreigners and the following curtailment of their rights exacerbated with the outburst of the global conflict.

In 1941, publications in foreign languages were banned, disposal that caused a complete alienation of Japanese colonisation units since they heavily depended on newspapers for any sort of information<sup>150</sup>.

On the same years, they were prohibited from assembling in order to avoid unfounded dreads of sabotage, and this caused communities to lose contact even among them.

In 1942, Japanese immigrants were prohibited to travel inside Brazil without a permission and many were subjected to domiciliary searches or arrested with the pretext of espionage in the last years of the conflict<sup>151</sup>.

Japanese lost of freedom fuelled the emergence of ultranationalistic secret societies before and during the global conflict, whose main purpose was to keep Japanese communities bounded in the absence of "vertical ties" with Japan<sup>152</sup>.

It rapidly spread the idea that those citizens who stayed loyal to Japan would have received rewards for their conduct upon their return home, such as lands, employment or scholarships.

Under these beliefs, at the end of the war Japanese communities in Brazil divided into two factions: *kachi gumi* (victory unit), where merged all the clandestine ultrapatriotic societies (like *Shindo Renmei*), who supported the victory of Japan and rejected any rumour of defeat, punishing "unfaithful" Japanese, and *make gumi* (defeat unit), who acknowledged Japan's surrender<sup>153</sup>.

149 Mita C., *Bastos, uma comunidade étnica japonesa no Brasil*, Humanitas FFLCH/USP, Universidade de São Paulo, 1999, p 90.

150 Adachi, N., "Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?", *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (May 2004), pp. 58-59.

151 Reichl, C., "Stages in the Historical Process of Ethnicity: The Japanese in Brazil, 1908-1988", *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Duke University Press, (1995), p. 43.

152 Ibid., pp. 42-42.

153 De Carvalho, D., *Migrants and Identity in Japan and Brazil: the Nikkeijin*, Oxfordsire, Routledge, 2003, pp. 21-22.

Despite several evidences of Japanese defeat were offered to the victory unit, included the speech of the Emperor Hirohito who alleged the renounce to his divine mandate and copies of the Imperial Edict confirming the defeat, all of these attempts were marked as “black propaganda” and fomented the anger of the *kachi gumi*<sup>154</sup>.

In the meantime, rumours of repatriation vessels to Japan, which revealed to be frauds planned by the same colonisation units’ leaders to make a profit from immigrants’ ingenuity, fostered the certainties of those who did not believe to the downfall of the Empire<sup>155</sup>.

The non-acceptance of Japanese defeat provoked a widespread reaction of violence that culminated in terroristic attacks organised by nationalistic groups, leading many people to death.

The wave of terror was stopped only in 1946 by the Brazilian army, since it had expanded until involving non-Japanese people.

What made these happenings possible was not only a lack of information in Japanese communities, but also the construction of a “mental” barrier towards the external world, caused both by their self-isolation and the discriminatory provisions taken by a xenophobic regime<sup>156</sup>.

***“Having a history of being treated little better than slaves and separating themselves from this unpleasant treatment by living in isolated self-contained communities, Japanese-Brazilians created an internal and external “mental wall”: internal because they built an ethnic boundary through self-isolation and solidarity and external because they were discriminated against by Brazilian elites”. (ADACHI, 2004, p. 60)***

154 De Carvalho, D., *Migrants and Identity in Japan and Brazil: the Nikkeijin*, Oxfordsire, Routledge, 2003, pp. 22-23.

155 Reichl, C., “Stages in the Historical Process of Ethnicity: The Japanese in Brazil, 1908-1988”, *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Duke University Press, (1995), pp. 47-48.

156 Adachi, N., “Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?”, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (May 2004), pp. 60-61

## 1.6 Towards the loss of Japanese values: the “Brazilianisation” of the *Nikkeijin*

The outcome of the Second World War played a role in causing many Japanese and Japanese descendants to distance from their native homeland. Japanese military defeat destroyed and humiliated Japanese migrants in Brazil, who, under Vargas government had been isolated from any mean of information, since both foreign newspapers and radio connections were strictly forbidden, creating a widespread sense of dismay and frustration.

However, until the end of the global conflict, the majority of the migrants were confident in the victory of their Country, since nobody believed that Japan, the Empire of the Rising Sun, could ever lose the War<sup>157</sup>.

Therefore, at the end of the war, a minor new wave of migrants abandoned Japan and moved to Brazil. The new migrants, mainly composed by unmarried Japanese males, were reported to settle in the already existent Japanese colonisations units to marry with young nisei brides<sup>158</sup>.

On the other hand, according to Adachi<sup>159</sup> (2004), Japanese migrants nourished a feeling of shame rather than acknowledging that they have been actually targeted by a huge discrimination by the nationalistic government of Vargas.

As a consequence, the youngest generations of Japanese-Brazilians left the colonisation units to pursue higher education in the city, in order not to be socially “stigmatised” as uneducated farmers.

By contrast, the eldest sons inherited plots of land and remained in rural areas, financially supporting their younger siblings’ education<sup>160</sup>.

However, during the post-war Japanese-Brazilians took divergent national identities’ orientations: the first generation of Japanese immigrants who remained emotionally bound to their native homeland intensified an anti-Brazilian sentiment, whereas the newest Japanese generations, who already felt slightly more Brazilian than Japanese, gradually undertook a process of “Brazilianisation” (*abrasileiramento*)<sup>161</sup>.

157 Handa, T., *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo:T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo- Brasileiros, 1987, p. 597.

158 Woortmann, E. “Japoneses no Brasil, Brasileiros no Japão: Tradição e Modernidade”. *Revista de Antropologia*, Vol. 38 n. 2, (1995), p. 20.

159 Adachi, N., “Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?”, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (May 2004), pp. 61-62.

160 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

161 Handa, T., *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo:T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo- Brasileiros, 1987, p. 476.

As a matter of fact, a dramatical change started to be perceived among the newest generations of Japanese descendants, especially in the *nisei* (second generation of Japanese migrants, born in Brazil) and the *jun-nisei* (second generation of Japanese migrants, born in Japan but grown up and educated in Brazil)<sup>162</sup>.

It has to be pointed out that Japanese community who continued to inhabit the rural areas of São Paulo and the one who moved to urban districts experienced different situations.

For those who moved to the city, it could be argued that the “Brazilianisation” process had been almost inevitable. Portuguese became essential to establish social relations and not to be excluded or targeted as “different”: Japanese children attended Brazilian schools and their fathers were almost obliged to speak Portuguese daily at work.

On the other hand, those Japanese families who continued to work in the agricultural sector entertained relations almost exclusively with other Japanese and thus could interact in their mother-tongue.

Overall, even a few years before Vargas’ mandate, the *nisei* and the *jun-nisei* were already observed to be slightly different in demeanour by their same Japanese compatriots, and claimed to have lost the “sensitivity” and “perspicuity” intrinsic to the Japanese spirit<sup>163</sup>.

*“Frequentemente, costumávamos perguntar aos nisseis em que língua pensavam ou raciocinavam, se em português ou japonês”. (HANDA, 1987, p. 514)*

The majority of the *nisei* who grew up in colonisation units were reported to think in their mother-tongue language, despite their Japanese was mixed with Portuguese verbs and expressions.

Even their parents, the *issei*, acknowledged that the newest generations lacked of something in their behavioural code, always more outstandingly “Brazilianised”.

On the other hand, the *nisei*, despite being Brazilian citizens, had inherited the consciousness to pertain to the Japanese race, feeling a stronger sense of identification to Japanese culture rather than the Brazilian one<sup>164</sup>.

162 Handa, T., *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo: T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros, 1987, p. 514.

163 Ibid., p. 491.

164 Mita, C., *Bastos, uma comunidade étnica japonesa no Brasil*, Humanitas FFLCH/USP, Universidade de São Paulo, 1999, p. 97.



It might be argued that also the inefficient educational system contributed to distance the *nisei* from their racial origins.

As a matter of fact, not only did the professors in Japanese schools organise a single class for students with different level of education, but it also has to be remembered that, at the age of twelve, Japanese children were sent to work at the farms, regardless of their grammatical improvements<sup>165</sup>.

The closing of all Japanese schools in the colonisation units contributed to boost the communities' social isolation, creating severe disparities between the *nisei*'s conception of "Japaneseness" and how it has to be actually intended.

Handa (1987) depicted the *nisei* as the products of "colonisation unites", that is the output of the first Japanese migrants' assimilation process in Brazilian society.<sup>166</sup>

Moreover, around the 1940s, it has been observed the emergence of "transitional *nisei*", second generation Japanese who could speak both Japanese and Portuguese. Although these "transitional" second generation Japanese could speak the language of their parents, they did not have the ripeness to grasp the meaning of the spiritual concepts intrinsic to Japanese culture.

On the other hand, they were prevented from learning the actual Portuguese knowledge and culture because of the barriers rose by Japanese community towards the exterior. The "transitional" feature of these *nisei* will accentuate and eventually result into a fragile identity that will be held back for decades and passed on the following generations<sup>167</sup>

*[...] "falavam o japonês, mas ainda não tinham base suficiente para chegar a absorver alimentos espirituais da cultura japonesa. Falavam português, mas, por causa do clima fechado da sociedade japonesa, não podiam adquirir cultura e conhecimento através da língua portuguesa" (HANDA, 1987, p. 630)*

By the 1970s, many Japanese-Brazilians had obtained white collar jobs in urban areas and their families remained in rural areas had started prosperous businesses<sup>168</sup>.

165 Handa, T., *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo:T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo- Brasileiros, 1987, p. 521.

166 Ibid, p. 521.

167 Handa, T., *O imigrante japonês: História da sua vida no Brasil*, São Paulo:T. A. Queiroz/Centro de Estudos Nipo- Brasileiros, 1987, p. 630.

168 Adachi, N., "Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?", *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3,(May 2004), pp. 62-63.

However, it has been argued that until the 1980s Japanese immigrants and their descendants maintained “a demographic and geographic invisibility” in Brazil<sup>169</sup>, since their presence was relegated to some cities in the South and the majority tended to agglomerate in rural areas.

However, their contribution to the quality improvement of alimentary products spread a positive image of Japanese migrants, especially impressing the middle class and the government. In almost forty years, the economic conditions and the tasks’ division of those families who settled in rural areas had gradually modified.

Nowadays, Japanese-Brazilian and their descendants do not deal only with the agricultural field, but they are more “visible” due to their presence in various sectors. Indeed, the number of Brazilians with Japanese origin who attend University has increased lately, especially in informatics and scientific careers.

Tsuda (2003) asserts that usually Japanese-Brazilians are positively regarded by Brazilians as more intelligent, more prone to study than locals<sup>170</sup>.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the first Japanese-Brazilian figures appeared in politics: both in the 1990 and 1994 electoral campaigns, indeed, have been reported to participate candidates with Japanese origin<sup>171</sup>.

Nowadays, there are about 1.228.000 Japanese Brazilians in Brazil, who compose the largest Asian minority of the Latin-American Country and constitute the largest community of Japanese descendants outside of Japan<sup>172</sup>. Japanese-Brazilians are reported to be generally well integrated in Brazilian society, as it can be deduced from an increase of inter-ethnic marriages<sup>173</sup>.

However, Adachi (2004) claimed that a subtle discrimination against Japanese-Brazilians persists even today. She observed, indeed, that the *Nikkeijin* tend to work only with other Japanese-Brazilians and that they are generally excluded from jobs at the national or state level. She also points out that, despite their professional realisation in Brazilian society, they are still socially categorised as *Japoneses*, hence as “outsiders”<sup>174</sup>.

169 Woortmann, E. “Japoneses no Brasil, Brasileiros no Japão: Tradição e Modernidade”. *Revista de Antropologia*, Vol. 38 n. 2, (1995), p. 21.

170 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003, p. 66.

171 Woortmann, E. “Japoneses no Brasil, Brasileiros no Japão: Tradição e Modernidade”. *Revista de Antropologia*, Vol. 38 n. 2, (1995), p. 22.

172 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003, p. 57.

173 Woortmann, E. “Japoneses no Brasil, Brasileiros no Japão: Tradição e Modernidade”. *Revista de Antropologia*, Vol. 38 n. 2, (1995), p. 28.

174 Adachi, N., “Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?”, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (May 2004), pp. 70-71.

The same point has been raised by Matheus<sup>175</sup>, a third generation *sansei* born in Brazil. During my research, indeed, I realised four interviews to middle-class Brazilian *Nikkeijin* of different generations (*nisei* and *sansei*), all born in the State of Paraná (Curitiba, Londrina, Arapongas) and graduated in Brazilian Universities (except for Gabriela who is still graduating). Although they have variegated backgrounds and experiences, the limited number of samples does not allow me to provide scientific outcomes or absolute truths.

However, I decided to integrate their point of views and remarks along my thesis, that will strengthen several issues raised through this work.

I found their contribution precious to understand the dynamics of Japanese-Brazilian transnational migration and the “paradoxes” intrinsic to their racial identity, either in Brazil or Japan.

Matheus is a professor of sciences and he has never been to Japan but he argues that in the North of the State of Paraná, where he lives, Japanese culture is still quite strong.

In fact, he has many friends and relatives that have already been or still reside in Japan and he has always accompanied their experiences closely.

I believe that it is worth to report his remark about the racial categorisation of the descendants of Japanese immigrants in Brazil.

*“Here in Brazil we are called Japonês because of our lineage. However, we are Brazilians and perhaps this is the first preconception that we suffer since it draws us to a feeling of non-belonging. I remember that when I was at high school, a big friend of mine, who is also a Nikkeijin, and I, have spoken a lot about that. In Brazil we are referred to as Japoneses, whereas in Japan we are referred to as gaijin [foreigners]. It is like that we would not have a place in the world that we can define “our” place. We joked that if we became millionaires, we would have bought an island and moved there, where we could be ourselves, without stereotypes. Well, now, speaking seriously, today I realise that I am Brazilian. Precisely like descendants of Africans, native Brazilians, Italians or Germans. Brazil is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Country and there is nothing more Brazilian than this mixture. I feel completely Brazilian, because that is what I am”. (MATHEUS, 2018)*

175 See Appendix, Entrevista 1.

Along this last paragraphs, we have seen that the construction of a national identity for Japanese-Brazilian minority in Brazil has been a contorted path, hampered by various factors throughout the years. It has been argued that Japanese-Brazilians have been subjected to a “diasporic radicalisation”<sup>176</sup>, which means that they are not completely integrated in the host society but they are also far from their ethnic homeland and often unlikely to return definitively.

As a consequence, they are paradoxically referred as “strangers” in both Countries, situation that causes them to establish ethnic boundaries as a protection from social discriminations. In the following chapter, we will examine whether the same paradoxical situation had persisted in the reverse migratory phenomenon began at the end of 1980s, that has drawn many Japanese-Brazilians to migrate back to their ethnic homeland.

176 Nobuko Adachi, “Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?”, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3, Sage Publications, Inc., May 2004, p. 71.

## **CHAPTER 2**

**Japanese-Brazilian return migration to Japan:  
exploring the causes of social discrimination**

## 2.1 The myth of Japanese homogeneity: threats from the “outside”

The globalisation process had created a “new world”<sup>177</sup> where nation-states boundaries have become less meaningful with respect to the past, fostering the flow of cultural diversity into always more frequently multi-cultural societies.

For decades, Japan has attempted to resist the pressure of a globalising world boasting its cultural and ethnic homogeneity.

During the so-called historical period of *Sakoku* (1641-1854), which strictly limited the contacts with the external world for more than two hundred years, an intellectual movement known as *Kokugaku* (native learning) supported the vision of Japan as divine land with a unique position in the world, thus creating the basis on which the Japanese myth of “uniqueness” would later develop.

However, despite its proclaimed racial homogeneity, it might be interesting to point out that actually “Japanese homogeneity conceals several internal sources of diversity”<sup>178</sup>, which still leaves many unsolved issues inside the Country.

There is the population of the Ainu, composed of northern indigenous who inhabited the island of Hokkaido, whose forced assimilation into Japanese society began in 1898 through the Hokkaido Former Aborigin Protection Act.

With the issuance of the Act, the Ainu were expelled from their original lands and their language was banned from the education system.

Since the 1970s, however, when Japan seemed to have moved some step forwards in the recognition of human rights, signing several international conventions, the Ainu claimed their rights to be acknowledged as an indigenous culture under the international law and to foster their culture. In 1997, the Ainu won their fight against Japanese government, however they failed in obtaining any sort of right on their former lands or in achieving a representation in legislative bodies.

Then, it is worth to mention a “culturally distinct”<sup>179</sup> population, which is not acknowledged as ethnic minority though, the Okinawans. The archipelago of Okinawa was a kingdom which was annexed to Japan in 1879 as the Okinawa prefecture.

177 Davidson, A., NATIONAL IDENTITY AND GLOBAL MIGRATION: LISTENING TO THE ‘PARIAS’, University of Ottawa Press., 2007, p. 23.

178 Lu, Catherine, et al. “JAPAN AND ‘THE OTHER’: RECONCEIVING JAPANESE CITIZENSHIP IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION.” *Asian Perspective*, vol. 29, no. 1, (2005), p. 108.

179 Ibid, pp. 108-111.

After the incorporation of the Okinawans into Japan, the local language and dialects were prohibited so as to educate their children with an ordinary school system, even if this “minority” was generally prevented from engaging either in political or civil services positions.

Okinawans continue to suffer a social marginalisation and they are still claiming the lands they were deprived during the period of American occupation (1945-72).

Finally, there are the so-called “*burakumin*”, a particular social class that had been the target of discrimination and economic marginalisation since the feudal era, that continue to live in miserable conditions and in a position of social disadvantage with respect to the rest of the society<sup>180</sup>.

Thus, it might be argued that Japanese historic seclusion joined with its unsolved internal conflicts of groups’ diversity might have contributed to shape a national xenophobia<sup>181</sup>.

As a matter of fact, Japan could be depicted as a recent country of immigration, since it has not been observed any significant wave of immigration until the last decades of the XX century.

Here, I use the adjective “significant” in relative terms, since, unlike other developed Countries, Japan still registers a tiny percentage of foreign residents on its soil, which accounts to only 1.76 percent of the total population<sup>182</sup>.

As we will see in the following chapter, indeed, Japan demonstrated an enviable economic self-sufficiency until the 1980s, that has never put the Country into the true necessity of external aid. However, the reluctance in the introduction of foreigners does not stem from merely economic considerations, but from something more intrinsic to Japanese conception of the “others”.

I believe that the best explanation of this conception is provided by the anthropologist Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney<sup>183</sup>. She bases her theory on the depiction of a conceptual structure in Japan that counterpose the “inside” with the “outside”, where the inside is associated with purity whereas the outside with impurity.

180 Lu, Catherine, et al. “JAPAN AND ‘THE OTHER’: RECONCEIVING JAPANESE CITIZENSHIP IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION.” *Asian Perspective*, vol. 29, no. 1, (2005), pp. 108-111.

181 Ibid.

182 Immigration Bureau (2016) <[http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/seisaku/index.html#sec\\_02](http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/seisaku/index.html#sec_02)>

183 Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Illness and Culture in Contemporary Japan: An Anthropological View*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, chapter II.

Despite similar understandings of the “outside” have been observed also in other Countries, in Japan this conception is reflected in cultural symbols and gestures.

In order to explain Ohnuki-Tierney’ s reflection on Japanese cultural structure, it is worth to analyse the relevance of Japanese home. Before entering a Japanese house, indeed, you are kindly asked to remove your shoes at the entrance.

When I went to Japan a few years ago, I immediately associated this request with cleanliness and I did not find it too strange since I used to do that even before in other Countries as well, especially if I was entering someone’ s else home.

However, I realised soon that the habit of removing shoes at the entryway was not only circumscribed to private houses. Have you ever been to Japan?

In that case, you might have noticed that this habit is extended even to public places, such as *izakaya*, a sort of Japanese tavern, and *onsen*, Japanese hot springs. Often, it might also be required to leave shoes in designed lockers in the lobby.

In other words, the removal of shoes is required anywhere the “inside” might be contaminated by form of external pollution, in this case both in relation to food or body cleanliness. Extending this concept to other aspects of Japanese society, it might be applied to a daily-life object, the *ofuro*.

The *ofuro* is a bathtub present in almost every Japanese house, containing warming water. However, the water is not scrolled down the tub once you have taken the bath. Indeed, one is expected to immerse in the *ofuro* only after having taken another bath in a regular shower, for instance, so as to keep the water inside the *ofuro* clean and with no need to change it so often.

The purpose is to come back to purity at the end of the day, after a whole day spent into contact with the “dirty” outside. I would assert that the binary opposition between “outside” and “inside” might be applied to tattoos as well. Japanese culture, indeed, generally does not accept tattoos<sup>184</sup>.

Although some leeway of yielding has been granted to tourists, the exhibition of tattoos in public places, especially at the *onsen*, where one is required to undress completely, is pretty stigmatised and often rejected with billboards which clearly state the invite to people wearing tattoos not to enter.

My purpose is not to focus on the stigmatisation of tattoos in Japan, which is a much more complex cultural issue, initially associated to organised crimes gangs, the *Yakuza*.

184 Jenni Marsh ”Did Japan just ban tattoo artists?”. CNN, 19 October 2017. 27 December 2017. <<https://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/18/asia/tattoos-japan/index.html>>



Beyond being seen as a sign of disrespect towards one's parents who gave the individual an "immaculate" body,

I would assert that even tattoos perfectly embody the conceptual structure of "inside" and "outside", since the ink, a "dirty" external substance injected in one's skin, might also be seen as a form of contamination of body's purity.

I found very interesting that this same binary structure has been applied to the concept of "foreigners", especially relating to their simultaneous beneficial and dangerous power.

In fact, even though the nature of the "outside" is impure and potentially dangerous, according to Ohnuki-Tierney<sup>185</sup>, its threatening power may be transformed into a beneficial force.

Foreigners convey the same ambivalent message: although they are blamed for importing alien, and thus impure, elements, in Japanese culture, if properly handled, they have demonstrated the effect of their beneficial power through the revitalisation of national economy.

Nonetheless, they are often associated with the increase of crime and the disruption of social stability<sup>186</sup>.

Furthermore, foreigners are dread to be a potential threat to the maintenance of Japanese homogeneity, especially in sight of the increased racial mingling and their tendency to reproduce more frequently than Japanese.

However, alien's contamination at national level is more tolerated rather than "bloodline" contamination, that is when foreigners mingle with locals and have children.

As argued by Tsuda (2003), similar episodes of dissent have emerged in response to foreigners who use public bathhouses<sup>187</sup>.

Afraid of contamination and impurities, many customers have been found to avoid public bathhouses attended by foreigners, and it seems that, as a consequence, some facilities have been provided with signs to advertise that foreigners were not relished.

What is more, especially back to the '90s, non-Japanese descendant female workers have been refused to engage in domestic jobs, such as caregivers, nannies and cleaners.

185 Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Illness and Culture in Contemporary Japan: An Anthropological View*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, chapter II.

186 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 126-131.

187 Ibid, pp. 126-131.

Despite the increasing demand in a sector that native Japanese were often unwilling to fill, many foreigners, no matter if graduated and skilled, have been kept out of Japanese houses. Therefore, it might be argued that foreigners are accepted to the extent they do conform to the unwritten rules of Japanese ethic code<sup>188</sup>.

They are welcomed as long as they maintain a certain “invisibility” in the society, both racially, culturally and politically speaking. In other words, foreigners’ acceptance depends on their capability to “melt” within the society, behaving properly and without causing internal troubles. Their presence might be tolerated, but they do not have to exist, that is they do not have to be too visible.

*“The foreigner has been acceptable in Japan only when thoroughly domesticated” (IVY, 1995, p. 211)*

Despite the reluctance of Japanese society in accepting foreign workers, the labor shortage triggered by the “economic miracle” of growth in the postwar period attracted new waves of immigration. It has been argued that there are two macro-classifications of foreign residents in Japan: Oldcomers and Newcomers<sup>189</sup>.

Oldcomers is a generic label that includes all those foreigners arrived before and during the Second World War. Thus, Chinese and Koreans foreign laborers brought to Japan after the annexation of Taiwan and Korea to the Japanese Empire, respectively in 1895 and 1910, who were naturalised as Japanese citizens but were suddenly stripped from their nationality during the Cold War, until obtaining the status of “special permanent residents” in 1982<sup>190</sup> (as we will see in the next chapter), are considered Oldcomers.

Oldcomers can be depicted as cultural and racially invisible, indistinguishable from native Japanese. Living in Japan since the colonial period, they successfully adapted to Japanese society, learning the language and gradually acquiring a “proper” Japanese conduct, which means that the majority of them do not differ from Japanese neither in demeanour<sup>191</sup>.

Whilst being “generational foreigners”<sup>192</sup>, however, they are not eligible for citizenship.

188 Marilyn, Ivy, *Discourses of the vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, pp. 202-213.

189 Lu, Catherine, et al. “JAPAN AND ‘THE OTHER’: RECONCEIVING JAPANESE CITIZENSHIP IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION.” *Asian Perspective*, vol. 29, no. 1, (2005), pp. 106-108.

190 Morris-Suzuki, T., *Borderline Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 101- 109.

191 Lu, Catherine, et al. “JAPAN AND ‘THE OTHER’: RECONCEIVING JAPANESE CITIZENSHIP IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION.” *Asian Perspective*, vol. 29, no. 1, (2005), pp. 106-108.

192 Arudou, D., ‘Embedded Racism’ in Japanese migration policies: Analyzing Japan’s ‘revolving door’ work visa regimes under Critical Race Theory, *Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, Vol. 3 No 1, 2013, Honolulu, pp. 161-163.

On the other hand, the term Newcomers embeds a wider heterogeneous group of migrants flowed into Japan after the national Immigration Law was revised in 1990.

The amendment of the Law introduced ten new visa “status” eligible for residence, fueling a sharp increase of foreign arrivals and boosting their stay.

Thus, Newcomers intends to address a broad category of “new migrants”, composed by foreign students, company trainees, entertainers, skilled professional labor workers and so on.

**Table 11 Changes in the number of registered foreign nationals by nationality (place of origin)**

(People)

Nationality (Place of Origin)	1985	1988	1991	1994	1997	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Total	850,612	941,005	1,218,891	1,354,011	1,482,707	1,686,444	1,778,462	1,851,758	1,915,030	1,973,747
Korea	683,313	677,140	693,050	676,793	645,373	635,269	632,405	625,422	613,791	607,419
China	74,924	129,269	171,071	218,585	252,164	335,575	381,225	424,282	462,396	487,570
Brazil	1,955	4,159	119,333	159,619	233,254	254,394	265,962	268,332	274,700	286,557
Philippines	12,261	32,185	61,837	85,968	93,265	144,871	156,667	169,359	185,237	199,394
Peru	480	864	26,281	35,382	40,394	46,171	50,052	51,772	53,649	55,750
United States of America	29,044	32,766	42,498	43,320	43,690	44,856	46,244	47,970	47,836	48,844
Thailand	2,642	5,277	8,912	13,997	20,669	29,289	31,685	33,736	34,825	36,347
Viet Nam	4,126	4,763	6,410	8,229	11,897	16,908	19,140	21,050	23,853	26,018
Indonesia	1,704	2,379	4,574	6,282	11,936	19,346	20,831	21,671	22,862	23,890
United Kingdom	6,792	8,523	11,794	12,453	14,438	16,525	17,527	18,508	18,230	18,082
Others	33,371	43,680	73,131	93,383	115,627	143,240	156,724	169,656	177,651	183,876

Source: Immigration Bureau (2005)

As it could be observed in the chart above, overall, it has been registered a significant increase in foreign residents from 1988 to 1994, that is before and after the amendment of the Immigration Law.

However, lingering on these data it might be argued that the nationalities that experienced a proper “boom” are Brazilians and Peruvians.

The number of Brazilian residents more than doubled in less than ten years, from 4.159 residents in 1988, their presence jumped to 233.254 individuals in 1997.

Slightly inferior but still considerable the increase of Peruvian residents, who passed from 864 residents in 1988 to 40.349 people in 1997.

Although it might seem bizarre that in pole position of entry there were two Latin American Countries, both culturally and racially apparently antithetical to Japanese race, it is not a chance but rather part of a well-studied ploy.

As a matter of fact, the 1990 amendment of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act introduced a new visa category of “long term” residence (*teijyūsha*), aimed at allowing descendants of Japanese emigrants up to the third generation, the *Nikkeijin*, mainly scattered across Latin America, to remain in Japan through a renewable visa, without restrictions on working activities.

With the pretext of a sign of benevolence by Japanese government, who wanted to give the *Nikkeijin* the chance to discover their ethnic roots, they were granted a *de facto* residence, since after a few renewals they could actually obtain a “permanent resident” status<sup>193</sup>.

In other words, the *Nikkeijin* have been conferred an enormous privilege in comparison with other nationalities.

As we already mentioned, Japanese government was desperately in need of foreign labor force at the end of the '80s, but dreaded that the introduction of foreigners (particularly from non-Western countries) might represent a threat to Japanese stability and “contaminate” the national ethnic purity, on the assumption of its cultural superiority<sup>194</sup>.

However, among the other foreigners, the *Nikkeijin* appeared to be the best cure to the national labor shortage, or, at least, the less detrimental solution to Japanese homogeneity.

Latin-American *Nikkeijin* were largely preferred over other nationalities on the assumption of cultural affinity towards a population that was tied to Japan by blood.

Tsuda (2003)<sup>195</sup> used the word *shitashimi*, which indicates a sense of familiarity and affinity towards the *Nikkeijin*, who were expected to be quite “Japanised” in demeanour since they were grown with Japanese families, and they had likely maintained some Japanese cultural traits.

Beyond the assumption of cultural similarity, another appealing feature of the *Nikkeijin* was their assumed temporary stay.

They were considered “opportunity migrants”<sup>196</sup>, willing to take advantage of the outcomes of Japanese economic growth, whose actual wish was to come back to Brazil soon and live a well-off life there.

193 Tsuda, T., “The Permanence of ‘Temporary’ Migration: The ‘Structural Embeddedness’ of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrant Workers in Japan.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, no. 3, (1999), pp. 687–689.

194 Lu, Catherine, et al. “JAPAN AND ‘THE OTHER’: RECONCEIVING JAPANESE CITIZENSHIP IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION.” *Asian Perspective*, vol. 29, no. 1, (2005), pp. 99–101.

195 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 104-105.

196 Tsuda, T., “The Permanence of ‘Temporary’ Migration: The ‘Structural Embeddedness’ of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrant Workers in Japan.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, no. 3, (1999), pp. 689–691.

The Latin-American migrants, thus, were seen also as a remedy to break the vicious cycle of overstayers and illegal migrants in general, or to prevent the entry of other undesirable nationalities.

In this chapter, I will focus my research exclusively on Brazilian *Nikkeijin*, which represent the major stream of Japanese descendants to Japan.

I will attempt to explore the features of this singular “return” migration and to reveal the limits of its privileged status.

## 2.2 Transnational migrants: trapped in a circular migration

In September 2014 I was heading to Japan for a six-month exchange study program.

I took off from Venice airport “Marco Polo” and I had a flight connection in Abu Dhabi, where I finally got into the plane for Nagoya Chubu.

I remember that there was a 28-years-old Brazilian guy sitting next to me. Although I was very tired because of the long time spent on board,

I was quite happy to have a good chat since I had been studying Portuguese for two years and I am always willing to practice. He was alone, so I assumed that the purpose of his travel was unlikely to be simply a vacation.

However, at that time, I could barely imagine a Latino walking down the streets of Shibuya. Brazil and Japan were two completely different culture to me, or at least, in my view.

I had not been in Brazil yet, so my assumption was barely grounded on stereotypes which depicted Latin American people as “friendly” and “warm”, versus “shy” and “cold” Asian people.

Therefore, one of the first question that I asked him was: “What are you going to Japan for?”. I was quite surprised to hear his answer: “I am working there, I was on vacation. I work for a Japanese company and I have just gone to visit my family back to Brazil, my Japanese grandparents emigrated there were I was not even born.” I asked him again: “Oh, I see. So you live in Japan, don’t you?”. He lightly smiled and said: “Well, currently yes. But I am not sure I want to live there forever. I miss Brazil, I have *saudade* (homesickness) of my home country. But Japan is the place to be, I could not strive for a well-off life in Brazil, there are too many unsolved problems there, you know”. I guess that our talk ended more or less like this, because we were interrupted by an old lady who kindly asked him to trade places in order to seat next to her granddaughter (he was seated right in the middle between the old lady’s granddaughter and I). When we landed in Nagoya, the day after, we just exchanged a quick greeting and before I got ready to get off the plane he was already gone.

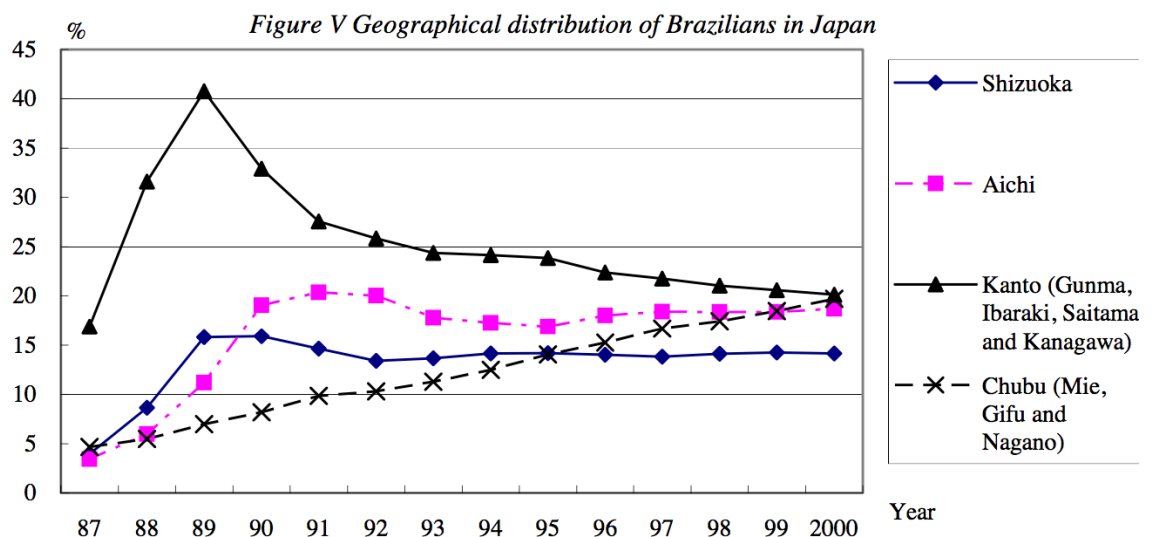
At that time, I knew nothing about Brazilians of Japanese descendants in Japan, so I was surprised to find out that Aichi prefecture, where Nagoya is the county seat, is one of the region that register the highest presence of Japanese-Brazilians.

According to Tsuda<sup>197</sup>, at the end of the twentieth century, the *Nikkeijin* were mainly clustered in industrial areas, especially those areas that counted with a significant number of manufactory industries.

Overall, although it is difficult to provide definite data, since the majority of the *Nikkeijin* were initially temporary migrants who remained in Japan for a relatively short period of time, it could be stated that Japanese-Brazilian population in Japan was mainly made of second-generation, *nisei* and third generation, *sansei Nikkeijin*, respectively in their middle age and younger age brackets. *Nikkeijin* of the first generation, the *issei*, were less prone to migrate since they were too old or blocked by a feeling of embarrassment in returning to Japan to take low-skill jobs, and fourth generation *yonsei*, were too young to migrate by themselves and, if present, they used to accompany their parents *sansei*<sup>198</sup>.

As it can be observed from the figure below, the concentration of the *Nikkeijin* in Aichi prefecture and the coastal areas of Shizuoka had been quite steady since 1993, a few years after the amendment of the Immigration Law, to the beginning of the twenty-first century, displaying respectively 18,5% and 14% of Japanese-Brazilians in 2000.

On the other hand, their presence in Chubu prefecture has sharply increased, from 10% in 1992 to almost 20% in 2000. The region that experienced the major alteration has been the Kanto region, that recorded 40% of *Nikkeijin* in 1988, but their presence has dramatically dropped to almost 20% in 2000, the same percentage shown by Chubu prefecture.



Source: Ministry of Justice (1988-2001)

197Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 97-101.

198 Ibid.

The Japanese-Brazilians, or *Nikkeijin*, can be defined as transnational migrants<sup>199</sup>, or, in other words, the “products” of a new type of migration developed during the globalisation era. I would assert that transnational migrants are constantly in a state of limbo between two Countries.

Indeed, as argued by Luciane Patrícia Yano<sup>200</sup> (2013), transnational migration refers to a model of migration where the migrant is tied both to his home country and the Country of destination by economic, social and emotional factors.

From an economic perspective, the migrant sends remittances back home and become a consumer in the destination Country.

In social terms, the migrant becomes an active actor in the new society: he engages in working activities, grow up his children, sending them to school, and buy properties. However, he maintains social relations with his home country as well, trying to come back home quite frequently.

Finally, from an emotional perspective, he keeps in touch with friends and family back home, thus although he is sentimentally bound to his native Country, simultaneously, he expands his social network in the new society, making new friends inside and outside his ethnic community<sup>201</sup>.

According to Tsuda (2003), the concept of “transnational migrant” is best exemplified by the *dekasegi*, or temporary working migrants, who have created a proper transnational community of “de-territorialised” migrants, which connects Brazil to Japan<sup>202</sup>. In *dekasegi*'s view, Brazil is a place meant to relieve the pressure, to relax, whereas Japan is a place meant to work and earn money<sup>203</sup>. Japanese-Brazilians' transition in this condition of limbo cause both a situation of anxiety and comfort.

The feeling of anxiety stems from uncertainties about the future, doubts about where to settle permanently, for instance.

By remaining in Japan, on the other hand, the *Nikkeijin* is placed in a comfortable situation, in the sense that repeatedly postponing his decision to come back home, he is temporary exempted from facing the harsh reality. In other words, until a *dekasegi* remains in Japan, he is protected from a potential and unfortunately quite realistic economic failure at his return to Brazil.

199 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 216-219.

200 Yano L.P., *Famílias brasileiras no Japão. Migração transnacional, adaptação e estresse aculturativo*, 1. ed., Porto Alegre, Poá Comunicação, 2013, pp.14-19.

201 Ibid.

202 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 216-219.

203 Yano, L.P., *Famílias brasileiras no Japão. Migração transnacional, adaptação e estresse aculturativo*, 1. ed., Porto Alegre, Poá Comunicação, 2013, pp. 14-19.



However, in this paragraph I will attempt to analyse deeper the evolution of the features of the *Nikkeijin*'s migration throughout the years.

Indeed, although one might tend to consider the Japanese-Brazilians as a unique, homogeneous group, it has to be highlight that there is actually a marked generational diversity among the group itself.

Since the amendment of the Immigration Law in 1990, their patterns of migration have modified and resulted in different situations.

However, first of all, I think it is worth to provide a brief overview on the reasons that caused the *Nikkeijin* to leave Brazil at the end of the 1980s, in order to understand which *pull factors* caused their return ethnic migration.

In 1980 Brazil was characterised by a sluggish economy deteriorated by an enormous external debt and acute rates of hyperinflation, which triggered a general decrease of incomes and exacerbated the instability of the labor market<sup>204</sup>.

In such a precarious situation, Brazilian people with a higher socio-economic status were paradoxically affected the most by the crisis, which accentuated a mismatch between their expectations of wealth and the reality.

Therefore, Japanese-Brazilians were attracted by the huge disparity of wages between Brazil and Japan, that would have allowed them to earn in Japan almost three times the monthly salary they received in Brazil, especially after the "economic miracle" that incredibly raised the value of the *yen*. In other words, it was not an absolute economic deprivation to push the *Nikkeijin* out of Brazil, but rather a principle of non-acceptance towards the crippling economic situation that did not allow them to receive fair job' s compensations.

Furthermore, the economic crisis that hit Brazil at the beginning of the 80's perfectly coincided with Japanese worsened labor shortage, especially in the manufactory sector and in other 3K jobs (which stands for *kitanai*, *kiken*, *kitsui*, respectively dirty, dangerous, difficult) that local Japanese were not willing to take.

Thus, as argued by Tsuda<sup>205</sup> (1999), this perfect match of *pull* and *push* factors created the right timing for Japanese-Brazilians to be in Japan.

204 Tsuda, T., "The Motivation to Migrate: The Ethnic and Sociocultural Constitution of the Japanese-Brazilian Return-Migration System." *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 48, no. 1, (1999), pp. 3-4.

205 Ibid, pp. 6-7.

The critical conditions in both Countries, indeed, eventually caused their different national needs to converge. Like in a puzzle, Brazil seemed to be precisely the missing block for Japanese economic adjustment.

However, what officially opened the gates to the inflow of the *Nikkeijin* into Japanese society was the 1990 amendment of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, which conferred to the descendants of Japanese emigrants up to the third generation a semi-permanent status of residence through renewable visa with no activities' restrictions<sup>206</sup>.

In other words, Japanese government issued a sort of "ethnicity policy" to allow the entry of the *Nikkeijin*, on the mere basis of their transnational ethnic connection<sup>207</sup>.

As I mentioned before, the *Nikkeijin* migration triggered by the revision of the Immigration Law, gradually changed its meaning.

Let's examine in details the origins of this movement of people. Brazilian *Nikkeijin* migration to Japan, indeed, started almost ten years before the amendment of the Immigration Law.

The return migration to Japan was initiated by first generation Japanese, or *issei*, who had emigrated to Brazil around the first decades of the 1900s in order to achieve economic success.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, these migrants were mainly uneducated peasants who remained impoverished after the application of agricultural and fiscal Meiji Japanese reforms.

Disillusioned by their unrealisable expectations of wealth in Brazil, they eventually came back to Japan as unskilled *dekasegi* workers<sup>208</sup>.

However, the *issei*'s return to Japan as unskilled temporary labor force raised bewilderment and embarrassment among the local population, who read between the lines of their return an admission of economic failure.

Despite the *issei* did not intend to leave Japan forever, but only the necessary time to improve their economic conditions, Japanese culture does not contemplate the abandon of one's Country in times of economic hurdle, not even temporary<sup>209</sup>.

206 Morris-Suzuki, T., *Borderline Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 239-240.

207 Tsuda, T., "The Motivation to Migrate: The Ethnic and Sociocultural Constitution of the Japanese-Brazilian Return-Migration System." *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 48, no. 1, (1999), pp. 8-10.

208 Ibid, pp. 14-16.

209 Tsuda, T., "The Stigma of Ethnic Difference: The Structure of Prejudice and 'Discrimination' toward Japan's New Immigrant Minority." *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, (1998), pp. 345-348.

Therefore, the term “*dekasegi*” underwent a sort of stigmatisation: the *issei* who returned to their homeland were regarded as people who solved their condition of poverty by escaping to Brazil instead of rolling up their sleeves and cope with their miserable situation by remaining in Japan. In other words, not only did the *issei* take the easiest way, but they did not even benefit from their decision to leave Japan.

On the contrary, their decision to come back to Japan begging for low-skill jobs aggravated their reputation, considered “not worthy of being Japanese”<sup>210</sup>.

The backlashes against the first *dekasegi* contributed to maintain their presence relatively low (4.159 in 1988, as we saw in the previous paragraph).

On the one hand, the *issei* felt ashamed to return to their ethnic homeland and were aware that they would have socially stigmatised because of their low socio-economic status. On the other hand, unless they had relatives in Japan, it was very difficult to enter the Country legally.

In the meantime, in Brazil, the histories of *dekasegi* who came back home enriched after working a few years in Japan became a widespread and interesting topic.

Many *Nikkeijin* were willing to endure Japanese criticisms for a few months in order to live with ease in Brazil.

Thus, gradually, the *Nikkeijin* assumed the feature of “opportunity migrant”<sup>211</sup>, mostly *nisei* single males willing to travel to Japan for a short period of time to save as much money as possible and use that money to buy luxury products, houses and cars in Brazil afterwards.

*Dekasegi* migration had become a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, “similar to winning the lottery”<sup>212</sup>. It was not only the revision of the Immigration Law, but also the assumption of instant wealth, exaggerated by the tales of acquaintances and friends, to trigger the so-called “*dekasegi* boom” in the early 1990s. It might be asserted that, for a brief period, Japanese government achieved its goal: obtaining temporary “returnable” cheap labor force.

As a matter of fact, as stressed by Japanese public opinion, the condition of “temporariness” was essential: *Nikkeijin* were welcomed in Japanese society as temporary “*dekasegi*”, not as immigrants, or *imin*.<sup>213</sup>

210 Tsuda, T., “The Stigma of Ethnic Difference: The Structure of Prejudice and ‘Discrimination’ toward Japan's New Immigrant Minority.” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, (1998), pp. 345-346.

211 Tsuda, T., “The Permanence of ‘Temporary’ Migration: The ‘Structural Embeddedness’ of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrant Workers in Japan.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, no. 3, (1999), pp. 690-692.

212 Tsuda, T., “The Motivation to Migrate: The Ethnic and Sociocultural Constitution of the Japanese-Brazilian Return-Migration System.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 48, no. 1, (1999), p. 16.

213 Tsuda, T., “The Permanence of ‘Temporary’ Migration: The ‘Structural Embeddedness’ of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrant Workers in Japan.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, no. 3 (1999), pp. 687–690.

However, what was expected to be a short-term migration turned into something different. Involuntarily, Japan offered the *Nikkeijin* a new home.

At the beginning, the *Nikkeijin* dedicated their whole time in Japan to work.

They were willing to overstay at the company (doing *zangyō*), working until ten hours per day, convinced to achieve their goal of wealth soon<sup>214</sup>.

Since 1991, Japan experienced a prolonged economic recession characterised by stagnant wages and increased unemployment.

The recession hit especially the banking system, unable to provide the credits for business activities to growth. Although the stagnant economy had an impact on the *Nikkeijin* as well, generating lower incomes and a decrease of working hours since the production was paralysed, their presence remained unvaried.

Economically speaking, Japanese recession passed almost unnoticed in the *Nikkeijin*'s eyes. They were not afraid of short-term fluctuations, aware that their only alternative was coming back to the "real recession" in Brazil<sup>215</sup>.

In a sense, not only did the *Nikkeijin* pass through the recession unscathed, they were also favoured by this condition of economic uncertainty since there were more jobs available to temporary workers. Employers, indeed, showed a certain reluctance in hiring regular workers in the middle of a period of instability and would rather hire seasonal migrants such as the *Nikkeijin*.

On the other hand, the recession played a role in turning the initial "opportunity" migration into a longer-term, undetermined migration.

As a matter of fact, the depreciation of the *yen* raised the awareness, among the *Nikkeijin*, that the instant wealth of the "economic miracle" was gone and that saving a reasonable amount of money would require more time than expected.

Therefore, since Japanese-Brazilians could not stand more time working as machines, they relaxed their "workaholic" attitude and started to enjoy life in Japan, buying goods and let their families to join them<sup>216</sup>.

Indeed, since the revision of the Immigration Law, also the spouses and children of the *Nikkeijin* were granted a visa status to enter Japan. As a consequence, gradually, the initial single-males migrants were replaced by nuclear families<sup>217</sup>.

214 Tsuda, T., "The Permanence of 'Temporary' Migration: The 'Structural Embeddedness' of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrant Workers in Japan." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, no. 3, (1999), pp. 700-702.

215 *Ibid.*, 698-700.

216 *Ibid.*, pp. 703-706.

217 Yano, L.P., *Famílias brasileiras no Japão. Migração transnacional, adaptação e estresse aculturativo*, 1. ed., Porto Alegre, Poá Comunicação, 2013, pp.14-16.

Family reunification is argued to be a remedy against homesickness, since it attenuates personal ties to the home country and it facilitates a sense of belonging to the host Country<sup>218</sup>.

In that way, many second generation *nisei* and third generation *sansei* procrastinated their return until becoming effective long-term settlers.

However, it has been demonstrated that both the presence of women and children trigger higher rates of settlement<sup>219</sup>.

Indeed, children are believed to facilitate their parents incorporation into the society, expanding their social networks thanks to their attendance at educational institutions, for example, and hence increasing their level of social commitment.

On the other hand, children's enrolment in Japanese schools might constitute an obstacle to the *Nikkeijin's* hope to return home. At schools, the new generations of *Nikkeijin* learn how to behave Japanese and how to conform to a Japanese way of thinking.

Even though their first steps towards "Japanisation" are justified by the desire to be accepted by their peers, they eventually distance themselves from their Brazilian background. Since young *Nikkeijin* do not understand the reason of their difference, they unconsciously start to treat their cultural diversity as something to conceal and to be ashamed of.

Furthermore, often the few spare time of the adult *Nikkeijin* prevent them from teaching their children their native language or from getting familiar with Brazilian traditions, and this accelerate their process of detachment from their native culture.

In other words, many children forget to be actually Brazilian and create a generational conflict inside the *Nikkeijin* household, increasing their parents' concern about a future return to Brazil<sup>220</sup>.

According to Tsuda (1999), *Nikkeijin's* "embeddedness" in Japanese society is not only the output of a socially oriented lifestyle, but it is also the product of their incapacity to re-adapt to their previous life, basically for economic reasons.

Once back in Brazil, indeed, they find out that economic conditions at home have further deteriorated and that they are not willing to work under certain conditions anymore.

218 Green, P. "Generation, Family and Migration: Young Brazilian Factory Workers in Japan." *Ethnography*, vol. 11, no. 4, (2010), pp. 516-518.

219 Tsuda, T., "The Permanence of 'Temporary' Migration: The 'Structural Embeddedness' of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrant Workers in Japan." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, no. 3, (1999), pp. 705-707.

220 Ibid., pp. 709-710

Not only they have higher expectations, but they eventually realise that they have embodied what Tsuda defines the “culture of migration”<sup>221</sup>. Matheus<sup>222</sup>, a third generation *sansei* living in Curitiba, exhaustively expressed this concept thanks to his relatives’ and friends’ reports, since he has never had direct experience with Japan:

*“There are some dekasegi who save some money in Japan, then come back to Brazil and survive for some time with the money they earned. However, it happens that [in Brazil], the Nikkeijin realise either that there are a few opportunities for investments or they are incapable to handle their savings properly. So they have to come back to Japan when their money ends, since there are no viable alternatives. There are people who remain blocked in this [vicious] cycle for a lot of time”. (MATHEUS, 2018)*

Under this doctrine, migration is a totally justifiable device to cope with unsatisfying conditions in one’s home country. On the other hand, this propensity to migrate is precisely what makes Japanese-Brazilians’ economic adjustment at home difficult. Indeed, employers might see them as non-trustworthy, “unpredictable” workers who could quit their job without notification. Otherwise, in case the *Nikkeijin* wished to become entrepreneurs at their return in Brazil, they eventually might realise that they do not have enough resources or skills to run a business. Therefore, some *Nikkeijin* become de-territorialised, circular migrants, who continuously travel back and forth from Brazil to Japan, even if they are prevented from settling permanently in either Country<sup>223</sup>.

*“These circular migrants have ironically been caught in a double marginalisation that prevents them from becoming stable residents in either Country - they cannot remain in Brazil because they have become economically marginalised but do not wish to remain in Japan because they are ethnically marginalised” (TSUDA, 2003, p. 237)*

We have already examined the main causes of the *Nikkeijin*’s “economic marginalisation” in Brazil. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, I will analyse which factors triggered their “ethnic marginalisation” in Japan.

221 Tsuda, T., “The Permanence of ‘Temporary’ Migration: The ‘Structural Embeddedness’ of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrant Workers in Japan.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, no. 3, (1999), p. 713.

222 See Appendix, Entrevista 1.

223 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 235-243.

### 2.3 Stumbling blocks in *Nikkeijin*'s "privileged" social integration in Japan

In this paragraph, I will emphasise the limits of the ethnic privilege conferred to the *Nikkeijin*, shedding light on the "stereotypation" they undergo on the basis of an assumed ethnic affinity. It is important to highlight that it is a double-side "stereotypation", because initially, the *Nikkeijin* themselves count on an assumed transnational ethnic connection that tied them to Japanese culture.

First of all, I think it is worth to remember that Japanese-Brazilians, as foreigners, are not totally accepted in social terms, they are just the less damaging alternative among a wider range of cultural diversity. This takes me back to an assertion made by a third generation *Nikkeijin* that I had the chance to interview.

Artur is a *sansei*, son of *nisei* who did retain double nationality. For that reason, it was quite easy for him traveling back to Japan. He lives in Londrinha and he has graduated in mechanical engineering in Brazil, but he returned to his ethnic homeland two times: the first one in 1989 for forty days, to visit the Japanese headquarter of the Brazilian company for which he works as employee. The second time, in 2006, he stayed in Japan as *dekasegi* for three months and ten days<sup>224</sup>.

*"Overall, society creates PRECONCEPTIONS (his emphasis) for every individual who shows a certain degree of diversity. If the subject is different with respect to the majority group, there will be a PRECONCEPTIONS AGAINST SOMEONE for sure". (ARTUR, 2018)*

Tsuda (1999) attempted to sketch a list of ethnic preferences in Japanese society, which is practically traduced in a hierarchy of best wages and more desirable jobs attributed to foreign workers. In pole position, Japanese people use to place the Latin American *Nikkeijin*, motivating their advantageous privilege for an innate sense of cultural affinity.

The second place is reserved equally to Chinese or Koreans, generational foreigners who had been living in Japan since the colonial times, as we will see in the next chapter.

224 See Appendix, Entrevista 2.

At the third place, Japanese people expressed a preference, not properly a sympathy, for Iranians or Bangladeshi who composed the majority of foreign unskilled labor before the arrival of the *Nikkeijin* and scattered across Japan after the 1973 Oil Shock, significantly increasing their presence in the Country.

The less desirable group is composed by people from the Middle East, who were even excluded from social interaction<sup>225</sup>. Making a step back to the first paragraph of this chapter it might be argued that the *Nikkeijin*, thus, are seen as the less “polluted” alternative among a mass of threatening contamination.

The Japanese-Brazilians group represents an exceptional case of hybrid minority: they are not completely Japanese because they lack an essential element to be considered part of the society: Japanese culture. However, they are not even completely strangers, because in their vessels flows a minimal percentage of Japanese blood<sup>226</sup>. In other words, although the *Nikkeijin* are believed to be “externally” polluted on a cultural level, for being exposed to the contamination of the external world, they are “internally” pure instead, since their body keeps untouched and pure Japanese blood.

Nevertheless, we will see that, albeit a minor number of cases have been recorded with respect to other ethnicities, Japanese “favourite” ethnic group’s social integration has not been exempted from some implicit forms of discriminations and mistreatments in Japanese society

First of all, I will discuss the role of stereotypes and ethnic preconceptions in shaping the vision of a specific culture.

According to Barna<sup>227</sup> (1994) there are six main obstacles to the interaction with different cultures, and I would say that these obstacles are observable not only at a communication level, but they can also be applied to the process of social integration.

These six stumbling blocks are reported to be: the assumption of similarity, language differences, nonverbal misinterpretations, preconceptions and stereotypes, tendency to evaluate and high anxiety.

All of these cultural hindrances might trigger different reactions, which sometimes involve simple misunderstanding, but in other cases might create a proper barrier between two cultures, leading to backlashes and discriminatory behaviours.

225 Tsuda, T., “The Permanence of ‘Temporary’ Migration: The ‘Structural Embeddedness’ of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrant Workers in Japan.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, no. 3, (1999), pp. 697–700.

226 Tsuda, T., “The Stigma of Ethnic Difference: The Structure of Prejudice and ‘Discrimination’ toward Japan’s New Immigrant Minority.” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, (1998), pp. 341–344.

227 Barna, L.M., “Stumbling Blocks in Intercultural Communication” in L.A. Samovar and R.E. Porter, *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, 7th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, (1994), pp. 337-346.



Hence, I will apply these stumbling blocks to the interaction between the two ethnic groups protagonists of my research: native Japanese and Brazilian *Nikkeijin*. Despite Japan, contrarily to other Countries, tends to show the awareness to be unique, it is trapped into the “assumption of similarities” when it comes to the co-ethnic *Nikkeijin*.

Indeed, initially feeling close to the *Nikkeijin* because of their “oriental” appearance and their assumed cultural similarities, some disappointment emerges in acknowledging that they are *de facto* strangers, *gaijin*, in demeanour<sup>228</sup>. Language might be another source of confusion and eventually lead to a feeling of disorientation<sup>229</sup>.

If we think that in Japan, language is also a tool to convey different level of respect through the use of honorific forms which alter some morphological structures, this disorientation is even aggravated. In the case of the *Nikkeijin*, they are often expected, being “sons of Japanese”, to retain some linguistic knowledge that they have actually lost through generations. However, we have seen that sometimes the command of the language is reacquired by the youngest generations and this might create a conflict inside the same ethnic group<sup>230</sup>.

Communication is further hindered by nonverbal misinterpretations.

According to Barna<sup>231</sup>:

*“People from other cultures inhabit different sensory realities. The see, hear, feel and smell only that which has some meaning or importance for them.” (BARNA, 1994, p. 339)*

One of the most evident gestural mismatch between Japanese and Brazilian culture might be the mutual way of greeting, for example. Japanese people use to bow in order to introduce themselves, and they even have a non-written cultural code aimed at expressing more or less formality through their degree of leaning.

As we already mentioned, respect is one of the founding principles of Japanese social relations. On the contrary, Brazilian *Nikkeijin*'s approach is much more physical: they use to introduce themselves with kisses or hugs, with little regard to formality.

228 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York. Columbia University Press, 2003, pp.121-124.

229 Tsuda, Takeyuki. “The Stigma of Ethnic Difference: The Structure of Prejudice and ‘Discrimination’ toward Japan's New Immigrant Minority.” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, (1998), pp. 317–320.

230 Yano, L.P., *Famílias brasileiras no Japão. Migração transnacional, adaptação e estresse aculturativo*, 1. ed., Porto Alegre, Poá Comunicação, 2013, pp.86-89.

231 Barna, L.M., “Stumbling Blocks in Intercultural Communication” in L.A. Samovar and R.E. Porter, *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, 7th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, (1994), pp. 337-346.

However, stereotypes and preconceptions are the first means through which we establish a contact with a new culture. In other words, before that we actually get to know an ethnic group, our vision is already influenced by generic, and often distorted, categorisations dictated by subjective misleading experiences.

Therefore, one might tend to attribute specific prejudices, ideally typical of an ethnic group. In this way, Japanese are usually associated with positive qualities such as intelligence and depicted as shy, hard-worker and studious, whereas Brazilian are positively regarded as warm and friendly.

On the other hand, stereotypes also entail the creation of negative ethnic stigma, which can be explained with the tendency to attribute adjectives such as “cold” and “racist” to Japanese people, or to address Brazilian people as lazy, irresponsible and careless, for instance<sup>232</sup>.

Usually, stereotypes attributed to a specific ethnic group are universally shared, as in the case of Japanese or Brazilian people.

However, the peculiarity of the Brazilian *Nikkeijin* is that they are regarded with different preconceptions according to the evaluating Country.

As argued by Tsuda (1998), although the *Nikkeijin* are depicted as a positive minority in Brazil, they might suddenly become a negative minority in Japan's view<sup>233</sup>.

The reason of this discordance stems from the fact that Brazilian *Nikkeijin* are conferred Japanese positive qualities by Brazilian, but they are attributed Brazilian negative qualities by Japanese.

As a matter of fact, in Brazil, Japanese-Brazilian minority is usually associated with the “advanced” Japan, theory that is confirmed by the socioeconomic status of the *Nikkeijin* in Brazilian society, who usually fill higher-ranking job positions than native Brazilians.

Indeed, the *Nikkeijin* usually achieve significant academic results because of their pronounced competitiveness and they are thus admired and respected for their abilities.

Otherwise, Japanese-Brazilian ethnic minority assumes a general negative connotation in Japan, in spite of remaining preferred over other ethnic minorities. Their passage to negative minority might be explained with their social downgrading in Japanese society.

232 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 59-62.

233 Tsuda, T. “The Stigma of Ethnic Difference: The Structure of Prejudice and ‘Discrimination’ toward Japan's New Immigrant Minority.” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, (1998), pp. 317–326.

Since the most of them engage in blue-collar, unskilled jobs, Japanese target them as uneducated people. Indeed, Japanese-Brazilians are willing to engage in those types of job classified as 3K, reserved to the least educated sector of the society and therefore usually shunned and stigmatised by middle-class Japanese<sup>234</sup>.

Another reason that show Brazilian *Nikkeijin* in a bad light is that they are connected with the original meaning of the term “*dekasegi*”. In other words, they are mistakenly associated to the first *issei*, individuals coming from the lowest social strata who repeatedly migrated in order to avoid social failure.

However, since they are returning to Japan, they are believed to have experienced a second social failure in Brazil because of their lack of abilities and education, raised by uneducated parents of low social background<sup>235</sup>.

Moreover, Japanese who come across the *Nikkeijin* are disappointed by the fact that they do not behave Japanese.

This incongruence between race and culture marks the *Nikkeijin* with further negative ethnic attributions generally associated with Latinos. Whilst in Brazil they are treated as an high-ranking ethnic group, in Japan the *Nikkeijin* suddenly turn into ignorant people coming from the Third World<sup>236</sup>.

Finally, their bad reputation is fuelled by other negative experiences emerged at workplace and in local communities.

As a matter of fact, the *Nikkeijin* are considered unreliable and selfish, since they are often compelled to change company due to their temporary job contracts. Overall, they are blamed for being an element of disturbance to local serenity, because they are “too loud and party too much”.

All of these backlashes towards the *Nikkeijin* in Japanese society stem from another stumbling block embedded in intercultural relations: the tendency to evaluate. Barna (1994) describes it as<sup>237</sup>:

*[...] “the tendency to evaluate, to approve or disapprove, the statements and actions of the other person or group rather than try to comprehend completely the thoughts and feelings expressed from the world view of the other.” (BARNA, 1994, p. 340)*

234 Tsuda, T., “The Stigma of Ethnic Difference: The Structure of Prejudice and ‘Discrimination’ toward Japan's New Immigrant Minority.” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, (1998), pp. 326-330.

235 Ibid., pp. 317–326.

236 Ibid., pp. 328-332.

237 Barna, L.M., “Stumbling Blocks in Intercultural Communication” in L.A. Samovar and R.E. Porter, *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, 7th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, (1994), pp. 337-346.

Indeed, *Nikkeijin* are evaluated on the ground of their different cultural behaviour without questioning the causes that drawn them to take certain attitudes or decisions.

The last stumbling block arises from a condition of high anxiety, which, in a sense, encloses all the other stumbling blocks and perhaps it is likely to create the most critical barriers to communication. As a matter of fact, all the obstacles examined are nothing but mechanisms of defence that we unconsciously activate to cope with cultural diversity.

Anxiety can be caused by several factors such as future uncertainties, situations of tension and so on. However, the incapability to deal with anxiety might provoke further discomfort. One of the main cause of anxiety for the *Nikkeijin* has been argued to be their territorial indeterminateness, which implies a certain difficulty in establishing a Country where to settle definitively<sup>238</sup>.

Furthermore, if a person is unable to overcome the stumbling blocks arisen by the process of intercultural adaptation, he is likely to experience a “culture shock” in the host Country.

Culture shock has been defined by the anthropologist Kalervo Oberg (1960) as “the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse”<sup>239</sup>.

In other words, the anxiety resulting from the inability to interpret meaningful communication signs trigger a sense of bewilderment in the host society. I would assert that not only do the *Nikkeijin* experience a cultural shock in a Country that they expected to be familiar with, but their sense of dismay might also underlies a crisis of identity.

I report an assertion of Gabriela<sup>240</sup>, a third generation *sansei* from Arapongas (Paraná) graduating in Literature who has lived in Japan for six years (2008-2014):

*“Here in Brazil, I have always felt very Japanese since I love the culture. I used to take part of taiko groups (Japanese drums), go to matsuri (Japanese parties), listen to Japanese music, watch a lot of anime. But yes, there [in Japan] I saw myself as very Brazilian, and I stopped doing every Japanese “thing” I used to do in Brazil as Japanese. Actually I have been missing Brasil, I have missed hearing people speaking Portuguese, listening to samba and chatting with more welcoming people”. (GABRIELA, 2018)*

238 Yano, L.P., *Famílias brasileiras no Japão. Migração transnacional, adaptação e estresse aculturativo*, 1. ed., Porto Alegre, Poá Comunicação, 2013, pp.17-23.

239 Kalervo, Oberg, “Culture Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments”, *Practical Anthropology* 7, (1960), pp. 142-144.

240 See Appendix, Entrevista 3.

As a consequence, those Brazilian *Nikkeijin* who already felt different in Brazil because they were address as “Japanese”, once they arrive in Japan realise that their conception of “Japanesness” was distorted, since it does not match with Japanese people’ s current perception. As argued by Artur<sup>241</sup>:

*“Japanese education, received in parallel to Brazilian education, is not even close to the current education in Japan. In my case, my grandfather raised me through a Japanese educational system, which does not reflect the new reality of the current Japanese society”. (ARTUR, 2018)*

Therefore, some *Nikkeijin* admit both to have remained attached to the original meaning of “Japanesness”, which has gradually evolved and assumed new features in Japan, and to have developed a rather Brazilian mindset.

As a result, some of them react becoming more “visible” in cultural terms, since they engage more actively in Brazilian traditions in Japan than they have ever done before in Brazil in order to deal with *saudade* (homesickness)<sup>242</sup>.

In some Japanese-Brazilian residential areas in Japan, in fact, it is possible to assist to *samba* parades on the streets, which displays a *Nikkeijin*’s attempt to re-affirm their national counter identity, that is their re-discovered “Brazilianess”.

The *Nikkeijin*’ s development of a counter identity might be also interpreted as the outcome of a feeling of non-acceptance in Japanese society, stemming from the realisation that their cultural diversity have transformed them in a new ethnic minority.

Although many Japanese attempt to conceal their true feeling towards the *Nikkeijin* in order to avoid social conflicts, sometimes Japanese-Brazilians are subjected to disguised discriminations. In the following paragraphs,

I am going to analyse in depth some specific environments of discrimination, which further make their adaptation process troublesome: workplace, educational institutions and local communities.

241 See Appendix, Entrevista 2.

242 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 157-163.

## 2.4 Discrimination at workplace: the reasons of Japanese-Brazilian individualism

The welcoming policy that in 1990 permitted Japanese-Brazilians up to the third generation and their descendants to enter Japan with unrestricted rights of residence and employment registered a rapid increase of their presence in Japanese working environment.

A few years after the revision of the Immigration Law, indeed, many *Nikkeijin* had enthusiastically responded to Japanese demand to fill its national lack of unskilled labor force. According to P. Green, Japanese-Brazilians tended to cluster in areas dominated by manufacturing industries<sup>243</sup>.

Some official statistics showed that almost the 75 percent of the *Nikkeijin* were employed in the manufacturing industry, whereas others chose to engage in the construction (7.4 percent) and food service industries (7.9 percent).

A low rate seemed to work as caregivers or nurses in hospitals and nursing homes (4 percent)<sup>244</sup>. Among the *Nikkeijin* I interviewed there was also a women working as golf caddy (Monica), but unfortunately I did not find accurate data on further working environments.

The increase of the *Nikkeijin* presence in Japanese labor force has undoubtedly been facilitated by an efficient system of labor recruitment and transnational employment networks enhanced after the amendment of the Immigration Law<sup>245</sup>.

In the 1990s, there were two means of recruitment for foreign workers: indirect employment and direct employment. The system of indirect employment involved the emergence of labor-broker agencies both in Brazil and Japan.

It could be asserted that this new system has been one of the inevitable outputs of transnational social networks, that made the dream of “opportunity migration” feasible<sup>246</sup>.

The recruitment process was divided in two levels: the first stage occurred at national level, that is Brazil, and the second one in the host Country, in this case Japan. Japanese-Brazilians were recruited through social channels such as personal contacts or advertisements: basically, those who wished to work in Japan just needed to appear at the labor-recruitment agencies that would take care of anything. As stated by Matheus<sup>247</sup>:

243 Green, Paul. “Generation, Family and Migration: Young Brazilian Factory Workers in Japan.” *Ethnography*, vol. 11, no. 4, (2010), pp. 517-519.

244 Japanese Institute of Labor (1995) <<http://www.jil.go.jp/english/>>

245 Tsuda, T., “The Motivation to Migrate: The Ethnic and Sociocultural Constitution of the Japanese-Brazilian Return-Migration System.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 48, no. 1, (1999), pp. 19-21.

246 Tsuda, Takeyuki. “The Permanence of ‘Temporary’ Migration: The ‘Structural Embeddedness’ of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrant Workers in Japan.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, no. 3, (1999), pp. 711–714.

247 See Appendix, Entrevista 1.

*“When I was supposed to go to Japan, there were plenty of touristic agencies in Brazil that dealt with the intermediation between Japan and Brazil for the dekasegi. My uncle used to work in one of these agencies. They took care of anything: provided a certificate of eligibility for entry, visa, all paperworks required, and managed to find employment in some factories as well. Everything was very organised. It was 2007, it was not difficult to find a job in Japan being a dekasegi. [...]” (MATHEUS, 2018)*

The revolutionary side of this new employment system was precisely its wide-range feasibility: the applicant did not need a significant amount of money at disposal in order to go to Japan, since the agency would have deducted the commission expenses from his salary afterwards. Usually, only his passport was kept as security deposit by the labor-broker agency, whereas the rest of the payment was generally due six months after the migrant had started to work in a Japanese company<sup>248</sup>.

Moreover, familiar connections were no longer essential since the new visa for “long term residents” did not compel the *Nikkeijin* to find an alive kin to sponsor their permanence. However, once the *Nikkeijin* were sent to Japan by the Brazilian labor-broker firm, a new Japanese labor-broker partner came into play<sup>249</sup>.

Japan was already used to a system of labor-broker firms called *assen gaisha*, through which companies filled their labor demand supplied with available part-time, seasonal and temporary workers.

With the uprising level of national labor shortage, the system was applied to foreign workers as well, especially the co-ethnic Japanese-Brazilians. Broker-agencies, in practice, played the role of mediators between the company and foreign workers. Whenever the company was in need of labor, it could turn over the labor-broker agency that would allocate the *Nikkeijin* in that way, on a temporary basis.

It could be asserted that Japanese-Brazilian were under a sort of warranty, since the company was free to return them to the labor agency when they were no longer needed. However, this did not mean that they remained unemployed because the agency would transfer them to another company in case of layoff, thanks to its extended network of potential employers.

248 Green, Paul. “Generation, Family and Migration: Young Brazilian Factory Workers in Japan.” *Ethnography*, vol. 11, no. 4, (2010), pp. 517-519.

249 Tsuda, T., “The Motivation to Migrate: The Ethnic and Sociocultural Constitution of the Japanese-Brazilian Return-Migration System.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 48, no. 1, (1999), pp. 19-21.

In other words, the temporary status of the *Nikkeijin* implicitly guaranteed them a sort of job security, since the labor-broker agency gave them the chance to be repeatedly re-employed in different companies.

Moreover, the Japanese broker-agency provided the worker with housing, transportation to work, medical insurance and a series of social services to simplify his stay. However, although the indirect employment system might seem quite efficient, many *Nikkeijin* have been exploited by labor-brokers, who discretionary applied consistent extra fee charges to the sum they were supposed to deduct from their salaries<sup>250</sup>.

Aware of labor-broker's abuses, some companies did not rely on them and would rather employ foreign workers directly.

Labor agencies were not the only mean of recruitment, indeed. There were other trustworthy organisations run by *Nikkeijin*, employment agencies sponsored by Japanese government and newspaper advertisements that allowed to hire Japanese-Brazilians without the mediation of labor-brokers.

However, like labor-broker agencies, Japanese companies that opted for direct employment used to hire the *Nikkeijin* only as *kikan shain*, which means temporary workers, with six to one year labor contracts, rather than formal workers, or *seishain*<sup>251</sup>.

Therefore, they did not benefit from social security, which caused them to be reallocated to different firms whenever they were no longer needed by the company, or in case of economic downturns<sup>252</sup>.

On the other hand, one important difference introduced by transnational employment networks is that it changed the uncertain features of the migration intended for economic purposes: unlike their predecessor *dekasegi*, who migrated abroad in seek of fortune, the new generations *Nikkeijin* were protected from the risk of total failure and quite conscious of their destiny once arrived in Japan.

It strikes me that, as the *Nikkeijin* do not form an homogeneous group inside Japanese society, it is quite hard to outline a shared experience of social integration.

There are plenty of variables that characterise each individual subjective experience and each experience its singular and worth to be evaluated, thus it will be my concern not to overgeneralise.

250 Tsuda, Takeyuki. "The Motivation to Migrate: The Ethnic and Sociocultural Constitution of the Japanese-Brazilian Return-Migration System." *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 48, no. 1, (1999), pp. 19-21.

251 Ibid.

252 Takeyuki, Tsuda. *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 175-176.



First of all, the extent to which a Japanese-Brazilian managed to adapt to Japanese society depended on its propensity to consider himself as more Japanese or Brazilian before his arrival in Japan.

It has been proved, indeed, that those *Nikkeijin* who boasted to be Brazilian had more difficulties in conforming to the parameters of Japanese society, whereas those who were already conscious of their marked “Japaneseness” better succeeded in coping with cultural diversity<sup>253</sup>.

Therefore, I will try to analyse the working environment, focusing especially on Japanese factories, as a breeding spot for possible situations of cultural misunderstandings and discomfort for the *Nikkeijin* minority.

I will also emphasise that different working environments might result in different experiences of adaptation, due to a company’s little or advanced experience in dealing with foreigners, for instance.

Imagine that you are a doctor in your home country and that you suddenly end up working on the assembly line in the Country where you decide to emigrate to.

Would you be able to deal with such a social declassification? This is what happens to the most of the *Nikkeijin* who decided to work in Japan, they were compelled to take the “second-class” jobs that Japanese people dislike in small and medium-sized factories of the manufactory sector.

According to some researches, however, almost twenty per cent of the *Nikkeijin* did complete their University formation and around sixty-five percent had middle-class jobs in Brazil<sup>254</sup>. Thus, contrarily to what some misinformed Japanese (either blue-collar workers or not) believed, the majority of the second-generation or third-generation *Nikkeijin* migrated to Japan was part of the Brazilian middle-class and received a quite complete education.

At the beginning of the 90’s, however, Japanese-Brazilian reputation was still widely affected by the image of *dekasegi* as “life-long migrant unable to achieve economic stability anywhere”<sup>255</sup>.

Perhaps, this belief was further fuelled by the fact that the first *nisei* and *sansei* were opportunity migrants, willing to overstay at work so as to earn more money in a shorter period of time.

253 Takeyuki, Tsuda, *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 197-198.

254 Ibid, pp. 98-102.

255 Takeyuki, Tsuda, “The Stigma of Ethnic Difference: The Structure of Prejudice and ‘Discrimination’ toward Japan’s New Immigrant Minority.” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, (1998), pp. 325–330.

Not by chance, Green described manufactory industrial areas as “cities made of overworking migrants”<sup>256</sup>. As a consequence, their longing for economic rewards was misinterpreted as an effort to improve their miserable condition at home for long.

Furthermore, there was a widespread tendency, among Japanese blue-collar workers, to think that their *Nikkeijin* colleagues earned low incomes.

Actually, there was not much wage differential among Japanese-Brazilian and native Japanese, but they were often warned by their employers not to disclose their wage amount so as not to create internal conflicts.

As a matter of fact, the *Nikkeijin* were entitled with higher wages with respect to other foreign groups because of their particular legal status.

Therefore, only the most reputable companies afforded to support Brazilian *Nikkeijin*, whereas less advanced firms were complexed to settle for non-*Nikkeijin* workers<sup>257</sup>.

Although employers were initially positively impressed by the serious working attitude of the *Nikkeijin*, many of them quickly replaced their haste to make money with the awareness that their goals would have required more time to be achieved and gradually relaxed their working pace.

In a sense, it might be assert that some *Nikkeijin*'s sudden change of attitude at work made them fall back into their ethnic “stereotypation” in the employers’ eyes, who eventually depicted the true nature of Brazilian *Nikkeijin* as lazy, careless, quick-tempered and so on. Moreover, some Japanese blue-collars colleagues tended to underestimate their Japanese-Brazilians colleagues’ performances, blaming them for leaving the production behind.

Despite often their incompetence was interpreted as social backwardness, many Japanese did not think that the scarce yield of their *Nikkeijin* colleagues was not always the output of a lack of diligence or education, but rather the output of their social declassification, who drawn them to carry out tasks that they had never accomplished before<sup>258</sup>.

It might be more appropriate to state that the *Nikkeijin* were unprepared to be introduced in factory work reality and that is the reason why it took longer to them to finalise certain duties.

256 Green, Paul. “Generation, Family and Migration: Young Brazilian Factory Workers in Japan.” *Ethnography*, vol. 11, no. 4, (2010), pp. 518-519.

257 Tsuda, Takeyuki. “The Permanence of ‘Temporary’ Migration: The ‘Structural Embeddedness’ of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrant Workers in Japan.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, no. 3, (1999), pp. 698–702.

258 Tsuda, Takeyuki. “The Stigma of Ethnic Difference: The Structure of Prejudice and ‘Discrimination’ toward Japan’s New Immigrant Minority.” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, (1998), pp. 327–333.

Furthermore, employers further stigmatised the *Nikkeijin* as non-trustworthy, unpredictable workers since they frequently change company for personal profit. Indeed, their opportunistic attitude seemed to be in stark contrast with Japanese conception that an employee is tied to a company during his whole career by a principle of loyalty<sup>259</sup>. Otherwise, we will see in the following chapter that even Japanese companies are unburdening this principle in view of the current threatening population ageing<sup>260</sup>.

Overall, beyond partially subjective and misleading considerations, it has been observed that ethnic prejudices and discrimination are more likely to emerge in smaller factories rather than more prestigious companies<sup>261</sup>.

It has also to be highlight that, at a personal level, discrimination was mainly manifested with mere backlashes such as anti-locution and avoidance, rather than more violent forms of denigration<sup>262</sup>.

Hence, the main type of discrimination at workplace is indifference, which is treating the *Nikkeijin* as they would not exist. During the lunch break, for example, usually Japanese employers used to sit in different tables than their Japanese-Brazilians colleague, so as not to avoid locution. Another less explicit discrimination occurred at gender level.

Whilst, contrarily to Japanese, Japanese-Brazilians are not segregated by gender at workplace, which means that they do not bother sitting at the same table for lunch and they are not subjected to wage differentials in terms of gender, Japanese women who work in factories are likely to receive less money with respect to male employees for carrying out the same tasks.

Usually this kind of treatment is not extended to the *Nikkeijin* because of their previous agreements with the labor-broker agency, which does not differentiate their performances by sex. However, some *Nikkeijin* women, according to Tsuda (2003), observed a tendency in being assigned more difficult tasks with respect to men<sup>263</sup>.

At a social level, as I have already mentioned, the *Nikkeijin* did not benefit of the same rights as their Japanese colleagues due to their temporary job contract.

259 Tsuda, Takeyuki. "The Stigma of Ethnic Difference: The Structure of Prejudice and 'Discrimination' toward Japan's New Immigrant Minority." *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, (1998), pp. 329-333.

260 Sueki, Nobuo. "Ageing Society and Evolving Wage Systems in Japan." *Management Revue*, vol. 27, no. 1/2, (2016), pp. 51-62.

261 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 170-191.

262 Ibid., pp. 151-152.

263 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 182-191.

Therefore, they had no access to bonus or allowances that were granted to regular workers and they were not protected by job security in case of economic fluctuations or proper recessions. Furthermore, as observed by Gabriela<sup>264</sup>, although Japanese-Brazilians can be promoted to higher status, they cannot not aspire for leadership positions, reserved to Japanese natives only.

In fact, although a foreigner might show expertise and marked competences in certain tasks, he is always left a step behind his Japanese superiors, who are they only workers entitled to take managerial positions.

*“At workplace, there is a significant distinction between natives Japanese and foreigners. For instance, there were Brazilian superiors, but the boss was always a Japanese man or woman, the actual leadership was never left to a foreigner. Despite the foreigner had major experience in certain working tasks or spoke Japanese fluently, he was never entrusted with a managerial position.” (GABRIELA, 2018)*

On the other hand, it might be asserted that the lack of friendliness towards the *Nikkeijin* might stem from several cultural factors such as linguistic barriers, the temporary permanence of the *Nikkeijin*, who sometimes were unwilling to establish more intimate relations due to their assumed forthcoming return home, or hindered by the close dynamics of Japanese social groups. In other words, often they were seen as a fleeting external presence that simply did not belong to the company<sup>265</sup>.

It has been interesting to find an element that appeared to pool several experiences of Brazilian *Nikkeijin* working in Japanese factories, regardless of their more “Brazilianised” or “Japanised” identity.

This element might be depicted as a sort of pronounced individualism or competitiveness, which has been observed even by some Japanese employers since Japan, traditionally, tends to be a collectivistic-oriented society<sup>266</sup>.

Let’s take an explicit assertion made by Artur<sup>267</sup>, who has been working in a Japanese factory as *dekasegi* for a three month period, where he precisely used the word *individualização* (individualism) :

264 See Appendix, Entrevista 3.

265 Tsuda, Takeyuki. “The Stigma of Ethnic Difference: The Structure of Prejudice and ‘Discrimination’ toward Japan’s New Immigrant Minority.” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, (1998), pp. 345–359

266 Tsuda, Takeyuki. “The Permanence of ‘Temporary’ Migration: The ‘Structural Embeddedness’ of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrant Workers in Japan.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, no. 3, (1999), pp. 701–705.

267 See appendix, Entrevista 2.

“There is a certain individualism among Brazilian Nikkeijin at workplace. Everyone lives individually, without solidarity towards other co-ethnic workers, which is an unnecessary competition in my opinion, but it does exist. Moreover, if you own privileged features, such as the ability to speak and understand Japanese language, this might be another factor of discrimination to someone (he did intend inside the same Nikkeijin group), but that’s simply the truth.” (ARTUR, 2018)

Artur meant that the relative state of inferiority experienced by some *Nikkeijin* at workplace might spur some of them to optimise their performances in order to be rewarded.

He alludes that a further discrimination, indeed, occurs at the ethnic group level, since the “more Brazilianised” *Nikkeijin* blamed the “more Japanese” ones for being subjugated to the rules of Japanese society.

As a matter of fact, it has been demonstrated that the *Nikkeijin* who behave Japanese, perhaps because they had a good command of Japanese language and retained a proper Japanese conduct, might paradoxically become victims of further discrimination by their same minority group.

Behaving Japanese implies obtaining more qualified job positions and possibly being accepted as part of the Japanese community, thus the *Nikkeijin* who managed to do so became the target of much resentment and jealousy from their less assimilated peers.

As a result, in case a *Nikkeijin* was promoted to a higher social status, sometimes his supervisor was forced to send him back to his lower-skilled previous position because jealousy from his peers might provoke a general insubordination that did not benefit the company productivity.

The more assimilated *Nikkeijin*, indeed, were depicted as “annoying” and “self-serving” people who attempted to get ahead at the expense of their compatriots, thus often their more “Brazilianised” peers refused to take orders from them <sup>268</sup>.

Thus, “more Japanese” *Nikkeijin* were found to suffer a double discrimination, both from their Japanese colleagues and from their same ethnic group.

268 Tsuda. T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 329-335.

In other words, those who take a more pronounced Japanese cultural stance, not only experience a psychological stress in their attempt to assimilate to Japanese conduct, but they also have to deal with huge backlashes from their ethnic companions<sup>269</sup>.

This double pressure has been confirmed by Monica<sup>270</sup>, a second generation *nissei* graduated in administration (in Brazil) who has been living in Japan for twenty-five years, working firstly as a golf caddy and later as employee in a Japanese factory of cosmetics.

**“I believe that it is difficult to get involved with Brazilian Nikkeijin at workplace. I would say that perhaps, in our case, we suffer a double pressure for competitiveness: I mean the we both compete with Japanese and we try to be the best Brazilian worker simultaneously. In that way, I distanced myself from Brazilian community”. (MONICA, 2018)**

Although she never mentioned any explicit episodes of discrimination, she asserted that the strong competitiveness among her co-ethnic group has drawn her to take a more “Japanised” cultural orientation, eventually.

Monica also confirmed to speak fluent Japanese, factor that has possibly exacerbated the “double pressure” she felt on her. The more she attempted to be the “best Brazilian”, which in Japanese view means becoming more culturally Japanese, the more she has been marginalised by her own Japanese-Brazilian community.

On the other hand, there were some *Nikkeijin* who, in order not to be labeled as traitors, have decided to maintain a double ethnic loyalty, according to the situation<sup>271</sup>.

To avoid a double social marginalisation, they strived to pass for Japanese in order to avoid psychological pressures by employers and Japanese peers, but they were ready to opportunistically shift to their Brazilian identity, when needed, so as not to break the bond with their *Nikkeijin* community.

As already mentioned, discrimination is more likely to pour out in smaller and more intimate working environments rather than affirmed companies.

According to Tsuda<sup>272</sup>(1998), the divergent treatment of the *Nikkeijin* depending on the company’s dimension found its explanation in the dichotomy *ura-omote*, which are two compounds of the Japanese self.

269 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 329-335.

270 See Appendix, Entrevista 4.

271 Tsuda., T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 344-354.

272 Tsuda, Takeyuki, “The Stigma of Ethnic Difference: The Structure of Prejudice and ‘Discrimination’ toward Japan’s New Immigrant Minority.” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, (1998), pp. 345–359

He explains that the *ura* is the part of the self where Japanese people conceal their most spontaneous and genuine feelings, which sometimes are prevented from emerging in public in order to maintain an upright conduct.

On the other hand, *omote* is the most rational part of the self, which controls and holds back the instinctive desires of the *ura*<sup>273</sup>.

The *omote* self conveys social accepted attitudes and feelings, or *tatemae*, which are expressed through the suppression of ethnic prejudices towards the *Nikkeijin* in public interactions, for example, or by feeling of sympathy and pity for their assumed condition of misery<sup>274</sup>.

Japanese are able to maintain their true feelings latent because, overall, they regarded Japanese-Brazilians as inferiors, since they do not see them as a threat, especially in sight of their temporary status of stay.

The collision between the inner parts of the Japanese self is particularly tested in small firms, where Japanese and *Nikkeijin* undergo a more intimate interaction, since the presence of Japanese-Brazilian is relatively low and therefore there is less risk that they would cluster within their ethnic group.

Furthermore, in small firms usually the *Nikkeijin* are directly employed by the company, which means that they are regarded as effective members of the social group that has been created inside the firm.

Hence, it is precisely the creation of private relations to expose the *Nikkeijin* to a more direct marginalisation in smaller working environments<sup>275</sup>. Otherwise, in larger companies, counting on a higher number of personnel and thus a more consistent presence of Japanese-Brazilians, the situation is reversed since the employers might be prevented from establishing direct interactions with Brazilian *Nikkeijin*.

The *Nikkeijin* are just regarded as strangers who come from the “outside” by mean of a labor-broker agency.

However, a thriving business might have more experience in dealing with Japanese-Brazilians and Japanese managers pay more attention to public opinion since they have to defend the reputation of the company.

For all of these reasons, discrimination is less likely to occur in larger working environments.

273 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 141-144.

274 Tsuda, Takeyuki, “The Stigma of Ethnic Difference: The Structure of Prejudice and ‘Discrimination’ toward Japan’s New Immigrant Minority.” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, (1998), pp. 350–352.

275 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 252-263.

## 2.5 Discrimination at school: does ethnic prejudice underlie generational conflicts?

As I have already mentioned in the previous paragraphs, identity is a delicate topic for transnational migrants, who are constantly traveling back and forth between two Countries, prevented from becoming stable residents in none of them<sup>276</sup>.

Brazilian *Nikkeijin*, in particular, make part of an hybrid category which lies in the middle between “foreigners” and “Japanese citizen”<sup>277</sup>, in spite of not being completely included in neither of the two.

We also mentioned that globalisation has changed the features of migratory movements, gradually entailing the displacement of whole longer-settler families rather than single temporary migrants in some cases. Brazilian *Nikkeijin* represents one of these cases, where migrant parents have inevitably got their children dragged into their transnational movements.

However, it strikes me that family can have a double-side effect in transnational migrations: on a psychological perspective, it might ease to overcome the detachment from one’s country of origin, whereas, on the other hand, it might strengthen the migrant’s compromise in the host country.

As a matter of fact, Brazilian *Nikkeijin* in Japan, in spite of being considered temporary sojourners, have been strongly encouraged to send their children in Japanese schools<sup>278</sup>. However, we have seen that educational institutions are the primary indicators of “embedding”<sup>279</sup> in Japanese society, since not only does the attendance of Japanese-Brazilian children incentivise their families to procrastinate their future return to Brazil, but it also creates concern about the feasibility of their return.

In this paragraph, I will first distinguish among different modalities of acculturation processes, since I believe that *Nikkeijin*’s children, especially those who have born in Japan and those who have spent the most part of their life there, show a much more pronounced tendency to assimilate into Japanese society rather than they parent do. In other words, while adult *Nikkeijin* maintain a conflictual identity that prevents them from understanding which Country do they actually belong to, their children seem to have a clearer vision of that.

276 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 251-260.

277 Kubota, N., *Okinawanos e não-okinawanos em Campo Grande: Relações de Parentesco e Famílias*, Universidade Federal de São Carlos, São Carlos, 2015, pp. 65-67.

278 Tsuda, Takeyuki. “The Stigma of Ethnic Difference: The Structure of Prejudice and ‘Discrimination’ toward Japan’s New Immigrant Minority.” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, (1998), pp. 346–355.

279 Tsuda, Takeyuki. “The Permanence of ‘Temporary’ Migration: The ‘Structural Embeddedness’ of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrant Workers in Japan.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, no. 3, (1999), pp. 707-712.



Afterwards, I will briefly introduce Japanese school system and explain how foreign children have been integrated in educational institutions.

I will also point out that the adaptation process differs among *Nikkeijin* children who have lived in Japan for the most part of their life, and *Nikkeijin* adolescents, who arrived in Japan when they were already grown up with a quite consolidate “Brazilian mindset”.

Finally, I will describe the notion of generational conflict and how this conflict uses to emerge in Brazilian *Nikkeijin* families settled in Japan.

The first definition of “acculturation” was introduced by Herskovitz<sup>280</sup> in 1936, who explained it as the adaptation process of a minority group that gradually assimilate or dissolve into the dominant cultural group.

However, in the ‘70s, John W. Berry<sup>281</sup> enhanced Herskovitz’s generic definition, creating a new “acculturation” model where the majority and the minority group mutually affected each other through the social incorporation of the new ethnic group.

Berry’s model is depicted as multi-cultural, since it contemplates the creation of a mutual relation between two different ethnic groups<sup>282</sup>.

Moreover, the ethnic minority can adapt to the hosting society through four modalities or strategies better known as “acculturative orientations”: assimilation, segregation, marginalisation and integration, which determine the success or the failure of the adaptation process itself.

Firstly, the assimilation process refers to a kind of acculturative orientation in which the migrant develops strong relationships with the majority group whereas he saves only superficial bonds within his original ethnic group.

In this case, the individual shows a complete integration into the hosting society, assimilating the language, conduct and daily habits of the new culture<sup>283</sup>.

This type of adaptation might be considered as positive at a sociocultural level, since it prevents the migrant to be discriminated against or rejected by the dominating society. On the other hand, it might displays some internal conflicts at a psychological level.

280 Herskovits M., "Man and his works". *The science of cultural anthropology*, New York, Knopf, (1970), p.523.

281 Berry, J.W. & Sam. D., “Acculturation and adaptation”. In J.W. Berry. M.H. Segall. & C.Kagitcibasi, *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol.3., Boston, Allyn & Bacon, (1996), pp. 241-243.

282 Yano L.P., *Famílias brasileiras no Japão. Migração transnacional, adaptação e estresse aculturativo*, 1. ed., Porto Alegre, Poá Comunicação, 2013, pp. 38-42.

283 Berry, J.W. & Sam. D., “Acculturation and adaptation”. In J.W. Berry. M.H. Segall. & C.Kagitcibasi, *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol.3., Boston: Allyn & Bacon, (1996), pp. 246-248.

This situation is likely to happen when the migrants' sons assimilate into the new society, whereas their parents continue to be relatively marginalised and cannot distance from their culture of origin.

In other words, this is the type of acculturation experienced by many *Nikkeijin*'s children in Japan, who tend to conform to Japanese behaviour in order to avoid discrimination at school by their peers, for example.

In this way, since the two migrant's generations undergo divergent adaptation processes, familiar relationships could be severely undermined both by a consequent lack of communication or internal cultural conflicts.

The segregative orientation occurs when a migrant does not show any interest in melting within the majority group, avoiding either to establish social relations or to engage in social activities. In this case, the individual keeps social bounds only inside his group of ethnic belonging.

The segregative orientation is not considerate an adequate form of adaptation, since it is typical of those migrants who develop negative ethnic prejudices on the dominating society, affected by stereotypes that have been confirmed by partial subjective experiences.

It might be asserted that these migrants distance themselves from the majority group, maintaining social relations only within their co-ethnic peers.

Although the segregative orientation might be seen as a sort of psychological protection to avoid conflicts, the act of seclusion itself might foster linguistic and cultural misunderstandings, which eventually do not exempt the minority group from discriminations<sup>284</sup>.

This acculturative orientation's model was typical of the first over-working *dekasegi* or opportunity migrants who traveled to Japan in order achieve economic purposes, unwilling to establish interpersonal relations within the hosting community due to their assumed temporary stay.

Afterwards, the marginalising orientation reveals a situation where the migrant weakens any contact with the members of his ethnic community and, simultaneously, does not strive for integrating into the dominating society.

284 Berry, J.W. & Sam. D., "Acculturation and adaptation". In J.W. Berry. M.H. Segall. & C.Kagitcibasi, *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol.3., Boston: Allyn & Bacon, (1996), pp. 251-252.

Therefore, he experiences a double-marginalisation, which prevents him to establish social interactions with the majority group, but it also makes the bonds with his ethnic community vanishing.

In such a situation, the adaptation process is not efficient at all and it is more likely to cause the development of psychological disturbs, because the individual feels rejected, misunderstood and discriminated against by both communities.

Finally, the last type of orientation seems to be the more desirable one: the integrative orientation. In this case, the migrant develops a sort of bi-cultural identity, both succeeding in maintaining his original cultural traits and learning the language and cultural aspects of the hosting society<sup>285</sup>.

Through this adaptation model, the individual achieves confidence in both societies, reducing his initial level of anxiety and dismay.

In the case of the Brazilian *Nikkeijin*, it could be argued that this last adaptation process takes place when the migrant manages to adopt a dual ethnic loyalty, acting either Brazilian or Japanese according to the situation, even though this opportunistic change of identity might be stressful from a psychological perspective<sup>286</sup>.

In Japan, education is promoted through three different institutes: national schools or *kokuritsu*, public schools or *kōritsu* and private schools or *shiritsu*, depending on fundings<sup>287</sup>.

Children start school at the age of six, when they are enrolled at the *shōgakkō* (primary school), that they will attend for six years.

Later, in their early adolescence, they are expected to attend the *chūgakkō* (junior high school) for three years, and the *kōtōgakkō* (senior high school) for further three years. If they wish, afterwards, they might continue their study at the *daigaku*, for another four years study-cycle.

Although only nine years of schooling are reported to be compulsory in Japan, there is a very small rate of students who have left their academic formation at the end of junior high school<sup>288</sup>.

All institutes, except for some private schools, are co-educational and public junior high schools' programming and textbooks are evaluated within a centralised system that coordinates the national government about both the setting of teaching hours from primary to senior high school and the issuing of textbooks.

285 Berry, J.W. & Sam. D., "Acculturation and adaptation", (1996), pp. 253-254.

286 Yano L.P., *Famílias brasileiras no Japão. Migração transnacional, adaptação e estresse aculturativo*, 1. ed., Porto Alegre, Poá Comunicação, 2013, pp. 38-42.

287 Castro-Vázquez, Genaro. "Jumping out of Enclosures: Ethnicity, Gender, Education and Language among Latin Americans in Japan." *Ethnicities*, vol. 11, no. 2, (2011), pp. 223–225.

288 Ibid, pp. 223–225.

Education guidelines are revised every ten years by governmental authorities, so as to guarantee equal access to education. However, it has been argued that for what does concern foreign schools, Japanese government has implemented a policy of non-interference<sup>289</sup>.

First of all, since many foreign households tend to enrol their children at foreign schools, the government often simply eludes its responsibility to encourage foreign families to send their children at Japanese educational institutions.

Then, even though Japanese schools for foreigners boast their heterogeneity, a few of them are officially acknowledged and the diplomas they release are not legally accepted. What is more, students of foreign schools have a few chances to reach tertiary education and their employment future prospects are compromised, at any rate.

Although Japan had signed two international documents that guaranteed “equal right of education” to children of foreigners as well, the distinction between foreigners and nationals remains quite pronounced<sup>290</sup>.

Both the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights were joined by Japan by the 1980s. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) states that education should be accessible to anyone without distinction of race and that elementary education is mandatory (for native Japanese). A second point of the article also emphasises that education should be a tool to promote peace, through the acknowledgement and tolerance of cultural diversity<sup>291</sup>.

***“1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. [...] 2) It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.” (UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, art. 26, 1948)***

289 Castro-Vázquez, Genaro. “Jumping out of Enclosures: Ethnicity, Gender, Education and Language among Latin Americans in Japan.” *Ethnicities*, vol. 11, no. 2, (2011), pp. 221-222.

290 *Ibid.*, pp. 223–225.

291 Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), Art. 26 <<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Language.aspx?LangID=eng>>

These disposals were embodied and further enhanced by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted in 1966 and entered into force in 1976, which, under article 13, declares that education and social engagement make part of the individual's fundamental freedoms and human rights<sup>292</sup>:

*"1)The States Parties to the present Covenant recognise the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. 2) [...] Primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all. (INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, art. 13, 1976)"*

In others words, both the conventions simply stress on the universal right of educational "accessibility", regardless of distinctions based on race, rather than enforcing compulsory schooling for foreign students.

As a consequence, Japan has been blamed for not being able to handle a multi-cultural society, ignoring the different cultures of foreign children and their parents, who are rather expected to abandon their ethnic heritage, conforming to the society's way of thinking in order to be accepted<sup>293</sup>.

In other words, foreigners' cultural diversity was not treated as a value to protect, but rather as a potentially threatening force to be absorbed. In this way, social integration took the shape of a proper assimilation.

However, since 1990 the term "multicultural education" was officially adopted after the arrival of huge waves of Japanese descendants after the revision of the Immigration Law. Official authorities invited every family with at least six-years-old children to send them to Japanese schools, no matter if they were Japanese or foreigners<sup>294</sup>.

292 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976), Article 13  
<<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>>

293 Castro-Vázquez, Genaro. "Jumping out of Enclosures: Ethnicity, Gender, Education and Language among Latin Americans in Japan." *Ethnicities*, vol. 11, no. 2, (2011), pp. 223–225.

294 *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.

As asserted by Tsuda<sup>295</sup> (1999), when *Nikkeijin*'s children come to Japan their national identity is still fragile and easy to be conditioned, and public Japanese schools, in a sense, accelerate their identity-shaping.

As a matter of fact, Japanese children tend to associate the *Nikkeijin*'s "Brazilian" features with negative stereotypes, such as poverty and backwardness, which might cause *Nikkeijin* to be exposed to *bullying* attitudes from their Japanese companions<sup>296</sup>.

Thus, they might develop a feeling of shame for their origins, which gradually make them detach from their ethnic culture. In other words, they show an assimilative orientation that requires them to sacrifice their Brazilian background in order to be socially accepted.

However, although Japanese children enrolled in Japanese schools tend to conform to Japanese conduct and have a faster pace of learning than their parents, acquiring a proficiency level in Japanese language is complicated for learners familiar with the Latin alphabet.

Therefore, even though they might learn to speak Japanese quickly, their reading and writing skills which involve the knowledge of two alphabets and several ideograms, are not enough to catch up with their Japanese companions, or to pass the entrance exam for being eligible to high school education.

Furthermore, education up to junior high school does not provide the possibility to attend course repeats, thus *Nikkeijin* children have a few chances to improve or overcome mother-tongue Japanese's performances<sup>297</sup>.

One of the main problem with education for foreigners is its uneven distribution, which means that it is up to the local government to ensure education assistance. In recent years, the situation has been improved, at least in Japanese cities which count with a significant foreign presence, since the government has not issued a national integration program for foreign migrants yet.

The new disposals envisage the creation of a separated international classroom, called *kokusai kyōshitsu*, a sort of course repeat where students can improve their Japanese language skills. However, the problem persists since separating children's migrants from native Japanese students might foster their linguistic "marginalisation"<sup>298</sup>.

295 Tsuda, Takeyuki. "The Permanence of 'Temporary' Migration: The 'Structural Embeddedness' of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrant Workers in Japan." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, no. 3, (1999), pp. 707–710.

296 Yano, L.P., *Famílias brasileiras no Japão. Migração transnacional, adaptação e estresse aculturativo*, 1. ed., Porto Alegre, Poá Comunicação, 2013, pp. 52-53.

297 Takenoshita, Hirohisa, Yoshimi Chitose, Shigehiro Ikegami, and Eunice Akemi Ishikawa. "Segmented assimilation, transnationalism, and educational attainment of Brazilian migrant children in Japan." *International Migration*, (2013), pp. 7-8.

298 Linger, Daniel Touro. *No One Home, Brazilian Selves Remade in Japan*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2001, pp. 66-67.

Other measures include the provision of individualistic language tutoring for those students who cannot keep up with their classes because of linguistic barriers.

The tutoring teachers could be recruited among Japanese students graduating in foreign languages, Japanese or foreign workers proved to be fluent in the language required and with some previous experience in teaching.

Often, mother-tongue speakers with a good command of Japanese language could be hired as well. After being previously assessed through an interview, eligible applicants are allowed to teach for four hours a week under a three-months extendible contract, depending on the students observed achievements<sup>299</sup>.

The situation for *Nikkeijin* enrolled in private Portuguese-language schools is equally unstable. First of all, it has to be highlighted that many Brazilian parents do not afford the tuition since these schools are private, and thus quite expensive<sup>300</sup>.

Furthermore, these schools are not completely recognised by Japanese government, therefore it is almost impossible to train *Nikkeijin* able to access to upper level of Japanese university education, afterwards.

On the other hand, some of these schools have been officially recognised by the Brazilian Ministry of Education at least, and Brazilian Universities have launched online programs to support *Nikkeijin* academic education overseas<sup>301</sup>.

It has to be pointed out that both Japanese and Brazilian schools lack to provide an efficient bilingual education: in fact, the teaching of Japanese language in Brazilian schools is reported to be insufficient, whereas in Japanese schools, the teaching of Portuguese language do not consent students to achieve levels of proficiency<sup>302</sup>.

Overall, there are several issues that *Nikkeijin* children have to deal with once they come into contact with the educational sphere<sup>303</sup>.

The first one is characterised by linguistic hurdles, linked to the incapability to become fluent speakers in neither language (Portuguese or Japanese), or to acquire a proficient level in one of them, at least.

299 Castro-Vázquez, Genaro. "Jumping out of Enclosures: Ethnicity, Gender, Education and Language among Latin Americans in Japan." *Ethnicities*, vol. 11, no. 2, (2011), pp. 223–225., pp. 227-229.

300 Castro-Vázquez, Genaro. "Immigrant children from Latin America at Japanese Schools: Homogeneity, ethnicity, gender and language in education." *Journal of Research in International Education* 8, no. 1, (2009), pp. 68-69.

301 Ibid, p. 69.

302 Yano L.P., *Famílias brasileiras no Japão. Migração transnacional, adaptação e estresse aculturativo*, 1. ed., Porto Alegre, Poá Comunicação, 2013, pp. 51-54.

303 Ibid, pp. 50-55.

Secondly, the tendency of *Nikkeijin*'s parents to move frequently from one city to another in order to optimise their economic gains, goes to the detriment of their children's education. This periodically change of environment do not consent to their children to maintain a stability, and thus deeply affect their adaptation process.

Furthermore, many *dekasegi* do not fulfil their parental role of educator-guides, both for a lack of time and motivation due to their assumed temporary stay in Japan.

On the other hand, I would assert that adolescent *Nikkeijin* who arrive in Japan at an older age are more likely to develop a segregative orientation. As a matter of fact, adolescence corresponds to a period of social and biological changes, therefore migrants during this phase of life might entail some bleak sides.

Those who experience a migration process during their puberty are argued to undertake a "double transition", since dealing simultaneously with puberty and migration might expose them to aggravated adaptational issues<sup>304</sup>.

*Nikkeijin* students who retain a segregative approach in Japan are those who respond more negatively to the situation, since they are unable to cope with the boundaries imposed by the new society.

Therefore, many foreign students are reported to skive off of school, and many definitively leave their academic formation at the end of junior high school, both for a lack of parental support and the difficulty in expressing themselves with a proficient level of Japanese.

Furthermore, the relative easiness to engage in unskilled labor spur many *Nikkeijin* to abandon their studies for working in Japanese factories.

On the other hand, they have no other viable alternative since white-collar positions are reserved to people who speak fluent Japanese.

The abandonment of schooling fosters feeling of anxiety and uncertainties in young *Nikkeijin* and their parents, concerned about their possible return to Brazil as unskilled workers.

In Brazil, a socio-economic differentiated reality persists, where one's level of instruction is directly proportionated to wage differential.

304 Berry, J.W. & Sam. D., "Acculturation and adaptation". In J.W. Berry. M.H. Segall. & C.Kagiticbasi, *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol.3., Boston: Allyn & Bacon, (1996), pp. 253-255.



Hence, those *Nikkeijin* who prematurely left their education will have less chance to professional growth in Brazil and they will be subjected to several occupational restrictions<sup>305</sup>.

Despite those young *Nikkeijin* retained a strong Brazilian identity in Japan, they might gradually develop a marginalising orientation towards both societies. Indeed, as they have never managed to adapt completely in Japan, they will likely fail to re-adapt in Brazil as well. Green<sup>306</sup> also shed light on the reverse phenomena that draws many *Nikkeijin* to leave school in Brazil to become *dekasegi* in Japan.

He actually noticed a “displacement of culture” in the youngest *Nikkeijin* generation, who are no longer attracted only by wage differentials, but also spurred by the need to achieve independence and autonomy in Japan<sup>307</sup>.

As a matter of fact, in Brazil, *Nikkeijin*'s longing for independence would require more time to be achieved. Otherwise, in Japan, different levels of education result relatively in the same salaries or resources to labor market, which means that they are not required to study a lot to become *dekasegi*.

Linger describes factory work in Japan as a “seductive honey trap” to young Brazilians, that seems appealing in the short-term but actually leaves them socioeconomically marginalised in both countries in the long-term<sup>308</sup>.

Therefore, it appears quite obvious that Japanese-Brazilian group is not homogeneous in terms of generation<sup>309</sup>. The *Nikkeijin* experience a different adaptation process in Japanese society depending on the age at which they migrate, whether they are adult, in their teenage, or children.

It has been argued that “conflict between generation is an integral part of social relations” and that “the intensity of conflict varies relative to the socio-economic-educational background of the subjects”<sup>310</sup>.

However, although the creation of a gap between generations is inevitable, especially whether they have developed divergent “acculturative orientations”, it might be mitigated by better mutual communication and understanding.

305Yano, L.P., *Famílias brasileiras no Japão. Migração transnacional, adaptação e estresse aculturativo*, 1. ed., Porto Alegre, Poá Comunicação, 2013, pp. 50-55.

306 Green, Paul. “Generation, Family and Migration: Young Brazilian Factory Workers in Japan.” *Ethnography*, vol. 11, no. 4, (2010), pp. 525-530.

307 Ibid, pp. 521-522.

308 Linger, Daniel Touro. *No One Home, Brazilian Selves Remade in Japan*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2001, p. 135.

309 Green, Paul. “Generation, Family and Migration: Young Brazilian Factory Workers in Japan.” *Ethnography*, vol. 11, no. 4, (2010), pp. 525-527.

310 Ramaa Prasad, *Generation Gap, a Sociological Study of Inter-generational Conflicts*, New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 1992, pp. 27-28.

According to Rambaut (1997), there is another downside of the acculturation process that it is worth to be mentioned. Children seem to be targeted by the collateral effect of the adaptation process, which has unfolded a damaging counter-indication on the mental health of foreigners who have born overseas<sup>311</sup>:

***"Children face special challenges in negotiating the divide between the private world of family and the public world of school and peers and thus are especially likely to embody the consequences of the conflict between the old and the new." (MONTAZER et al.,2011,p.24)***

To conclude, a family' s social engagement expands with children, who are involved in the community through school, activities and organised groups. Being the dowel between the "old and the new", children are those member of migratory flows who both ease the social integration process but that, simultaneously, suffer the most from the effects of incorporation into the new society, where they are asked to build multiple identities.

**311** Montazer, S., Wheaton, B., "The impact of generation and Country of origin on the mental health of children of immigrants", *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 52 (1), American Sociological Association, (2011), p. 24.

## 2.6 Henna Nihongo: discrimination at social level

Along this chapter, we have seen how a socially high positioned ethnic minority in one Country can be perceived as a negative minority and consequently “stigmatised” in another one, leaving a few margin of socio-economic improvements for future generations. It has been argued that individuals who go overseas for a long time develop new cultural traits that prevent them to be recognised as part of their ethnic community once they come back<sup>312</sup>.

This is the case of Japanese-Brazilians, who are depicted as “strange”, atypical Japanese for having lost features intrinsic to the pure Japanese essence.

Among the category of descendants of Japanese emigrants, overall labeled as *hen* (strange), Japanese people tend to confer different degrees of strangeness according to where these people have emigrated. Generally, as argued by Adachi<sup>313</sup> (2004), the better the reputation of a Country worldwide, the less the migrant is perceived as “atypical”.

Thus, whereas Japanese-Brazilian are immediately associated with images from the Third World, Japanese-American are more appreciated because of the global prestige of the nation they come from. However, this is not always true.

According to Takamori (2015), some Japanese people believe that language is “biologically inherited”, therefore if someone with Japanese blood is not fluent in Japanese, this might create some confusion, especially if the individual also retains an Asiatic appearance<sup>314</sup>.

*“In Japan, being “racially” Japanese yet not being able to speak Japanese like a “native” speaker produces a cognitive dissonance among many of their interlocutors, and assumptions of communicative competence deeply impact their experiences. “(TAKAMORI, 2015, p. 497)*

I saw a short comic video that perfectly embodies this kind of mindset. In the video, entitled “*But we’re speaking Japanese!*”<sup>315</sup> that can be easily found on Youtube, there are five friends at a Japanese *izakaya* about to order some food.

Among this group, only a girl might expected to be Japanese because of her facial Asiatic traits, however, it comes out that she is the only one who does not speak Japanese.

312 Sekiguchi, Tomoko, “Zainichi Nikkei Burjirujin no Kodomotachi: Ibunkakan ni Sodat Aidentitikei Keisei”. Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2003 in Nobuko Adachi, “Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?”, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (May, 2004), p. 67.

313 Adachi, N., “Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?”, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (May, 2004), p. 67.

314 Takamori, A., “Henna nihongo” (Strange Japanese): On the Linguistic Baggage of Racial Strangeness”, *Japanese Language and Literature*, Vol. 49, No. 2, (2015), p. 497.

315 *But we’re speaking Japanese!* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLt5qSm9U80>>

Indeed, when the Japanese waitress appears in the scene, she directly addresses the looking-like Japanese girl, assuming that she is only native Japanese who is hanging out with some foreign friends.

Therefore, she appears quite surprised when she is answered by a *gaijin* instead, who does not look Japanese at all. In fact, all the guys seated at the table except for the looking-like Japanese girl (who is American) are actually Japanese-Americans, even if they are aesthetically non-associable to Japanese.

The looking-like Japanese girl apologises for not speaking Japanese, and it is her Japanese-American friend who takes the order at her place, in a perfectly fluent Japanese. The waitress stands quite astonished and after a brief reflection, she says: "I'm sorry, I do not understand English".

The scene gets quite surreal, since it was quite obvious to everybody that the Japanese-American guy has turned over the waitress in perfect Japanese.

After a few further attempts of the waitress to communicate with the girl who did not speak any Japanese, another Japanese-American seated at the table intervenes (always speaking a perfect Japanese), a little annoyed by the situation: "Listen, she may look Japanese, but she was raised in America.

I realise that we may look like we can't speak Japanese, but it's the twenty-first century. It is time to accept that physical appearance is not necessarily a reflection of one's cultural identity!".

Despite the guy's effort, the scene ends with the waitress who whispers to the ear of the looking-like Japanese girl: "Would you like something to drink?" and thus, the Japanese-American guy sitting next to her is forced to teach to her non-Japanese friend what to say in Japanese, since she is the only one the waitress is willing to address.

Of course, this video is a bit exaggerated and does not reflect impeccably the reality, but I think it is quite useful to understand the feeling of upset a Japanese person might still prove in finding out that a looking-like Japanese interlocutor does not have command of Japanese language.

Tsuda<sup>316</sup> argued that, in Japanese-Brazilian case, Japanese media have played a role in portraying a disguised image of the *Nikkeijin* as “culturally Japanese”.

As a matter of fact, the impression conveyed by commercial Japanese television, at the beginning of the 1990s, was not only that Brazilian *Nikkeijin* continued to be ethnically Japanese and could speak good Japanese, but also that their community was mostly composed by Japanese *issei*, and that both language and traditional activities were naturally handed down to *nisei* and *sansei*<sup>317</sup>.

Even though commercial broadcaster stressed the illusion that the *Nikkeijin* were ethnically invisible and justified the sense of *shitashimi* (familiarity) perceived by many Japanese because of ethnic affinity, enhancing the interlocutors reactions of surprise to find out that the *Nikkeijin* had maintained Japanese culture, NHK contradicted this vision.

NHK or *Nippon Hoso Kyoku* is a Japanese public broadcasting corporation, which is also more trustworthy than other commercial Japanese medias.

Although until the 1990s NHK shared the view of the *Nikkeijin* as ethnically Japanese, it gradually shifted to a different stance. As a matter of fact, NHK is a broadcasting station financed by subscriber fees whose aim is to transmit genuine and quality news rather than mainstream programming.

Since it is not affected by commercial pressure, it can lift up challenging social issues, without caring too much about entertaining the public with cheap programmes<sup>318</sup>.

As a consequence, it has been the first broadcast network to shed light on the “cultural foreignness” of the *Nikkeijin*, warning on their potential disruptive feature in terms of ethnic homogeneity.

Through documentaries aimed at provoking Japanese ethnic assumption, NHK pointed out the “atypicality” of their co-ethnic descendants, who had preferred personal gains over the traditional sense of filial obligation that bound them to their families<sup>319</sup>.

In a sense, NHK introduced Japanese society to the concept of “ethnic strangeness” and to another realistic forthcoming challenge: multi-culturalism.

316 Tsuda, T., "Domesticating the Immigrant Other: Japanese Media Images of Nikkeijin Return Migrants", *Ethnology*, Vol. 42, No. 4, University of Pittsburgh, (2003), pp. 291-292.

317 Ibid., pp. 293-294

318 Tsuda, T., "Domesticating the Immigrant Other: Japanese Media Images of Nikkeijin Return Migrants", *Ethnology*, Vol. 42, No. 4, University of Pittsburgh, (2003), pp. 290-291.

319 Ibid., pp. 298-299.

Although Japanese should gradually adopt a more open-minded orientation towards new cultures, getting rid of ethnic preconceptions, the tendency to judge on the basis of ethnic assumption seems to persist.

According to Monica<sup>320</sup>, despite their colleagues were aware that she had grown up in Brazil, whenever she asserted that actually both of her parents born in Japan, the interlocutors implicitly tended to assume that she would retain a proper Japanese conduct, since she did not have “mixed blood”.

Therefore, they showed a certain surprise in realising that her behaviour did not conform to Japanese rules, in spite of speaking fluent Japanese and being more “Japanised” than other Brazilian *Nikkeijin*.

*“When I say that my parents born in Japan, they say: “Oh! So you do not have mixed blood”. However they get scared whenever I laugh uproariously or whenever I do not conform to the rules. And sometimes I disrespect my senpai (superior). And that’s an issue”. (MONICA, 2018)*

The concept of conforming to Japanese rules has been reiterated by Artur<sup>321</sup>, who stressed how social acceptance depends on the extent to which an individual is able to embody Japanese principles, until becoming almost indistinguishable from native Japanese people.

*“Acceptance depends on individuals, people judge you on the extent to which you internalise Japanese behaviour and culture (rules). In Japan, people work hard, and whoever embodies this principle is respected.” (ARTUR, 2018)*

However, acceptance conceived in these terms is very difficult to be achieved, because it would entail an annihilation of one’s cultural traits. We have seen that it might be plausible for *Nikkeijin* children, who still have a conflictual identity, but not for adults who have already bridged a consolidate Brazilian mindset.

Non-acceptance might lead to various form of discrimination (*sabetsu*). We have stated that at workplace, especially in Japanese factories, discrimination usually entails anti-locution and avoidance, rather than more concerning or violent behaviours.

320 See Appendix, Entrevista 4.

321 See Appendix, Entrevista 2.

However, do the same forms of discrimination take place in community life? Which treatment is reserved to Brazilian *Nikkeijin* in Japanese local communities? Many Japanese-Brazilians are reported to cluster in Brazilian enclaves nearby industrial areas<sup>322</sup>.

In other words, they constitute a sub-community secluded from the rest of the society, who accentuate the presence of different residential areas divided by socio-economic positions. *Nikkeijin* are often provided an accommodation by labor-agencies, since it is difficult to rent apartments by themselves.

The most serious discrimination against the *Nikkeijin*, indeed, have been recorded in the housing system. As a matter of fact, some landlords have refused to rent their apartments to Brazilian *Nikkeijin*, alluding to unfounded preconceptions which make them believe that they do not recycle or they play the music too loud<sup>323</sup>.

Furthermore in some residential areas inhabited by *Nikkeijin*, such as the city of Toyota, a warning board in Homi Danchi was exposed to invite Japanese-Brazilian residents to adopt a more appropriate conduct.

The board cited remarks written both in Japanese and Portuguese, such as "let's stop barbecuing on the veranda" and "conversing in loud voices bothers your neighbours"<sup>324</sup>.

On the other hand, some discriminations against the *Nikkeijin* are inevitably related with their assumed temporary feature.

The majority of the *Nikkeijin*, indeed, is not provided with social security at workplace with respect to regular workers because they are meant to stay for a short period of time<sup>325</sup>.

Moreover, in case they need medical treatments, being assisted might result difficult since they have outstanding communication problems, and the lack of a national integration program for foreigners deprive them from many necessary social services. As a consequence, many of them decide to postpone any therapy to their undefined return to Brazil.

Of course, discrimination entails a series of emotional and psychological reactions in Japanese-Brazilian community. Sometimes the *Nikkeijin* might tend to form relationships only within their national group, creating a sort of self-ethnic seclusion.

322 Scottham, Krista Maywalt, and Rodrigo Hitoshi Dias. "Acculturative Strategies and the Psychological Adaptation of Brazilian Migrants to Japan." *Identity* 10, no. 4, (2010), p. 289.

323 Yano L.P., *Famílias brasileiras no Japão. Migração transnacional, adaptação e estresse aculturativo*, 1. ed., Porto Alegre, Poá Comunicação, 2013, pp. 17-23.

324 Yamashita, Karen Yei. "Circle K Rules." In *Searching for Home Abroad: Japanese Brazilians and Transnationalism*, edited by Jeffery Lesser, Durham, Duke University Press, 2003, p. 68.

325 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland*, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 175-176.

Other reactions might imply the construction of a negative image of Japanese people, blamed for being “*racistas*” (racist), or completely distance themselves from Japanese culture, re-discovering and affirming more strongly than ever their “Brazilianess”<sup>326</sup>.

Furthermore, working as blue collars for many *Nikkeijin* means undertaking a social declassification that is more likely to be overcome thinking that it is only a temporary condition. The emerging sense of frustration which blows up for the incapability to adapt is typical of jobs uniquely aimed at economic gains, which does not imply a satisfying professional realisation eventually<sup>327</sup>.

According to Yano<sup>328</sup>, both discrimination and psychosomatic disturbance can affect one’s emotional health, resulting in feelings of frustration, anxiety and irascibility.

Despite there is no evident connection between social marginalisation and crime, sometimes an individual’s frustration might trigger drastic reactions. In 1991, a young *Nikkeijin* worker was reported to murder a Japanese woman neighbour after she repeatedly insulted him in front of her house.

He claimed that his extreme gesture was only the outburst of a series of previous abuses he was inflicted in Japanese society<sup>329</sup>.

Although this was just an isolated episode, since there has been just an insignificant number of *Nikkeijin* associated with crime in more than twenty years, Japanese media have contributed to foment the image of foreigners as potential criminals, portraying them as “prone” to criminal behaviour<sup>330</sup>.

As a matter of fact, a widespread sense of xenophobia still persists throughout the society, and it might explain why several groups of foreigners, included Brazilian *Nikkeijin*, are still relegated in the suburbs of the city rather than living mingled with locals. Japanese society, however, does not offer a lot of basic services to foreigners.

Although Japanese-Brazilians have been indispensable to Japanese economic, filling the demand of labor shortage, especially in the first critical years of the “economic miracle”, and becoming active consumers in the society, they have been always treated as “second-class” laborers and barely rewarded.

326 Tsuda, T., *Strangers in the ethnic homeland. Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 140-167.

327 Yano L.P., *Famílias brasileiras no Japão. Migração transnacional, adaptação e estresse aculturativo*, 1. ed., Porto Alegre, Poá Comunicação, 2013, pp.32-40.

328 Ibid., pp.32-40.

329 Adachi, N., “Japonês: A Marker of Social Class or a Key Term in the Discourse of Race?”, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (May, 2004), p. 67.

330 Shipper, A.W., “Criminals or Victims? The Politics of Illegal Foreigners in Japan”, *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2, (2005), pp. 318-320.



Not only did many of them have promptly sent back home in 2008<sup>331</sup> after a national financial recession (as we will see in the next chapter), but those who have remained are still denied some basic services. In the following chapter, we will see also that services offered to foreigners are unevenly distributed on Japanese soil, and that their availability largely depend on local governments and NGOs' commitment.

There are Christian NGOs that provide labor and consultation about daily practical issues or deal with the adjustment of disputes of various nature, like lawyers' association do.

There are also medical service providers, which offer medical treatments and foreign support groups aimed at sharing experiences and possible scenarios in migrants' process of settlement<sup>332</sup>.

Today, in spite of being *Henna Nihongo* (people who speak weird Japanese), Japanese-Brazilians are claimed to be "embedded"<sup>333</sup> in Japanese society.

Their presence is mainly observable across Gunma, Aichi, and Shizuoka prefectures and their main sectors of occupation remain construction, automobiles, and electrical appliances<sup>334</sup>.

However, although communities with a large presence of *Nikkeijin* have developed local plans for integration, their presence still remains invisible to national government, which seems reluctant to adopt "multi-cultural" provisions.

Thus, not only it damages Japanese-Brazilians, who, despite being long-members of Japanese society are still considered as "temporary" sojourners, but it also goes to the detriment of the *Nikkeijin*'s future generations, who are provided with little opportunities for social mobility and consequently destined to have gloomy future prospects.

In the following chapter, I will focus on Japanese immigration policies and the main weaknesses intrinsic to the system. I will also emphasise the need to promote more transparent policies in terms of immigration and to overcome the image of foreigners as *hen* (strange) in order to create a multicultural-oriented society.

As a matter of fact, I would assert that foreigners should not have to be considered as a threat to national homogeneity, but rather as an additional value for social improvements.

331 C.Masters, "Japan to Immigrants: Thanks, But You Can Go Home Now", Time, Tokyo, 20 April 2009, 15 December 2017 <<http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1892469,00.html>>

332 Shipper, A.W., "Criminals or Victims? The Politics of Illegal Foreigners in Japan", *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2, (2005), pp. 313-314.

333 Tsuda, Takeyuki. "The Permanence of 'Temporary' Migration: The 'Structural Embeddedness' of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrant Workers in Japan." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, no. 3, (1999), pp. 707-710.

334 Tsuda, Takeyuki, "Japanese-Brazilian ethnic return migration and the making of Japan's newest immigrant minority." In *Japan's minorities : the illusion of homogeneity*, by Michael Weiner, 206-227. London: Routledge, 2009, p. 209.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Japanese immigration policies: challenges in the acceptance of foreigners**

### 3.1 Is *Abenomics* a remedy to Japanese ageing population?

In the twenty-first century, population ageing has become a common trend within developed Nations<sup>335</sup>. The more the market competition is ruthless, the more companies have to achieve unprecedented level of efficiency.

Often, the longing for a successful career overlaps with the wish to create a family, and this kind of mindset is reflected by emerging career women in our society, who have always less time to dedicate to their private life. However, in Japan, a sharp population ageing is distressing the whole nation: according to a survey of the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, Japan's male life expectancy at birth exceeded 80.2 years and female life expectancy rose to 86.6 years, which make respectively the fourth highest rate and the highest rate in the world (2015)<sup>336</sup>.

It has been argued that Japan is currently dealing with two severe types of ageing issues: one at social level, which concerns elderly people over sixty-five years old, and another at labor level, which targets senior workers<sup>337</sup>.

*"There are two varieties of ageing problem in Japan. The first is ageing of society as a whole and then target is elderly people over 65 years old. [...]The second is the issue resulting from the increase in middle and older age people in companies". (NOBUO, 2016, pp. 51-52)*

As a matter of fact, the rapid population ageing has triggered a series of implications, both in social and labor terms.

On the social side, it could be affirmed that the increase in the percentage of elderly people is requiring more social costs to be invested in medical care. In other words, more elderly in the society entails more figures of caregivers to take care of them.

As we will see in the next paragraphs, Japanese government is launching several "trainee programs for health care", so as to introduce foreign nurses into the health care field.

Moreover, the growing number of older age people is urging for a revision of the national system of public pensions and it is always more diffused the practise of relocating people over sixty in low-skilled part-time jobs.

335 Ogawa, N., et. al., "Declining fertility and the rising costs of children and the elderly in Japan and other selected Asian countries: An analysis based upon the NTA approach". ANU Press. (2016), pp. 85-86.

336 Ibid, 87-88.

337 Sueki, Nobuo. "Ageing Society and Evolving Wage Systems in Japan." *Management Revue*, vol. 27, no. 1/2, (2016), pp. 51-52.

This last measure is due to the fact that today it is no longer realistic to keep the low mandatory retirement age at sixty years old, since the majority of the population is composed by people aged over sixty-five, thus it has been proposed to shift the retirement age at sixty-five, at least.

However, since the shift is still to have accomplished in a formal way, the extension of the employment at sixty-five years old has been realised through re-employment in many firms. Two main gradual changes have been made since 1970s: the first one has been the passage from a rewarding seniority-based wage system to a skill-grading wage system based on individual performances<sup>338</sup>.

In other words, allowances and bonus are more likely granted on then basis of one's personal achievements rather than on one' s lasting fidelity to the same company.

In that way, not only did Japanese companies manage to stimulate younger employees to optimise their performances, but they also maintained an internal flexible rotation system which has always been one of the assets of Japanese labor market.

Furthermore, wage system has been subjected to further changes in sight of older people who might potentially be re-employed after their retirement, and overall, the value of wages itself has experienced a reduction. In the future, Japanese companies seem to be always more willing to adopt a wage system based on job responsibilities.

Although this system might unfold some unclear features, such as the extent to which the contribution of unexperienced employees has to be evaluated, it might seem more effective in reducing market's unpredictability.

In other words, reward-oriented performances might be affected by market fluctuations that do not depend on the worker, who should better be evaluated on the basis of his abilities, a more stable constant.

On the other hand, older workers might be reluctant in accepting the extension of their employment to sixty-five-years-old since this would not imply any increase in their lifetime earning, nor in their retirement allowance.

Actually, retirement allowance is threaten to disappear with the sharp population ageing.

Therefore, as argued by Nobuo<sup>339</sup>, in Japanese companies it is spreading a new tendency to consider employees as "specialist rather than generalists", ensuring a deeper connection between their abilities and skills.

<sup>338</sup> Sueki, Nobuo. "Ageing Society and Evolving Wage Systems in Japan." *Management Revue*, vol. 27, no. 1/2, (2016), pp. 52-54.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., pp. 59-60.

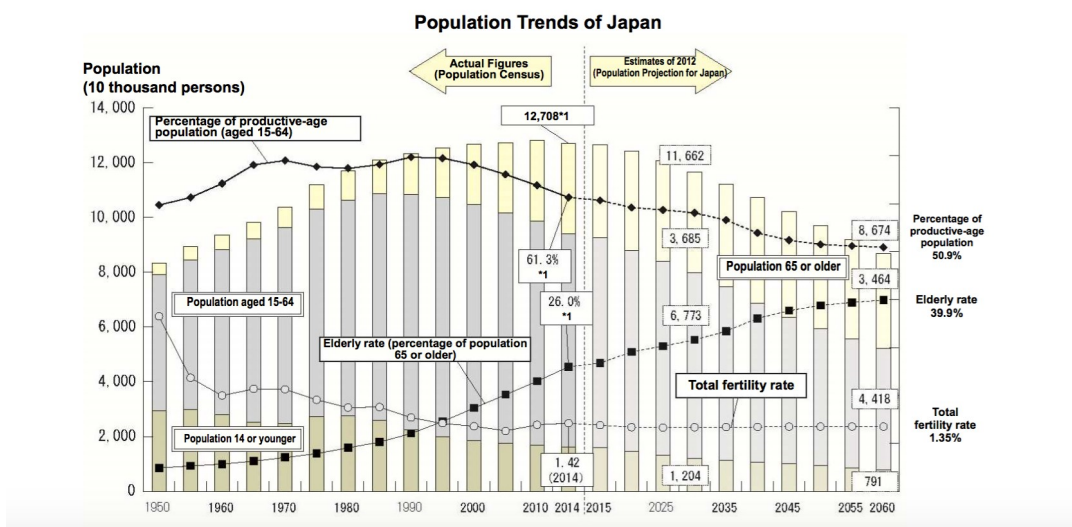
Despite post-war studies had already predicted the likeliness that in those part of the world where industrialisation, economy and education facilities advanced, national progress would “prepare the way for lower birth rates”<sup>340</sup> and ageing population, perhaps Japan has been startled by the latest researches.

According to a Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare report<sup>341</sup>, Japanese productive-age population, which is Japanese workforce, is expected to shrink dramatically until ranking at the 50.9 percent out of the total population by 2060.

It is also interesting to point out that by the same year, as shown in the graph below, it seems that the curve for workforce will not be that distant from the elderly rate curve, which means that elderly people, steadily growing up, are expected to compose almost the 40 percent out of the total Japanese population in a few decades.

What will continue to maintain a stagnant trend, instead, is the total fertility rate, which does not appear to be subjected to any significant change by 2060, amounting to 1.35 percent of the population.

Thus, if the situation does not change, the consequences for Japanese society might result catastrophic. The Country, in fact, risks to experience a proper economic collapse followed by a dramatic drop in standards of living.



Source: “Population Census” and “Population Estimates” by the Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, “Population Projection for Japan: Medium-Fertility/Mortality Projections (estimated in January 2012)” by National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, (population as of October 1 of the respective year), “Vital Statistics” (2014 is preliminary data), MHLW).

340 Durand, J. “The Trend toward an Older Population”. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 237, World Population in Transition (Jan., 1945), p. 146

341 MHLW Annual Health, Labour and Welfare Report 2016 <<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/wp/wp-hw10/index.html>>

First of all, let's try to analyse the causes that drawn to this critical situation. It is undeniable that, lately, Japan is facing a serious demographic crisis: birth rate is indeed following a downward trend that alarmed national authorities.

The main reason of the so-called "death of the family"<sup>342</sup> is both worrying and bewildering: Japanese people have a few time to take care of their families because of their job commitment. In fact, the majority of Japanese workers are reported to spend excessive hours at workplace.

After the economic recession triggered by the economic *bubble burst* of the late 1980s, it had been shown that "long hours, unpaid overtime, shorter holidays and fewer perks have become the norm at workplaces, with a 12-hour working day considered completely normal"<sup>343</sup>, in the effort to readjust national economy as faster as possible.

However, not only did overtime work caused "the death of the families", but it also severely affected employees' mental health.

Although the trend of overwork had become nationally accepted and workers' performance were tried to be enhanced encouraging employees "to take naps at workplace"<sup>344</sup>, the general outcomes were indeed physiological stress and nervous breakdowns.

What is even worse, lately, it has been recorded the re-emergence of a phenomenon blew up in the 1960's-70's, believed to be over, the so-called *karoshi*<sup>345</sup>, that is death for overwork. In the latest years, *karoshi*, that occurred through heart attacks, strokes and suicides, has been the tragic ending of ordinary human beings treated as they were machines.

Sometimes, suicide appeared to be the only solution to workers who risked to lose their employment, or were blamed for being disloyal to the company.

An unforgettable case is the death of a women called Matsuri Takahashi, who committed suicide after being illegally forced to work 100 hours' overtime in the last wearying month of her life.

According to a strong assertion posted by the same Takahashi on the social medias some weeks before her death, she explicitly expressed her desire to die, since she claimed to be "physically and mentally shattered."<sup>346</sup>

342 Weller, C. "This is death to the family", Business insider. 21 May 2017; 11 December 2017.

343 Ryall, J. "Tokyo governor orders city's workers to leave desks by 8pm in overtime crackdown", The telegraph. 16 September 2016; 11 November 2017

344 McCurry, J. "Clocking off: Japan calls time on long-hours work culture", The guardian. Tokyo, 22 February 2015; 1 October 2017.

345 McCurry, J. "Death from overwork: Japan's 'karoshi' culture blamed for young man's heart failure"; The Guardian, Tokyo. 18 October 2016; 11 December 2017.

346 McCurry, J. "Japanese firm fined token sum after woman died from overwork", The Guardian, Tokyo. 6 October 2017; 30 October 2017.

Sadly, this has not been an isolated case. Today, it seems that Japanese firms are trying to minimise overtime at work, taking very simple measures to avoid abuses, such as turning the lights off at the end of the day in order to spur their employees to go home, or simply allowing more holidays leaves.

Indeed, working overtime is believed to be a relevant cause of Japanese down-warding birth rate.

In the latest years, some measure have been implemented so as to cope with Japanese national ageing issue and the sharp decline in fertility rate.

In 2013, Prime minister Shinzo Abe launched a national recovery plan denominated *Abenomics*<sup>347</sup>, which envisaged a series of interventions to lift the Country up from decades of economic stagnation.

The political-economic plan has been developed designing three “*arrows*”, that is three specific areas of intervention: monetary policy, fiscal policy and strategies of growth.

The first arrow could be summed up as a reform of monetary easing, in which the Central Bank plays the significant role of releasing money in the market. In other words, the government' s purpose is to increase price levels by creating more money, breaking the deflationary cycle through costumers investments in the market.

The second arrow was addressed to enhance Japanese fiscal policy in order to stimulate growth through a bilateral approach: both boosting government spending and adjusting national finances, so as not to rely mainly on national debt.

The second arrow of the *Abenomics*, indeed, specifically addressed interventions on welfare field, which is particularly important when it comes to Japanese ageing population, on the huge national debt, that had to be controlled and progressively decreased, and finally on infrastructural investments, especially to ensure proper infrastructures for the next 2020 Olympiads held in Tokyo.

Finally, the third arrow of the *Abenomics*, which involved new policies for national growth, is the most significant intervention to my research.

As a matter of fact, beyond reducing the weight of corporate taxes in business, lowering barriers to foreign direct investments and introducing a dynamic agricultural reform, it also included innovative measures.

347 Japangov: The government of Japan. <<https://www.japan.go.jp/abonomics/index.html>>

It could be asserted that the actual “revolutionary” purpose of the third arrow of the Abenomics dealt with an enhanced participation of women at workplace and an unprecedented openness to foreigners, through a loosening of visa restrictions.

Aware of the provisions that depict Japan as destined to be an elderly Country in a few decades, the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has proposed to compensate ageing people for more women in leadership job positions, previously assigned almost exclusively to men. On January 22, 2014, at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Abe claimed, during his speech<sup>348</sup>:

***“ [...] the female labour force in Japan is the most under-utilised resource. Japan must become a place where women shine. By 2020 we will make 30% of leading positions to be occupied by women. In order to have a large number of women become leading players in the market we will need a diverse working environment.” (SHINZO ABE, 2014)***

In order to attribute women a new role in the society, Abe included in his *Abenomics*’ third arrow a strategic plan for women empowerment, also popular as *Womenomics*<sup>349</sup>.

This reform insisted on measures aimed at creating conditions for an increased participation of women at workplace, considered as a potential supply factor in Japanese deficient workforce. In other words, the *Womenomics* is a strategy to ask women to work but also to have children, promised to be rewarded with more social services such as kindergartens, and less hurdles to their developing career<sup>350</sup>.

However, although the government had succeeded in increasing women participation, partially filling the gap of some industries suffering from acute labor shortage, Japanese level of working women is still one of the lowest among the other developed Countries<sup>351</sup>.

In fact, it might be asserted that there are several factors that discourage women from having babies or finding employment, and unfortunately, one of the greatest obstacle to women employment seems to be Japanese society itself. Hence, in order to draw Japan towards a more feminist-oriented stance, further measures need to be taken.

348 Shinzo Abe’ s speech at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, 22 January 2014

349 Sachs, Goldman. "Womenomics 4.0: Time to walk the talk." *Japan: Portfolio strategy research*, (2014).

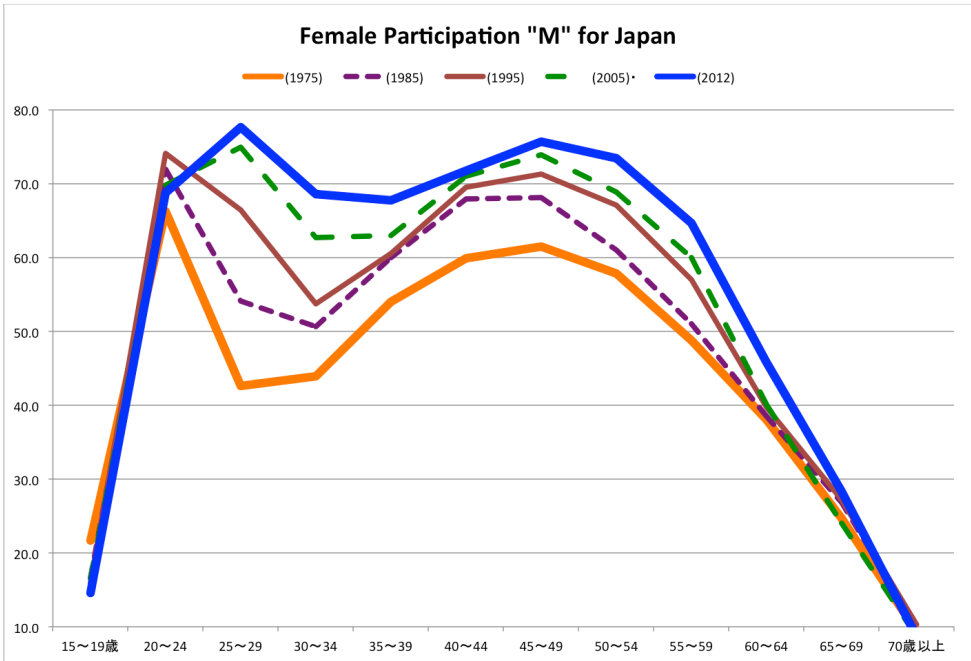
350 Ogino, M. “Japanese Women and the Decline of the Birth Rate”, *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Population and Family Planning, Taylor & Francis, Ltd. (May, 1993), p. 83.

351 Sachs, Goldman. "Womenomics 4.0: Time to walk the talk." *Japan: Portfolio strategy research*, (2014).



### 3.2 The new shape of the M-curve: domestic remedies to national labor shortage

Women have been reported to be the “most-under utilised resource”<sup>352</sup> of Japanese society. Whether this statement has been dictated by opportunistic goals, such as stopping the alarming national birth decline and the pressures for a greater acceptance of immigration, or not, it could be argued that in XXI century the social role of Japanese women has changed. The dominating pattern of female employment in Japan is shaped by the M-curve<sup>353</sup>, which displays women’s participation rate in the labor force.



Source: Labor Force Update, Japan and Economics, August 5th 2013

The waving tendency of the curve is due to women’s intermittent presence at workplace. On the vertical axe of the graph above, we can observe the percentage of women’s participation at workplace, while on the horizontal axe, it is indicated women’s age slots.

In fact, the first up-warding segment of the curve depicts women’s introduction in the labor force as soon as they graduate or complete their education.

Subsequently, the curve changes direction, moving down-ward, and this sharp decrease represents women’s first short withdrawal from job after pregnancy. Afterwards, they re-enter the labor force, raising again the level of the curve until a last downfall due to a second permanent retirement, often spurred by the necessity to take care of their elderly relatives.

352 Shinzo Abe’s speech at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, 22 January 2014

353 White, Merry “Women and Social Change in Japan”, *Daedalus*, Vol. 121, No. 4, The MIT press, (Fall, 1992), pp. 68-69

However, it could be noticed that, from 1975 to 2012, the first decline of the curve is always less pronounced. Back to the 1970s, indeed, the general trend for women was to retire from work for their first childbearing at the age of roughly 21-24 years old, causing a sharp decline in women's participation rate in the labor force (from almost 68% to 42%).

Nowadays, not only has the first withdrawal age augmented to 26-29 years old, but it could be noticed that the decline in women's participation rate due to childbearing is not that significant anymore (from almost 78% to 69%), which means that births are diminishing. Indeed, it has been asserted that "women's economic independence hinders gains from marriage and reduces the desirability of marriage"<sup>354</sup>, causing a further decline in births rate.

Therefore, this evidence might suggest that the pattern of female employment had slightly changed throughout the years. In this paragraph, I will try to focus on the causes of the first decline of the M-curve and until what extent the evolution of the curve contributes to the current drop in natality.

In order to attain my purpose, I think that it is worth to analyse the measures taken by Japanese government in order to abolish gender barriers at workplace throughout the latest years.

For decades, Japanese women have struggled to achieve equal gender treatment at workplace. It strikes me that, the main cause of gender unfairness is connected with a natural right of every woman: pregnancy.

This does not mean that Japanese government discourages women to have babies. On the contrary, several changes have been made since the 1990s in order to support couples who wished to become parents<sup>355</sup>.

However, Japan women's career ambitions and pregnancy are barely reported to coincide. Despite fathers are allowed to take a one-year child-care leave as well, nobody does it so as to avoid social backlashes.

In other words, in many cases, women who desire to create a family are forced to leave their dream of career upgrading apart<sup>356</sup>. Furthermore, it might be argued that the figure of "professional mother"<sup>357</sup> emerged in the latest centuries has still some difficulties in being positively valued by the society.

354 Fukuda, S. "The Changing Role of Women's Earnings in Marriage Formation in Japan", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 646, Sage Publications, Inc., (March 2013), p. 109.

355 Ogino, M., "Women and the Decline of the Birth Rate", *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 1, No. 1, *Population and Family Planning*, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., (May, 1993), p. 80.

356 Ibid.

357 White, Merry "Women and Social Change in Japan", *Daedalus*, Vol. 121, No. 4, The MIT press, (Fall, 1992), p 63.

However, even though it might be expected that the new role covered by women into Japanese society would be legally protected, many discriminations at workplace still persist. There have been several attempts to equalise employment opportunities between men and women, which claimed the elimination of wages' disparities based on gender and the abolishment of concealed discriminations.

Although in theory many measures towards a more female-oriented society have been taken in order to ensure women's rights protection, it might be argued that often the same measures are not put into practice.

Anyway, let's analyse the main changes made by Japanese government to give women more opportunities at workplace.

In 1986, Japanese government tried to cope with gender discrimination enacting the Japanese Equal Employment Opportunity Law (hereafter EEO)<sup>358</sup>.

The attempt of the act was not only to ensure women with equal opportunities to men, but also to protect women who were not willing to sacrifice their career for their right to become mothers. In other words, the EEO held the hope that pregnancy would not necessarily imply the end of a woman career.

Indeed, the act introduced a series of measures to prevent women from discriminations such as unjustified dismissal due to marriage and pregnancy, ensuring up to ten weeks of prenatal and eight weeks of postnatal leaves<sup>359</sup>.

Moreover, some years later, the Ministry of Welfare and Health introduced new policies aimed at increasing the national birth rate<sup>360</sup>. A first policy have been issued in 1991 so as to increase child allowances and provide financial aid for night nurseries.

Another proposed legislation came into effect in the following year, 1992, which envisaged an increase of the parental leave up to one year, addressed either to the mother or the father of the baby.

However, it could be argued that, at the beginning, the enactment of the EEO was subjected to several limits<sup>361</sup>. As a matter of fact, it is important to point out that it lacked of specifying the level at which working women had to be re-hired after maternity and it did not mention that, in case the former mother would exceed the allowed eight weeks post-pregnancy period to stay at home, she would lose any chance to get more qualified positions.

358 White, Merry "Women and Social Change in Japan", *Daedalus*, Vol. 121, No. 4, The MIT press, (Fall, 1992), p. 65.

359 Yamada, Shozo, "Equal Employment Opportunity Act, Having Passed the Quarter-Century Milestone", *Japan Labor Review*, vol. 10, no. 2, (Spring 2013), Chuo University, 2008, p. 10.

360 Ogino, M., "Women and the Decline of the Birth Rate", *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 1, No. 1, *Population and Family Planning*, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., (May, 1993), p. 80.

361 Yamada, Shozo, "Equal Employment Opportunity Act, Having Passed the Quarter-Century Milestone", *Japan Labor Review*, vol. 10, no. 2, (Spring 2013), Chuo University, 2008, p. 10-11.

This mainly happened because, once a woman returned to work, she would likely pass the applicable age for certain types of jobs, such as white-collar jobs in private companies, and she would be possibly transferred to a different position, since in Japan seniority is evaluated over experience<sup>362</sup>.

Moreover, it has been pointed out that “employing men in full-time jobs and women in more casual, part-time jobs serves the Japanese economy well.”<sup>363</sup>.

Therefore, this system has been created with the purpose of ensuring job security to male workers at the expenses of their female colleagues on the basis of their transitory nature. In fact, women are more likely to take on part-time employments in order to spend more time with their children at home, image that is pretty acceptable in Japanese society due to its long-standing vision of women as housewives.

Moreover, even if the EEO Law was more explicit in addressing equal treatment of genders, it was blamed for having a simply cautionary approach, without specifying any practical penalty for transgressors. As expressed by the act itself<sup>364</sup>:

*“Employers should endeavor (emphasis added) to give equal opportunities to men and women when recruiting and hiring workers, [...] to treat women workers on an equal footing with male workers when assigning posts or promoting workers”. (EEO Law, art. 6-7, 1985)*

In other words, until 1998 the extent to which the EEO Law’s recommendations had to be implemented was left to the discretionary power of employers and labor unions. With the 1999 amendment of the the EEO Law, however, implementing equal gender treatment in recruitment became an effective obligation.

The act contained three main changes: the first one concerned the possibility to turn to the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare in case employers would not make efforts to achieve equal opportunities, which means that transgressors would be eligible to penalties if needed. A second notification required the employers not to ignore sexual harassment at workplace, either taking measure to prevent it from happening or punish any form of physical or psychological violence retroactively, that is once the damage has been inflicted.

<sup>362</sup> Yamada, Shozo, “Equal Employment Opportunity Act”, *Japan Labor Review*, vol. 10, (2008), p. 9.

<sup>363</sup> Edwards, Linda N. “Equal Employment Opportunity in Japan: A View from the West”, *ILR Review* Vol 41 n. 2. (January 1988), p. 249

<sup>364</sup> Japanese Equal Employment Opportunity Law, art. 6-7, 1985

One last measure taken was the introduction of the concept of positive action, that is support programs financed by the government in order to foster employers themselves to publicise discriminatory incidents, since sometimes women might be afraid of notifying certain unfair behaviours against them<sup>365</sup>.

The EEO law was further enforced in 2007 in order to prohibit indirect discriminations both towards men or women, that is subtle and concealed behaviour aimed at hindering employees' performances somehow, such as treating full-time workers more favourably than part-time workers, or discriminating against women employees by reason of marriage and pregnancy<sup>366</sup>.

However, a lot of employees women are still reported to be subject to maternity harassment at workplace. According to a survey of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, published on the *Asahi Shimbun*<sup>367</sup>, in which pregnant interviewees have been asked about the treatment used towards pregnant Japanese women, it could be asserted that, although there might have been some improvements in achieving gender equality overall, smaller realities are still fighting against concealed discrimination.

As it has been mentioned, indeed, it is up to the firm to decide whether a certain type of behaviour has to be labeled as discriminatory and thus, sanctioned. As a matter of fact, 47.3% of the interviewees claimed that they have been accused of "causing troubles" or that "they should better retire" as they found out to be pregnant. In 21.3% of the cases examined, job contracts have not been renewed after the allowed period of childbearing. 20.5% of the women interviewed, argued that they have been definitively dismissed.

Smaller percentage have been dedicated either to women who complained to not get fair bonus (17.1%) and who have been forced to retire (15.9%). Looking at this statistic, pregnancy seems to be still quite discouraged in Japan.

Pregnant women are subject to so many social backlashes, that they start wondering whether their decision to have a baby has to be considered a mistake.

Furthermore, the recruitment criteria followed by employers are often blamed for being discriminatory by reason of sex<sup>368</sup>, thus applicants occur to be rejected with non-transparent and hardly identifiable motivations.

365 Yamada, Shozo. "Equal Employment Opportunity Act, Having Passed the Quarter-Century Milestone", *Japan Labor Review*, vol. 10, no. 2, (Spring 2013), p. 12

366 Ibid, pp. 12-16

367 Timmons, H. "How pregnant Japanese women are treated at work", *Asahi Shimbun, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare*, 2015, <https://www.theatlas.com/charts/4kfmH4MQI>

368 Yamada, Shozo. "Equal Employment Opportunity Act, Having Passed the Quarter-Century Milestone", *Japan Labor Review*, vol. 10, no. 2, (Spring 2013), p. 18

Anyway, there is no legislation that considered to ensure an appropriate work-life balance to workers. Indeed, none of the acts enacted deals with the concept of equilibrium between work and privacy, since the priority of Japanese government appears to be the achievement of absolute efficiency at the expenses of one's private life, trend that inevitably contributes to cause a decline in birth rates<sup>369</sup>.

*[...] "the decline in the Japanese birth rate has emerged as a form of retaliation and the price to be paid for a post-World War II society which has consistently placed its priorities on economic development and worked on the principle of koritsu-shijo-shugi (absolute efficiency)". (OGINO, 1993, p. 83)*

In other words, gender equality at workplace is still a goal to achieve. Above all, in Japanese society it is hard to maintain the double-role of working woman and mother<sup>370</sup>.

As a matter of fact, mothers feel responsible for their children's education, especially during the years that their progeny has to pass competitive exams in order to enrol in qualified high schools or colleges.

It has been recorded that many middle-class women tend to quit their job in this phase of their sons' life, in order to increase their chances to become socially affirmed in the future. Indeed, even if some progress in women employment is observable since Abe's arrows have been launched, gender inequality persists: women are still struggling to obtain security and institutional support and they are still likely to gain lower salaries compared to men for carrying equal jobs<sup>371</sup>.

Furthermore, as already mentioned, the second decline of the M-curve is mainly caused by the necessities of a sharply ageing society, which often draws women to retire in order to take care of their elderly relatives<sup>372</sup>.

*"In an ageing society the burden for the care of the elderly falls on the family, as social supports outside the family are few." (WHITE, 1992, p. 77)*

369 Ogino, M., "Women and the Decline of the Birth Rate", *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 1, No. 1, *Population and Family Planning*, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., (May, 1993), p. 83.

370 White, Merry "Women and Social Change in Japan", *Daedalus*, Vol. 121, No. 4, The MIT press, (Fall, 1992), p. 74.

371 Ibid, p. 80.

372 Ibid, p. 77.

Someone argues that although nowadays the issue of elderly care is partly trying to be solved with the introduction of foreign workers, such as women from Vietnam, Philippines and Indonesia<sup>373</sup>, requirements for being employed are often very high.

As a consequence, usually it is a member of the family who takes care of aged relatives: in ninety-five per cent of the cases, the caregiver is reported to be the daughter of the elder person<sup>374</sup>.

To sum up, it might be predictable that in the following years, the M-curve will show a always less pronounced decline during women's first withdrawal from workforce, since there are always more women who decide to save their career, postponing marriage and childbearing or just renouncing to them.

What is more, since Japan is dealing with a shortage of eldercare workers, if the government would not implement measures to respond to this urgent demand, not only the "financial burden of providing pensions and medical and social services for the elderly will increase dramatically"<sup>375</sup>, but it may also be registered a premature sharp decline in the second slope of the M-curve, in case no other available resource for eldercare will be found.

By the way of conclusion, we have seen that Japanese government had tried to adopt different domestic solutions to the crippling national labor shortage before turning to the option of "external" aid.

However, both the expansion of working women's rights and the re-employment of aged workers have demonstrated not to be enough in order to offset the concerning plunge in domestic labor.

Therefore, Japanese government had to turn to "guest workers". Today, *dekasegi* migrants are named "guest workers", definition that, according to the former Minister Shinzo Abe<sup>376</sup>, enhances the temporary nature of the migratory flows.

Although there are different kind of migrations, in Japan it is very complex to draw a line between whoever is a "migrant" and who a "foreign resident", or a "migrant worker"<sup>377</sup>. In the following paragraph, we will take into analysis Japanese immigration policies so as to make this distinction more clear.

373 "Japan wants 10,000 Asian elderly care workers in 3 years", *Nikkei Asian Review*. 13 June 2017; 15 December 2017 <<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/Policy-Politics/Japan-wants-10-000-Asian-elderly-care-workers-in-3-years?page=2>>

374 White, Merry "Women and Social Change in Japan", *Daedalus*, Vol. 121, No. 4, The MIT press, (Fall, 1992), p.77.

375 Ogino, M., "Women and the Decline of the Birth Rate", *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 1, No. 1, *Population and Family Planning*, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., (May, 1993), p. 79.

376 Enda Curran, "Japan quietly accepting foreign workers — just don't call it immigration", *The Japan Times*, 3 November 2016; 4 December 2017. <<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/11/03/national/japan-quietly-accepting-foreign-workers-just-dont-call-immigration/>>

377 Morris-Suzuki, Tessa, *Borderline Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p.13

According to the Immigration Bureau (2016), in Japan, the most prominent foreign nationalities have Asian origins.

More precisely, it is estimated that the majority of the total foreigners come from the Republic of Korea (457.772), China (665.847), Philippines (229.595) and Brazil (173.437), and that gather mainly in the prefectures of Osaka, Tokyo and Aichi<sup>378</sup>.

Despite numerically, foreign residents in Japan are almost imperceptible (1.76 percent out of the total population), they are expected to grow considerably in the following years, in sight of Japanese ageing and demographic crisis.

378 Source: Statistic Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, Japan Statistical Yearbook 2017, Population and Households <<http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/nenkan/66nenkan/1431-02.htm>>



### 3.3 Overview on Japanese postwar immigration policies

In this paragraph I will try to provide a brief overview on Japanese immigration policies. In order to analyse the current crippling issues, I think it is worth to draw a general panorama on the creation of Japanese immigration system and until what extent it has been improved or modified throughout the years, especially in response to the severe national labor shortage that hit the Country in the late 1980s.

First of all, it might be argued that Japan was relatively unprepared to deal with immigration since it has never been targeted by immigration problems, with exception for Koreans and Chinese who were brought as laborers before and during the Second World War<sup>379</sup>.

As a matter of fact, the system of migration control in Japan has been claimed to find its basis in the pre-Meiji *sakoku* mentality.<sup>380</sup>

*"No other legislation more vividly embodies the sakoku mentality than the immigration and labour laws" (ITO, 1998, p. 109)*

The myth of Japanese "exceptionalism"<sup>381</sup>, founded on the principles of a unique and ethnically pure Country, contributed to shape somehow the restrictive immigration policies in force today.

Although some inevitable circumstances are compelling the Country to adopt a always more "welcoming" stance, it strikes me that Japanese government is still relying way too much on its discretionary power in migratory matters, which weakens its already patchy and relatively "new" immigration system. Let's make a step back to analyse the dawn of Japanese immigration policies.

The first steps towards a more rigorous border control's system were taken in the immediate Post-War, in order to block the wave of "undocumented migrants" who had smuggled into Japanese shores by boat. They were mainly Korean people who used to live in Japan before the Second World War drifted to the Country as forced laborers and consequently repatriated with the outburst of the global conflict. The majority did not even know that re-entry was "illegal" (and this is quite explanatory on the degree of transparency of post-War Japanese immigration policies).

379 Spencer, Steven A. "Illegal Migrant Laborers in Japan." *The International Migration Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, (1992), p. 754.

380 Mayumi Itoh, *Globalization of Japan: Japanese sakoku mentality and US effort to open Japan*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1998, p. 109.

381 Morris-Suzuki, T., *Borderline Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 11.

Therefore, in 1947, the SCAP<sup>382</sup> (Supreme commander for the Allied Power) issued an ordinance requiring foreigners to carry registration cards at their entry and aliens' control was left to the administration of local authorities, afterwards.

Unfortunately, the most of the migrants who arrived in Japan during the Cold War period remained "invisible", due to the status of chaos dominating the period of post-war reconstruction that prevented local officials from conducting their job efficiently.

As a consequence, many Korean migrants had not even been registered at their entry or had been mistakenly recorded<sup>383</sup>. In order to improve the monitoring of migrant inflows, in a few years migrations controls were centralised thanks to the contribution of Nicholas D. Collaer, an American official who drafted an Immigration Control Ordinance in 1951<sup>384</sup>.

The Ordinance marked a significant change in the migratory system. The following year, indeed, the new Migration Control Law turned into the Immigration Bureau, which shifted under the Ministry of Justice. However, some unsolved situations with foreigners who had been living in Japan since the colonial period, demonstrated that the new adopted system was still unripe and subjected to several limits.

The outburst of the Korean War in 1950, which suspended any kind of diplomatic relation between South Korea and Japan for fifteen years, did not help in defining the status of those foreigners living on Japanese soil. As a matter of fact, two years later, Koreans and Taiwanese on Japanese soil were informed that they would lose their Japanese nationality and become effective foreigners. Nationality was restricted only to "Japanese proper"<sup>385</sup>, under an ordinance of the Ministry of Justice, which de-nationalised Koreans and Taiwanese living in Japan.

As a consequence, the 530.000 Koreans and 30.000 Taiwanese residing in Japan after the War were deprived of some rights exclusively addressed to citizens, such as the access to public-sector jobs and suffrage. According to article 14 of the Constitution equality of rights should be guaranteed exclusively to nationals<sup>386</sup>:

***[...] "all nationals are equal under the law, and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status, or family origin" (JAPANESE CONSTITUTION, art. 14, 1946)***

382 Military government established by General Douglas McArthur during the Allied Occupation of Japan in the post-war.

383 Morris-Suzuki, T., *Borderline Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 90- 91.

384 Ibid, pp. 101-109.

385 Surak, Kristin. "Convergence in Foreigners' Rights and Citizenship Policies? A Look at Japan." *The International Migration Review*, vol. 42, no. 3, (2008), pp. 557-558.

386 Japanese Constitution, Article 14, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan  
<[http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/human/race\\_rep1/intro.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/human/race_rep1/intro.html)>

However, in 1964, the Japanese Supreme Court took the decision to extend this provision to alien residents as well. Anyway, the acknowledgement of aliens' rights remained slow to be enforced and until 1965, Koreans in Japan remained under an undefined status of "neither permanent residents nor temporary visitors"<sup>387</sup>.

It is interesting to highlight that the Migration Control Law had been the first act to embody a discretionary power, granting some individuals, like Koreans, a "special permissions to stay", under certain circumstances<sup>388</sup>.

Today, there are about 348,626 special permanent residents in Japan, reported to be "foreign nationals who have continued to reside in Japan since on or before September 2, 1945, having lost their Japanese nationality pursuant to the Treaty of Peace with Japan and their descendants who were born in Japan and have continued to reside in Japan" (Immigration Bureau, 2015). We will see that "special residents", however, does not always imply receiving a "special treatment".

However, a new attitude towards foreigners have been promoted after the social changes that involved Japanese society in the mid-1980s. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Japan had been the protagonist of a rapid industrialisation, that had been efficiently handled autonomously through the implementation of domestic resources. Indeed, in the 1960s, Japanese workforce was mainly composed by rural laborers and facilitated through technologies introduced by large corporations.<sup>389</sup>

The prevision of an imminent change had been slightly perceived in 1973, when Japan had been subjected to an oil embargo by the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, together with other Countries, for having supported Israel during the Yom Kippur War<sup>390</sup>. The restriction mentioned fuelled an accelerated process of automation and labor-saving within Japanese industries<sup>391</sup>.

As a consequence, in 1985, Japanese local currency, the *yen*, underwent a sharp upward revaluation as a result of the Plaza Accord<sup>392</sup>, which marked a significant wage differential between Japan and its Asian neighbouring Countries.

387 Morris-Suzuki, T., *Borderline Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 115.

388 *Ibid.*, p. 175.

389 Yamanaka, Keiko. "New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan." *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 1, (1993), p. 74

390 The Oil Shock of 1973 had been an energy crisis that increased of the oil price and its derivatives. The crisis was triggered by the Yom Kippur War, when Syria and Egypt attacked Israel on the occasion of the Yom Kippur, a Jewish celebration held on October 6th.

391 Kajita, Takamichi. "CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOREIGN WORKER PROBLEM IN JAPAN: TO AN ANALYTICAL VIEWPOINT." *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, (1995), pp. 1–26

392 Historic agreement signed in 1985 by France, Germany, United States, Japan and United Kingdom to devalue the dollar, as a consequence of an account deficit.

On the one hand, the belief that Japan had become a land of easy and quick-money served as a *push factor* to attract laborers from the less-developed neighbouring Countries, whose plan was to take advantage of the situation and send remittances back home<sup>393</sup>.

On the other hand, the appreciation of the *yen* brought Japanese labor costs to a higher level with respect to the rest of the world, hence competing with Countries with lower labor costs became more difficult.

In Japan, who suffered the most from the *yen* appreciation was the more labor-dependent small and medium sized companies, which had already boasted a labor cost advantage in the past and did not have the possibility to relocate some operations of production offshore<sup>394</sup>.

Moreover, these happenings also caused a recession of some industries, especially in the construction and manufacturing sectors, further hit by a shortage of labor, which began to promote the employment of foreign workers as the only solution to revive their business.

It is worth to mention that during its process of economic growth, Japan has never counted on cheap foreign immigration, unlike others superpowers such as the United States.

The reason of Japanese self-sufficiency before 1980s can be explained analysing a series of factors intrinsic to Japanese labor system.

The key-factors of Japanese successful local employment plan were the highly-mechanisation of the production and its system of labor market flexibility.

Labor flexibility has to be intended as students who are eager to engage in part-time work to catch up with their scholastic expenses, employees who work overtime and elderly people aged sixty or over-sixty, who continue to work after their retirement<sup>395</sup>.

According to Tsuda, the national lack of workforce had been the outcome of several crippling factors of social changing: a declining fertility rate, the rapid razing of the population and the drain of rural labor resources<sup>396</sup>.

Therefore, as we saw in the previous paragraphs, Japan initially tried to use its internal assets to fill the increasing national labor shortage.

393 Spencer, Steven A. "Illegal Migrant Laborers in Japan." *The International Migration Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, (1992), p. 761.

394 Ibid, p 760.

395 Tsuda, Takeyuki. "The Motivation to Migrate: The Ethnic and Sociocultural Constitution of the Japanese-Brazilian Return-Migration System." *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 48, no. 1, (1999), pp. 4-5.

396 Ibid, p. 4.

A first step was moved towards a broader inclusion of women and workers who had already retired in low-level jobs. However, female and elderly participation in workforce had already been increased considerably with respect to other industrialised Countries.

Furthermore, the employment of women might represent an issue with regard to certain white-collar positions in Japanese society, and thus their potential is often circumscribed to part-time jobs<sup>397</sup>.

What is more, in the 1980s, it was becoming always more difficult to find young citizens willing to engage in 3K jobs, depicted as *kitsui*, *kiken*, and *kitanai*<sup>398</sup>, which respectively means difficult, dangerous and dirty, category that included the manufactory sector, indeed<sup>399</sup>.

On the other hand, other viable options to block the shrinking labor force entailed the intervention on the production chain.

However, also the shift of some operations previously carried out by employees to machines, and thus automating the production process as much as possible, showed its only partial feasibility.

Transferring the manufactory abroad through the relocation of the product had been another option considered, despite the awareness that this measure would have been very risky to the domestic economy, and that many firms did not have the proper *know-how* to move part of the production overseas.

As a consequence, the introduction of foreign workers had been addressed as “the only realistic and cost-effective source of labor”<sup>400</sup>.

It has to be highlighted that foreign workers are prohibited to engage in unskilled labor in Japan. The Directive n. 42 of 1899 specified that foreign applicants were forbidden to engage in “low-unskilled labouring occupations” such as “farming, fishing, mining, construction, building, manufacturing, transport, hauling, longshore work and other miscellaneous trades”<sup>401</sup>. Anyway, although unskilled foreign labor was not officially acknowledged by the government and the debates over the acceptance of foreign workers did not pass without disapprovals, the pressure of the industries affected by a crippling labor shortage compelled Japan to soften its immigration policies.

397 Tsuda, Takeyuki. “The Motivation to Migrate”, *Economic Dev. and Cultural Change*, vol. 48, (1999), pp. 5-6.

398 Yamanaka, Keiko. “New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan.” *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 1, (1993), pp. 75–76.

399 W. Mark Fruin, *Knowledge Works: Managing Intellectual Capital at Toshiba*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 132.

400 Price, M., Benton L., *Migrants to the Metropolis: The Rise of Immigrant Gateway Cities*, Syracuse University Press, 2008, p. 359.

401 Morris-Suzuki, T., *Borderline Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 44.

Therefore, in 1989 the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, issued in 1951, was amended and one year later, new disposals were implemented.

The first one was that unskilled labor, which is pretty stigmatised in Japanese society, would be conceived only as a “supplementary” role to fill the sectors that the local industries were no longer able to administrate.

Moreover, the amendment of the law envisaged three new measures to cope with the hampering national labor shortage.

First of all, ten new residence categories were added to the Immigration Law, up to a total of twenty-eight status through which foreigners might enter Japan legally, specifying the clauses of eligibility<sup>402</sup>.

All “newcomers” had to register compulsory as foreign residents within ninety days from their entry. Among the new categories, it is worth to highlight the new “long-term” status granted to the descendants of Japanese emigrants (*Nikkeijin*), up to the third generation, that we will take into analysis in the next paragraph. As a matter of fact, before June 1990<sup>403</sup>

***“No explicit status existed for unskilled laborers, but there was a separate catch-all status for “persons who do not fall under any other status but are permitted to reside at the discretion of the Ministry of Justice”. (SPENCER, 1992, p. 762)***

In other words, the informal acceptance of unskilled labor was left to the discretionary choice of the Ministry of Justice.

A second measure taken has been simplifying the procedures to obtain a visa permit, in order to better deal with the increasing arrival of migrants.

Last but not least, for the first time a promising but still unripe attempt to discourage the employment of illegal foreign labor was implemented, through the deterrent of imposing criminal penalties to those companies or recruit brokers that would violate the law<sup>404</sup>.

Furthermore, no longer after that, through a new decree the government achieved to obtain the permission to soften the so-called “trainee programs” aimed at training foreign workers in Japanese companies.

402 Yamanaka, Keiko. “New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan.” *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 1, (1993), pp. 75–76.

403 Spencer, Steven A. “Illegal Migrant Laborers in Japan.” *The International Migration Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, (1992), p. 762.

404 Immigration Bureau, 2004. <<http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/hourei/index.html>>

The decree, which legalised the engagement of foreign workers in manual labor, allowed many small-scale firms to take advantage of the suitable “company trainees” category to hire cheap labor<sup>405</sup>.

Therefore, along the decade of the 1980s, the vicious cycle of the Japanese labor market versatility had been broken.

Women, elderly and seasonal workers were gradually replaced by an uprising demand of “opening” to foreigner workers fractionating public opinion and political parties, which took divergent stances.

First of all, it is interesting to note that, whereas other developed Countries were already used to co-exist in a multicultural environment, Japan was still debating whether, and until what extent, accepting foreigners or not.

During the initial years of the Bubble Economy (1986-1991), in which Japan recorded the greatest inflation on real estate and stock market prices, a limited number of foreign specialists had been allowed to work in the Country to revitalise some industries sectors<sup>406</sup>.

Thus, although some labor-scarce industries, such as construction and manufactory, had already started to hire foreign workers illegally since the mid- '80s and they were eager to legalise their status, public opinion was generally against aliens' settlement.

The same stance was shared by large companies and governmental agencies, who would rather hire foreign workers illegally since they were not so dependent on them such as small and medium size firms<sup>407</sup>.

Even political parties were unable to come up with a unilateral stance. Although still today, one might come across headings of Japanese newspaper questioning about the immigration dilemma, shedding light on the never-solved issue, it might be stated that the happenings of the 1980s, at least, raised the consciousness that immigration was an upcoming issue to be faced, somehow.

I found Yamanaka assertion about the destiny of foreign workers in Japan, pronounced more than twenty years ago, quite looking-forward in describing the situation:

**[...] “foreign worker problem is not a current problem but a future problem in Japan”. (YAMANAKA, 1993, p. 7)**

405 Yamanaka, Keiko. “New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan.” *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 1, (1993), p. 76.

406 Surak, Kristin. “Convergence in Foreigners' Rights and Citizenship Policies? A Look at Japan.” *The International Migration Review*, vol. 42, no. 3, (2008), pp. 560-563.

407 Yamanaka, Keiko. “New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan.” *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 1, (1993), pp. 7-8.

### 3.4 Special but not enough: the controversial privileged status of the *Nikkeijin*

In this section, I will try to analyse the strategic role covered by the *Nikkeijin* in Japanese immigration policies, since a broader analysis of the topic has already been provided in the previous chapter.

I will also question whether the special treatment granted to the descendants of Japanese emigrants stemmed from a pure sign of benevolence or whether some opportunistic reasons were involved, making the “specialness” of those people quite fragile.

Firstly, I think it is worth to clarify that I will focus merely on those *Nikkeijin* coming from Brazil, subject of my research, because they had a major impact on Japanese society, rather than other Latin American Countries.

As we have seen in the previous paragraph, since the early 1980s, descendants of pre-war decades Japanese emigrants coming from South American Countries (mainly Brazil and Peru), the *Nikkeijin*, have been return migrating to Japan as “short-term” and “low-cost” workers.

It has to be pointed out that none of these migrants was triggered by reasons of extreme poverty, but they were rather spurred by the huge disparity of wages between their own Country and Japan, stemmed from the appreciation of the *yen* in the mid-1980s, that would have allowed them to earn much more money in a much shorter period of time<sup>408</sup>.

The majority of the *Nikkeijin* came from Countries whose economy was deteriorated by a huge national debts and hyperinflation, like Brazil, causing a decline of incomes that prevented the higher socioeconomic educated classes to live a well-off life. Indeed, statistics showed that mid-class Brazilians were more prone to migrate to Japan because their national working situation did not satisfy their expectations of wealth<sup>409</sup>.

As happened in the 1890s, when the first Japanese emigrated to Brazil, it could be argued that choosing Japan has been the outcome of an equally well-rationed choice, moved by the same intent to fill the host Country' s lack of labor.

The main reason that drawn a wave of *Nikkeijin* to Japan from the 1980s, however, stemmed from another consideration of “transnational ethnic connection”<sup>410</sup> that bound the descendants of Japanese emigrants to Japan.

408 Tsuda, Takeyuki. “The Motivation to Migrate: The Ethnic and Sociocultural Constitution of the Japanese-Brazilian Return-Migration System.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 48, no. 1, (1999), p. 2.

409 Ibid, p. 8.

410 Tsuda, Takeyuki. “The Motivation to Migrate: The Ethnic and Sociocultural Constitution of the Japanese-Brazilian Return-Migration System.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 48, no. 1, (1999), p. 8.



In other words, the *Nikkeijin* did not opt for Japan only because of economic convenience, but rather for a sense of belonging to the Country of their ancestors. Brazilian *Nikkeijin* left their Country with the hope that their assumed cultural affinity to Japanese culture would have played a positive role in their adaptation process.

As a matter of fact, before 1990, the criteria of admission to Japan were quite rigid due to Japanese restrictive policies. There were three types of *Nikkeijin* involved: first generation or *issei*, second generation or *nisei* and third generation or *sansei*.

It has been proved that the first Japanese-Brazilian migrated to Japan around 1985 were either first-generation *issei* with Japanese nationality or second-generation *nisei* who often retained double-nationality, when it was still permitted.

The *issei* who retained Japanese nationality were allowed to come to Japan and work without particular restrictions.

On the other hand, the following generation, the *nisei*, used the emotional pretext to visit their relatives in Japan in order to engage in some working activity.

For those *Nikkeijin* of third generation, though, the situation was a little more complex since the most of them did lose their ancestral linkage with Japan, that is, they were not nationality holder<sup>411</sup>.

Hence, for those *Nikkeijin* who did not retain Japanese nationality, the only way to enter the Country was to rely on a Japanese relative who would have sponsor their permanence, unless the Ministry of Justice used its discretionary power to grant them a special permission to stay.<sup>412</sup>

However, this discretionary approach was quickly turned in a more formal immigration policy in order to facilitate the entry of descendants of Japanese emigrants to Japan.

Therefore, in 1990, through an amendment of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, a new labor recruitment plan allowed descendants of Japanese born abroad, up to the third generation, to legally work in Japan for a period of three years<sup>413</sup>.

411 Kajita, Takamichi. "CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOREIGN WORKER PROBLEM IN JAPAN: TO AN ANALYTICAL VIEWPOINT." *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, (1995), pp. 1–26, p. 12.

412 Ibid, p. 9.

413 Yamanaka, Keiko. "New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan." *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 1, (1993), p. 78-79.

Indeed, under the article 4 of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, a new visa category meant to allow Japanese descendants to reside in the Country, named “Long Term Resident” status, was added.

According to the Act, long-term residents are those individuals “who are authorised to reside in Japan with designation of period of stay by the Minister of Justice in consideration of special circumstances”<sup>414</sup>.

The amendment of the Act conferred the *Nikkeijin* an almost-permanent resident status, since their permissions, which initially allowed three years of stay, were unlimited renewable and applicable to any kind of employment or activity<sup>415</sup>.

The *Nikkeijin* have been argued to represent the “most visible outcome”<sup>416</sup> of the amendment of the 1990 Immigration Law.

As a matter of fact, they had promptly satisfied the demand of the most labor-hungry industries, especially in the manufacturing sector, due to their renewable visa status that exhibited no evident work restrictions. Through these disguised working program, many *Nikkeijin* were successfully employed in unskilled labor, replacing other nationalities that had been consequently subjected to heavy limitation on entry.

It has been pointed out, in fact, that the low-skills jobs where the *Nikkeijin* have been placed were previously carried out by Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Iranian workers. Japanese government, willing to reduce the presence of these “visible” non-Japanese descendants, availed of the opportunity to compensate their loss for the most publicly accepted *Nikkeijin*.

Ready to respond to its discriminatory behaviour towards other categories of foreign workers, Japanese government used the pretext of “family reasons” to justify the privilege granted to the co-ethnic *Nikkeijin*<sup>417</sup>.

**“The non-economic (my emphasis) category “long-term resident” enabled the government to meet economic needs without risking accusations of discrimination.” (SURAK, 2008, p. 562)**

However, it has been proved soon that the majority of the *Nikkeijin*, mostly Brazilian *Nikkeijin*, were actually working in Japan.

414 Immigration Bureau, Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act <<http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/hourei/index.html>>

415 Price, M., Benton, L., *Migrants to the Metropolis: The Rise of Immigrant Gateway Cities*, Syracuse University Press, 2008, p. 360.

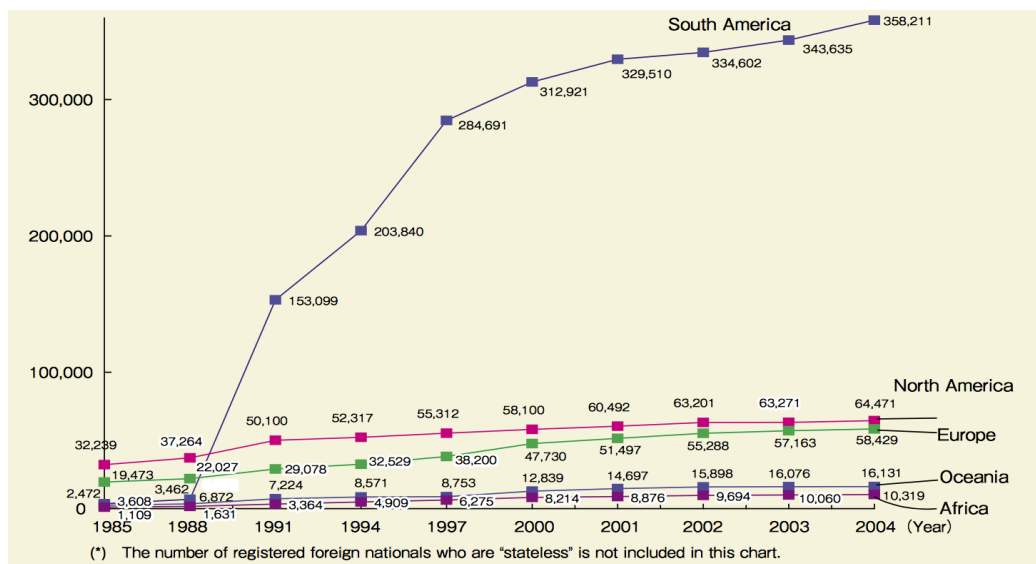
416 Surak, Kristin. “Convergence in Foreigners' Rights and Citizenship Policies? A Look at Japan.” *The International Migration Review*, vol. 42, no. 3, (2008), pp. 560-563.

417 Ibid, p. 562.

The main purpose of their journey came to assume a mere economic connotation, especially from the third generation on. Many *sansei*, in fact, had no Japanese relatives to wait for them in Japan, hence their employment-seeking was likely supported by labor brokers, rather than kins<sup>418</sup>.

As a result, the inflow of *Nikkeijin* coming from South America had rapidly grown since 1989<sup>419</sup>. In 1988, before the amendment of the Immigration Law, there were 6,872 *Nikkeijin* living in Japan.

The figure below shows the *boom* of the *Nikkeijin* presence in Japanese society after the revision of the Immigration Law, that became much more significant than any other registered foreign nationality. It could be observed that the *Nikkeijin* community in Japan insistently skyrocketed until the early XXI century, reaching a peak in 2004, accounting to 358,211 *Nikkeijin* residents.



Source: Immigration Bureau, 2005

The fact of having “no restriction” up to the third generation on the activities they wanted to pursue, in a sense, implicitly authorised *Nikkeijin* to engage in unskilled labor legally.

418 Kajita, Takamichi. “CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOREIGN WORKER PROBLEM IN JAPAN: TO AN ANALYTICAL VIEWPOINT.” *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, (1995), pp. 12-13.

419 Yamanaka, Keiko. “New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan.” *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 1, (1993), pp. 72–90

Japanese officials had various reasons to consider the co-ethnic Japanese descendants the “most acceptable”<sup>420</sup> solution to the lack of national labor force.

As a matter of fact, the *Nikkeijin* were expected to have a double beneficial effect on Japanese economy: not only they would have filled the demand for workforce (there were a lot of migrants willing to work in Japan coming from the neighbouring Asian Countries, with no particular need to recruit *Nikkeijin*), but they would also partially contribute to absorb the inflows of illegal immigration<sup>421</sup>.

Indeed, the inflow of Japanese descendants was thought to be relatively small compared to the massive intrusion that would cause opening the “gates” to all the rest of the migratory flows. The *Nikkeijin* were also preferred over other foreigners because of the assumption of their temporary intention of stay.

Furthermore, although the acceptance of foreigners in Japan had always been the target of public objections, the entry of the Brazilian *Nikkeijin* were expected to pass exempt from criticisms or political conflicts in the name of ethnic affinity. In other words, the main concern of the government was to pick the less damaging alternative to the disruption of Japanese ethnic homogeneity.

The *Nikkeijin* were supposed to naturally adapt to Japanese society on the assumption they had inherited Japanese culture from their parents, that is they would have been “culturally invisible”<sup>422</sup>.

However, until what extent the *Nikkeijin* would have actually maintained their cultural identification with Japanese society? It has been argued that the third generation of *Nikkeijin*, the *sansei*, had lost any cultural connection to Japan, bound to that Country only by blood<sup>423</sup>. The majority of the *sansei* are reported to not even know the language and that their quite “Brazilianised” families in Brazil prevented them to come into contact with the true Japanese culture.

Many of them did not have relatives in Japan, thus they might have lost interest and motivation in discovering their origins, since they actually felt Brazilian inside.

Therefore, the privileged status conferred to the *sansei* through an “arbitrary” decision taken by the Ministry of Justice had been the target of various criticisms, since the boundary between them and other foreigners appeared quite blurred.

420 Tsuda, Takeyuki. “The Motivation to Migrate: The Ethnic and Sociocultural Constitution of the Japanese-Brazilian Return-Migration System.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 48, no. 1, (1999), p. 13.

421 Ibid, p. 11.

422 Tsuda, Takeyuki. *Strangers in the ethnic homeland*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 62-63.

423 Kajita, Takamichi. “CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOREIGN WORKER PROBLEM IN JAPAN: TO AN ANALYTICAL VIEWPOINT.” *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, (1995), p. 12.

However, one might assume that the attempt of Japanese officials was to fight illegal migration legalising the status of the *Nikkeijin* as official unskilled foreign workforce. Indeed, many Countries believed that the employment of Japanese descendants in the labor market was the proof that Japan had started to accept foreign unskilled workforce by an informal way<sup>424</sup>. On the contrary, the purpose of Japanese government was not to acknowledge the *Nikkeijin* presence as an unskilled foreign resource, not even to break the principle that Japan does not officially recognise foreign unskilled labor<sup>425</sup>.

The descendants of Japanese emigrants did not have to be treated as simple *dekasegi*, that is seasonal worker, because they did not have the duty to engage in working activities in Japan, unless they wish to do so.

On the contrary, the *Nikkeijin* were asked to add value to the opportunity they were given, which was not only about working in Japan, but rather exploring their own culture.

[...] "the policy was (and continues to be) ideologically justified as an opportunity provided by the benevolence of Japanese government for those of Japanese descendants born abroad to explore their ethnic heritage and visit their ancestral homeland". (TSUDA, 1999, p. 11)

As a matter of fact, although the majority of the *Nikkeijin* were *de facto* working in Japan, it was claimed that the purpose of their journey was precisely to experience part of their ancestral culture by traveling, visiting relatives, learning the language and so on<sup>426</sup>.

Although the Immigration Law maintained its strict stance over the illegality of unskilled labor, imposing sanctions on employers and labor brokers who continued to hire foreign workers through "side-doors", Tsuda (2008) argued that the Latin American *Nikkeijin* had been one of the biggest source of unskilled labor imported since the 1990s<sup>427</sup>.

As already mentioned, encouraged to visit their relatives and discover their roots, the most of the *Nikkeijin* eventually ended up working in Japanese factories, exploited as cheap and flexible labor force. Anyway, the reason that drawn Japanese government to open its doors to the *Nikkeijin* was based on the assumption that they would be "easily assimilable" and "racially invisible" because of their ethnic origins<sup>428</sup>.

424 Kajita, T., "CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOREIGN WORKER PROBLEM IN JAPAN", (1995), pp. 12-13.

425 Tsuda, T. "The Motivation to Migrate: The Ethnic and Sociocultural Constitution of the Japanese-Brazilian Return-Migration System." *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 48, no. 1, (1999), pp. 10-11.

426 Ibid, pp. 11-12.

427 Tsuda, Takeyuki "Local Citizenship and Foreign Workers in Japan". *The Asia Pacific Journal*, Vol. 6, (May 2008), p. 6.

428 Morris-Suzuki, T., *Borderline Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 241.

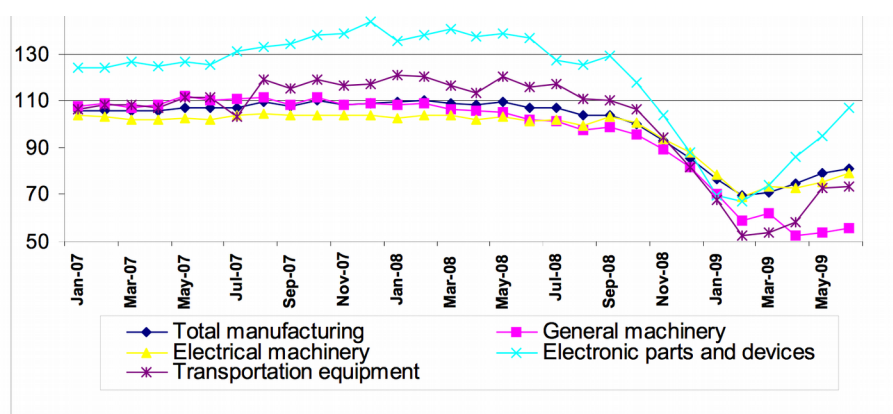
However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the government expectations were revealed to be wrong. Indeed, the assimilation process unfolded to be more difficult than expected, especially for those *Nikkeijin* who did not know the language and were quite different in demeanour.

On the one hand, it might seem that the special status granted to the *Nikkeijin* partly prevented foreign workers belonging to different racial groups to access to Japanese labor market. As a matter of fact, despite Japanese Law on Equal Employment and Opportunities<sup>429</sup> condemns discriminations based on race, the *Nikkeijin* have been outstandingly preferred with respect to other nationalities, especially throughout the 90's<sup>430</sup>.

However, in spite of their special treatment with respect to other foreigners, the *Nikkeijin* themselves have not been exempted from exploitation, especially at workplace<sup>431</sup>.

Often, they have not been granted with job security, or they have not been given equal benefits to their Japanese colleagues due to their assumed temporary and unpredictable length of stay. As a consequence, often they have been the first employees to be dismissed during an economic downturn, as it happened in 2009.

Between 2008 and 2009, Japan was in the middle of an economic recession that hit especially the manufacturing production. As it could be observed in the figure below, the two industrial sectors to suffer the sharper loss had been transportation equipment and general machinery, especially throughout a critical five months between January 2009 and May 2009, when first transportation equipment around February 2009 and, a few months later, general machinery, dropped to fifty pieces of production per month.



Source: Ministry of Economy and Industry (available: [www.meti.go.jp/statistics/tyo/iip](http://www.meti.go.jp/statistics/tyo/iip)).

429 Japanese Equal Employment Opportunity Law of 1985, effective in April 1986, which prohibits gender discrimination with respect to recruitment, hiring, promotion, training, and job assignment.

430 Kajita, Takamichi. "CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOREIGN WORKER PROBLEM IN JAPAN: TO AN ANALYTICAL VIEWPOINT." *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, (1995), pp. 1–26, pp. 12-13.

431 Yamanaka, Keiko. "New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan." *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 1, (1993), pp. 72–90

In that occasion, the special treatment that had been conferred to the *Nikkeijin* almost twenty years before lost its benevolent characteristic and unfolded its opportunistic feature.

No longer seen as essential to fill Japanese labor shortage but rather as a hindrance to local workers, threatened to lose their jobs, the *Nikkeijin* were politely invited to go back home. In 2009, there were around 101.250 Japanese-Brazilians living in Japan according to the Immigration Bureau, as showed in the figure below, among whom 70-80% of them remained unemployed during the crisis. Thus, in order to face the crippling situation, Japanese government advanced the proposal to pay 3,000 dollars to each unemployed foreigner of Japanese descent and further 2,000 dollars to each family member to repatriate<sup>432</sup>.

The "Project to support repatriation of *Nikkeijin* with employment difficulties"<sup>433</sup> required Japanese-Brazilians to cede their long-term status and abandon any future right to come back to Japan, until economic and employment condition improve, at least.

It is important to keep in mind that, since 1990, the *Nikkeijin* have been treated as almost-permanent resident with no restriction about visa renewals or job engagement, and that many of them had started a new life in Japan.

However, despite the *Nikkeijin* have been special enough to be allowed to work in Japan since the early 1990s, as soon as the labor market swayed, they have been no longer considered "special" enough to stay. As it could be observed in the figure below, the number of long-term Brazilian residents have been decreasing since 2009, immediately after the financial crisis.

14-2 Changes in the number of mid to long-term residents with the status of residence of "Long-Term Resident" by nationality/region (People)

Nationality/region	Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total		221,771	194,602	177,983	165,001	160,391
Brazil		101,250	77,359	62,077	53,058	47,903
Philippines		37,131	37,870	39,331	40,714	42,156
China		33,651	32,048	30,498	27,150	26,240
Peru		16,695	14,849	13,496	11,941	11,269
Korea		8,622	8,374	8,288	7,774	7,636
Viet Nam		5,847	5,771	5,726	5,558	5,513
Thailand		3,532	3,641	3,875	3,800	3,785
Myanmar		795	1,116	1,381	1,647	2,000
Bolivia		2,539	2,219	2,054	1,884	1,902
Indonesia		1,774	1,735	1,756	1,714	1,747
Others		9,935	9,620	9,501	9,761	10,240

Source: Immigration Bureau, 2014

432 Masters, C., "Japan to Immigrants: Thanks, But You Can Go Home Now". *Time*, Tokyo, 20th April 2009. 17th January 2018. <<http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1892469,00.html>>

433 Arudou, D., "'Embedded Racism' in Japanese migration policies: Analyzing Japan's 'revolving door' work visa regimes under Critical Race Theory", *Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, Volume 3 No 1, Honolulu (2013), pp. 168-169.

Although the “repatriation program” has been strongly blamed for its discriminatory attitude against the *Nikkeijin*, paradoxically, they have been “preferred” over other foreigners of non-Japanese descent by blood.

Nonetheless, it raised a double-discrimination: not only against the *Nikkeijin* community itself, but also against other foreigners who have also been affected by the economic crisis but were not provided with any kind of assistance by Japanese government.



### 3.3 *De facto* “back doors” for unskilled labor

There is still some confusion about the definition of “foreign worker” in Japan, and this makes the boundary between legal and illegal very fleeting, especially since there are some categories of foreign workers who are not allowed to work in Japan.

As it has been mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the third arrow of the *Abenomics* contemplates the acceptance of short-term immigrant workers. However, as asserted by the former Minister of Japanese economy, Heizo Takenaka: “The word ‘immigrant’ is not used in policymaking.

The prime minister [Shinzo Abe] often says it’s not immigration, it’s guest workers”<sup>434</sup>.

In this section, I will try to analyse the contradictions intrinsic to Japanese immigration policy system, that still relies on the discretionary power of the Ministry of Justice for several issues and on some archaic devices created at the beginning of the Cold War<sup>435</sup>.

It might be claimed that, in a system in which often the principles do not match with the practices, it is difficult to draw a line between “formal” and “informal” policies. It strikes me that, if policy makers themselves refuse to name problems for what they actually are, it will be difficult to address the problem itself and find proper measure to improve the blurred existent policies.

The creation of “back-doors” to allow the entrance of forbidden categories of migrants is only one of the aspects of an “underground” system that needs to emerge to be defined with transparency.

Although the first revision of the Immigration Law in 1990 aimed at fighting the recruitment of illegal workers, it also left some leeways of misinterpretation, creating the opposite effect, that is “side-doors” to import illegal workforce. Indeed, there are some categories of acknowledged “foreign workers” introduced with the revision of the law that could actually be exchanged for *de facto* disguised labor.<sup>436</sup>

*“Although the Japanese government has officially prohibited the importation of unskilled foreign labor [...] the Ministry of Justice (responsible for immigration policy) has created various “side-door” mechanisms that enable the legal importation of large numbers of unskilled foreign workers under visa categories officially intended for other purposes.” (TSUDA, 2008, p. 6)*

434 Curran, E., “Japan quietly accepting foreign workers — just don’t call it immigration”, The Japan Times, 3 November 2013. 18 January 2018, <[https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/11/03/national/japan-quietly-accepting-foreign-workers-just-dont-call-immigration/#.WmUI\\_jaMBsM](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/11/03/national/japan-quietly-accepting-foreign-workers-just-dont-call-immigration/#.WmUI_jaMBsM)>

435 Morris-Suzuki, T., *Borderline Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 245.

436 Tsuda, Takeyuki “Local Citizenship and Foreign Workers in Japan”. *The Asia Pacific Journal*, Vol. 6, (May 2008), pp. 5-6.

Let's analyse in detail the categories that are more likely to be exploited as cheap labor thanks to the "side-doors" created by the 1990 amendment of the Immigration Law.

Under the new act, the entry of four categories of unprofessional or unskilled workers (Latin American *Nikkeijin*, foreign students, female entertainers, and trainees) have been lightened. We have already discussed about the special treatment reserved to the *Nikkeijin*, focusing on Brazilian *Nikkeijin* in particular, in the previous section, thus I will shift to the further categories involved.

The revised act also included a new visa category for foreign students who wished to engage in part-time jobs, introducing the status of *shugakusei*, that is pre-college student who studies in Japanese language or vocational schools. Japanese language schools had been addressed as an effective mean to import cheap labor.

Indeed, labor recruiters had been the protagonists of scandals where they used to pay schools in order to "admit" students who, instead of attending class, were brought to the labor market<sup>437</sup>.

According to the Law, students at college (*ryugakusei*) and pre-college level (*shugakusei*) were legally allowed to work up to four hour per day, thus twenty hours weekly, and forty hours per week during the holidays<sup>438</sup>.

Pre-college students, however, contrarily to their peers attending college, were required to inform the Immigration Office about their engagement in working activities, and to report the exact amount of hours they had been working.

In practise, they were informally permitted to exceed the maximum threshold since the government did not dispose any measure to prevent these violations from happening.

Indeed, it has been found that many students coming from poor Asian neighbouring Countries (such as China, The Philippines, and Indonesia) used to overcome the amount of hours allowed, in order to support themselves, since studying in Japan requires a significant financial aid<sup>439</sup>.

This status was eventually abolished in 2010, but until then it has been one of the most exploited "back-door" used by the government to import low-cost labor.

437 Spencer, Steven A. "Illegal Migrant Laborers in Japan." *The International Migration Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, (1992), p. 764.

438 Yamanaka, Keiko. "New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan." *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 1, (1993), pp. 72-90, p. 81.

439 Kajita, Takamichi. "CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOREIGN WORKER PROBLEM IN JAPAN: TO AN ANALYTICAL VIEWPOINT." *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, (1995), pp. 9-10.

Female entertainers, or *yapayuki-san*, had been one of the first categories of illegal Asian working women drifted to Japan in the mid-80s, recruited by *yakuza*, a Japanese criminal organisation, to work in the food and entertaining fields.

Although after the revision of the Immigration Law, they continued to be admitted as professionals, they were actually employed to fill positions often shunned by Japanese women, such as dancers, bar hostesses, or involved in sex trade<sup>440</sup>.

Foreign trainees (*jisshūsei*) is another category that deserves to be analysed. Undoubtedly, trainees are less costly with respect to standard employees because the purpose of the programme is not to provide the trainees with a proper salary but rather to give them the opportunity to acquire new competences and skills<sup>441</sup>.

However, in order not to exchange “foreign trainees” with cheap labor, the 1990 amendment of the Immigration Law tried to clarify the true purpose of those programs<sup>442</sup>:

**[...]” (1) they must not be learned through repetition of a single operation; (2) trainees must be guaranteed a job in which they might use their newly learned skills upon return to their own Country; and (3) technology, skills or knowledge must not be easily obtainable in their country of origin.”**  
**(KEIKO, 1993, p. 80)**

The reference to the “repetition of a single operation” is a quite outstanding allusion to unskilled jobs, thus it could be read as an implicit way to say that trainees are not meant to be exploited or neither to take the place of robots.

Otherwise, the aim of the training program is to convey new skills that can be implemented in other developing Countries, the ones where the trainees come from. It is interesting to highlight that the training programs were reported to be launched mostly by small and medium-size companies, precisely those companies who were the most labor-hungry.

When the “trainee” category was created, it was meant to be valid for one year, at the end of which the “trainee” would have upgraded to the position of Intern/Researcher (*kenshūsei*), acquiring the social safety benefits of every legal worker<sup>443</sup>.

440 Yamanaka, Keiko. “New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan.” *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 1,(1993), pp. 72–90, p. 82.

441 Kajita, Takamichi. “CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOREIGN WORKER PROBLEM IN JAPAN: TO AN ANALYTICAL VIEWPOINT.” *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, (1995), p 10.

442 Yamanaka, Keiko. “New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan.” *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 1, (1993), p. 80.

443 Arudou, D., " 'Embedded Racism' in Japanese migration policies: Analyzing Japan's 'revolving door' work visa regimes under Critical Race Theory", *Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, Vol. 3 No 1, Honolulu, (2013), pp. 163-166.

All of these noble purposes, however, had been subjected to a modification in 1993, that brought the concept of trainee more closer to the definition of “foreign worker”.

Japanese government allowed that a trainee, once the program was completed, might decide to overstay and engage in working activities, including manual labor<sup>444</sup>.

The “trainees” were granted a twice renewable visa, basically created to extend their unprotected status as temporary cheap labor. Furthermore, contrarily to the *Nikkeijin*, exempted from any working restriction, trainees were actually subjected to several limitations.

First of all, their visa could not be unlimitedly renewable, and they were sponsored by their employer, which means that, in case of layoff, not only would have they cede their visa but also leave the Country<sup>445</sup>.

In addition, Japanese Industrial Trainees and Technical Interns programs have been reported to approach to slavery because of their mental and physical’s violation of rights<sup>446</sup>. It is important to highlight that the trainee system introduced in 1993 has never been translated in an actual “front-door” policy, but has rather maintained an informal feature so as to allow further revisions, when needed<sup>447</sup>. In other words, erasing the leeway of unclearness from a policy would not leave room for transgressions or violations of the Law.

Therefore, it is Japanese government’s care to maintain its policies vague. Japanese government is also aware that the amendment of the 1990 Immigration Act had opened the labor market to many illegal foreign workers, in fact fighting illegalities has repeatedly been one of the major challenge of the Basic Plan for Immigration Control in the latest years<sup>448</sup>.

However, very often it happens that some eyes turned blind to cover the Country’s need of manual labor<sup>449</sup>.

Moreover, illegal workers are often discouraged from reporting abuses. Although they have no access to health care, unprotected by Japanese labor laws and target of abuses by employers and labor brokers, their illegal status is the unique dread that prevents them from exposing their condition<sup>450</sup>.

444 Kajita, Takamichi. “CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOREIGN WORKER PROBLEM IN JAPAN: TO AN ANALYTICAL VIEWPOINT.” *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, (1995), pp. 10-11.

445 Arudou, D., “‘Embedded Racism’ in Japanese migration policies: Analyzing Japan’s ‘revolving door’ work visa regimes under Critical Race Theory”, *Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, Vol. 3 No 1, Honolulu, (2013), pp. 163-166.

446 Ibid, pp. 164-165.

447 K., Takamichi, “CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOREIGN WORKER PROBLEM IN JAPAN”, (1995), p. 13.

448 Immigration Bureau, Basic Plan for Immigration Control, 5th edition (2016) <[http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/seisaku/index.html#sec\\_01](http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/seisaku/index.html#sec_01)>

449 Kajita, Takamichi. “CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOREIGN WORKER PROBLEM IN JAPAN: TO AN ANALYTICAL VIEWPOINT.” *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, (1995), pp. 8-9.

450 Spencer, Steven A. “Illegal Migrant Laborers in Japan.” *The International Migration Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, (1992), pp. 762-764.

According to Tsuda<sup>451</sup>, the presence of illegal immigrant workers, composed by overstayers, smuggled immigrants and people employed through disguised visa, accounts to over 300.000 individuals (2005).

In order to fight illegal immigrations, the government have recently focused on reinforcing immigration controls, both by imposing new severe penalties to overstayers and immigrant smugglers and stiffening the entry procedures at national seaports and airports.

However, why in Japan do the majority of the foreign workers are permitted to engage only in non-professionals, or non-skilled, job positions? One of the reason is that, in Japan, job classifications are fluids and divided into stages.

There are employees who remains tied to a position all life long, such as part-time workers, and others that can aspire to higher qualified status. Usually, those who can yearn for promotions are not foreign workers.

However, there are two types of unskilled labor: one is the low-level jobs carried out by new employees at the first stage of their skill formation in large companies, who will be transferred to higher-level jobs once they acquire the necessary competences, that is “skilled labor to-be” (*mijukuren rodo*).

The second type of unskilled labor is the one which sticks people in the same low-job position forever, with no possibility of upgrading, that is non skilled-labor or *hijukuren rodo*.

This is the status under which many foreign workers are employed temporarily by small firms<sup>452</sup>.

Moreover, there are two necessary conditions to be hired in general labor in Japan: a full understand of Japanese language and being educated in Japanese schools.

Since it is quite obvious that foreign workers might not satisfy these requirements, not only are they usually hired in non-skilled labor, they also undergo a declassification with respect to their Country of origin.

Why should a person accept such a downgrading in social status? Again, the reason is quite simple. Money. Wage differential makes those people think that they may endure in non-skilled position for a short period of time.

451 Tsuda, Takeyuki “Local Citizenship and Foreign Workers in Japan”, *The Asia Pacific Journal*, Vol. 6, (May 2008), p. 7.

452 Yamanaka, Keiko. “New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan.” *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 1, (1993), p. 75.

Even for foreign high-skilled professionals, such as specialists or experts, the situation is quite complicated. Although they should be protected by the Law on Equal Employment and Opportunities, they can barely obtain managerial positions and they are not given equal benefits to local workers.

Furthermore, there are very strict requirements in order to be admitted as foreign high-skilled worker, which implies that the candidate have to own skills unavailable to local workforce<sup>453</sup>. Again, the requirements are very general and it is difficult to establish universal criteria to evaluate one's "exceptional" competences.

Therefore, even though in theory labor laws should apply to foreign workers without discriminations on the basis of their residence status and many immigrants would be eligible for health insurance, national pension plan and public housing, the pretext of their "temporary stay" is often used by employers and officials authorities to deprive them of these rights<sup>454</sup>.

In fact, the vagueness of Japanese immigration policies and the arbitrary degree of power of the governmental authorities leaves broad room for violations of the rules.

Overall, although it is undeniable that foreign workers had contributed, in the past, and are still contributing to Japanese economic adjustment, their incorporation in the market is not officially acknowledged<sup>455</sup>.

However, in spite of their official "invisibility", they have been expanding in Japanese society. I would also assert that, although initially Japanese government resorted to foreign workforce in order to fill the demand of undesirable jobs that Japanese citizens were not willing to engage in, the so-called 3K jobs, today the demand has amplified until flowing into other sectors, such as health care, and what initially seemed a temporary solution threaten to become an actual "co-existence".

However, the modalities through which Japanese authorities had tried to disguise the entrance of unskilled labor have varied throughout the years.

At the beginning, the government has attempted to compensate the national labor-shortage for the introduction of descendants of Japanese emigrants in the early 1990s.

However, we will also see that after the financial crisis that hit Japan in 2008-2009, the number of Japanese descendants gradually decreased and have been promptly replaced by immigrants coming from the neighbouring Asian Countries.

453 Spencer, Steven A. "Illegal Migrant Laborers in Japan." *The International Migration Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, (1992), p. 762.

454 Tsuda, Takeyuki "Local Citizenship and Foreign Workers in Japan". *The Asia Pacific Journal*, Vol. 6, 3 May (2008), pp. 9-10.

455 Kajita, Takamichi. "CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOREIGN WORKER PROBLEM IN JAPAN: TO AN ANALYTICAL VIEWPOINT." *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, (1995), pp. 10-11.

### 3.6 A present but non-existent immigration

In the following paragraphs, I will put an additional emphasis on the concept of “nonexistence” of foreign workers in Japanese society, analysing how this term has to be intended and to which categories of foreigners does it apply. In order to attain my purpose,

I have firstly wondered whether today some improvements have been made in order to take a more “multi-ethnic” stance at the international level.

Afterwards, it was my concern to investigate the utilisation of “back-door” policies in immigration laws, whether these camouflaged measures have been eventually turned into transparent “front-door” policies since the 1990 Amendment of the Immigration Law or they have just been switched for new categories of migrants.

It might be argued that Japan began to assume more relevance on the international sphere by the end of the 1970s, when the Country was particularly concerned about the conveyance of its international image among the *élite* of global leaders <sup>456</sup>.

In fact, in that period, Japan received very much pressure about the ratification of international treaties on human rights, especially after being nominated G7 member in 1975.

To avoid international criticisms, the government accepted to offer asylum to 500 Indochinese refugees veteran of the Vietnam War in 1978, even though it did not sign the Geneva Convention on the status of refugees until 1981.

Actually, the Country had not been exempted from asylum seekers appeals for help even during the Cold War, when, for example, the Committee for Republic of Korea Political Refugees in Japan demanded to interrupt the expatriation of South Korean refugees in Japan and to treat them according to the rights established by the international convention<sup>457</sup>.

However, Korean refugees in Japan had not been entitled with the status of refugees not even after Japan joined the Convention since, as argued by the UNHCR, the Geneva Convention was meant to address “people displaced by events *in Europe* (my emphasis) before 1951”<sup>458</sup>.

However, perhaps Japanese refugees policy’ s main downside is that it was shaped within the Immigration Law, which means that refugees are regarded almost as standard immigrants.

<sup>456</sup> Surak, Kristin. “Convergence in Foreigners’ Rights and Citizenship Policies? A Look at Japan.” *The International Migration Review*, vol. 42, no. 3, (2008), pp. 559-560.

<sup>457</sup> Morris-Suzuki, T., *Borderline Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 187-190.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid*, p. 189.

At least, this might explain the incredibly low admission of refugees within the Country and the draconian criteria to achieve a refugee status in Japan, which had discouraged many asylum seekers to apply.

On the other hand, by signing the Geneva Convention in 1981 and other treaties of international relevance between 1979 and 1981, Japan did formally accept to expand its foreign residents' rights.

As a matter of fact, under the articles 23 and 24 of the Geneva Convention, newly arrived refugees were "given equality with nationals of the host Country in terms of public assistance, social security and other forms of welfare"<sup>459</sup>.

Since these measures arose some dissent among Korean and Taiwanese communities, who had not been conferred the same rights despite having arrived in Japan before the War, the government decided to grant some nationality rights, such as the access to national insurance and state housing loans, also to permanent residents.

Moreover, in 1982, an amendment of the migration control law introduced a new visa category for "special permanent residents", created to confer Taiwanese immigrants residents in Japan since colonial period and North Koreans foreign residents and their relative descendants permanent residence rights.

On the other hand, the admission of refugees was handled with extreme caution introducing very strict requirements for applicants.

Indeed, in twenty-two years between 1982 and 2004, less than 10 per cent of the requests for asylum have been allowed, causing many refugees, above all Koreans, to apply for the less contorted procedure of "special permissions to stay"<sup>460</sup>.

However, not only did Japan expand the rights of former permanent residents, it also implicitly agreed to acknowledge to all resident aliens equal rights with Japanese citizens on issues entailing welfare and social security, by signing other international conventions<sup>461</sup>.

Another conquer of the 1980s had been the signature of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985, which transformed the citizenship law in a bilinear *jus sanguinis* conferment, that is citizenship is bequeathed either by both parents, or just one of them, with no distinction on sex<sup>462</sup>.

459 Morris-Suzuki, T., *Borderline Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 237.

460 Ibid, pp. 187-190.

461 Surak, Kristin. "Convergence in Foreigners' Rights and Citizenship Policies? A Look at Japan." *The International Migration Review*, vol. 42, no. 3, (2008), pp. 559-560.

462 Ibid. pp. 560-562.



Last but not least, thanks to a revision of foreigner laws in 1987, the status of “special permanent residents” has been extended to all Koreans and their descendants living in Japan, with special attention given to the third generation.

Overall, it might be argued that pressures from the international community gave Japan the stimulus for relaxing its strict migration control laws and actually resulted in some initial positive achievement towards a less “anti-immigration” stance, which will be further unburdened after the bubble economy of the 1980s, that marked the beginning of a sharply increasing national labor shortage.

However, it might be asserted that the happening of the terroristic attack of 9/11 in New York, that razed the Twin Towers to the ground, caused a sort of regression in the process of opening, since the event triggered the need to enhance national security through the reintroduction on fingerprinting at aliens arrival and another series of precautionary measures for border security<sup>463</sup>.

As we have already seen, the demand for labor force opened a burning debate over a much more significant admission of foreign workers into Japanese society at the end of 1980s. Perhaps, the divergent stances taken by different Japanese ministries and political parties, or, in other words, the incapability of coming up with an unilateral solution, explains the creation of a system that leaves room for misinterpretations and confusion, beyond often resorting to “back-doors” strategies<sup>464</sup>.

As a result, both the Ministry of Justice and Labor, contrarily to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sided with a more close-door policy stance, with no intention of shedding lights on the blurred immigration policies or even refusing to pronounce certain words in public interviews, such as “immigration”<sup>465</sup>.

However, although the two Ministries agreed on the maintenance of immigration policies’ debate far from indiscretions, they were discordant on the degree of concessions: the Ministry of Labor, in fact, would find more convenient accepting a wider range of skilled foreign workers, whereas the Ministry of Justice was not very prone to modify its conservative view (2007)<sup>466</sup>.

463 Pokarier, C., “Open, secure, influential? Contemporary issues in Japan’s international economic engagement”, ANU Press., (2007), pp. 103-128.

464 Surak, Kristin. “Convergence in Foreigners’ Rights and Citizenship Policies? A Look at Japan.” *The International Migration Review*, vol. 42, no. 3, (2008), pp. 560-563.

465 Curran, E., “Japan quietly accepting foreign workers — just don’t call it immigration”, *The Japan Times*, 3 November 2013; 18 January 2018. <[https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/11/03/national/japan-quietly-accepting-foreign-workers-just-dont-call-immigration/#.WmUI\\_jaMBsM](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/11/03/national/japan-quietly-accepting-foreign-workers-just-dont-call-immigration/#.WmUI_jaMBsM)>

466 Surak, Kristin. “Convergence in Foreigners’ Rights and Citizenship Policies? A Look at Japan.” *The International Migration Review*, vol. 42, no. 3, (2008), pp. 560-563.

It appears quite evident that the general panorama over immigration policies is sprinkled with controversies. To add a new layer of confusion, instead of clarifying the situation, in 1990 the Immigration Bureau modified the Immigration Control Act.

In this way, not only did the amendment of the Law create a “back-door” policy to admit co-ethnics, but also did it open “front-doors” for skilled laborers and “side-doors” for unskilled labor<sup>467</sup>.

In other words, as we have seen in the previous paragraphs, the revision of the Immigration Law created new visa categories to introduce unskilled labor, meant to engage in activities that diverged from the legal status declared by their visa.

Despite the utilisation of disguised categories by Japanese authorities have become clear to the international sphere, as well, to the extent that even some local NGOs have been activated to fight abuses on foreign workers<sup>468</sup>, a few measures have been implemented to transform the camouflages of unskilled labor in “front-doors”.

Otherwise, I would argue that the government have just moved the attention from the already known “back-doors” to other strategies of recruitments, operating a sort of “migrants-recycling”.

For example, the residence status for *pre-college* students, which allowed students enrolled in vocational or languages schools to work up to twenty hours weekly during school-time and forty hours per week during the holidays, has been abolished in 2010<sup>469</sup>.

However, today, one of the main job sector to be affected by labor shortage is health care. Indeed, Japan is struggling to fill the demand of caregivers, which has skyrocketed in the latest years in response to a sharpening ageing population.

Therefore, to deal with this new social issue, Japan has created an additional status of residence for “Nursing Care”, in order to “enable foreign students, who have graduated from a Japanese institute of higher education designated as a certified care worker training facility and acquired the qualification of a certified care worker, to engage in the work of nursing care or the instructions of nursing care as a certified care worker based on a contract with a Japanese nursing care facility, etc.” (Immigration Bureau, 2016).

467 Surak, K., “Convergence in Foreigners' Rights and Citizenship Policies? A Look at Japan.” (2008), p. 563.

468 Tsuda, Takeyuki “Local Citizenship and Foreign Workers in Japan”. *The Asia Pacific Journal*, Vol. 6, (May 2008), pp. 9-18.

469 Surak, K. “Convergence in Foreigners' Rights and Citizenship Policies? A Look at Japan.” *The International Migration Review*, vol. 42, no. 3, (2008), pp. 560-563.

Thus, since 2015 foreign students are allowed to engage in “high-quality nursing care” jobs. In other words, the former status of *pre-college* students has been replaced by the category of caregivers, whose effect has just been to shift the concentration of illegal workers from convenient stores to hospitals or nursing homes.

Moreover, as happened in 1993, trainee programs have unfolded to be *de facto* labor recruitments in nursing care under the names of Japan-Philippines and Japan-Indonesia Economic Partnership Agreements.

These two bilateral programs, both started in 2008, aimed at importing caregivers and nurses from Indonesia and the Philippines<sup>470</sup>. However, the foreign workers recruited through the programs were not allowed to practise their profession directly, in spite of having already trained and graduated in their home Countries, but they were required to start working as “trainee” once in Japan. In that way, not only had their employers no obligation of paying them a proper salary, just an “allowance” for training, but also the status of “trainee” did not ensure them any legal protection.

Furthermore, after three years of training, in order to continue to work in Japan, the nurses had to pass a national nurse licensure test.

However, the competences required to pass the examination were too pretentious. It was quite obvious that, after attending a six-months Japanese language course while working full-time in low-skilled occupations at the hospital, foreign nurses would not have been able to pass the same examination taken by native Japanese.

No matter how educated in the health care field in their home Country, learning a language like Japanese over six months during their few spare time was more than a challenge.

As a consequence, a few nurses did succeed in passing the test, and the majority have been forced to go back home since they could not retain their visa.

Therefore, the three-years “trainee program” for health care has been addressed as another disguised ploy to exploit cheap foreign labor<sup>471</sup>. Not by chance, Japanese government is now expanding the programs to other “non-kanji” Asian Countries such as Vietnam, Laos and Thailand<sup>472</sup>.

470 Arudou, D., " Embedded Racism' in Japanese migration policies: Analyzing Japan's 'revolving door' work visa regimes under Critical Race Theory", *Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, Volume 3 No 1, Honolulu, (2013), pp. 167-168.

471 Ibid., pp. 167-168.

472 “Japan wants 10,000 Asian elderly care workers in 3 years”, *Nikkei Asian Review*, Tokyo. 13 June 2017; 21 January 2018. <<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/Policy-Politics/Japan-wants-10-000-Asian-elderly-care-workers-in-3-years>>

Indeed, since the nurse licensure test is mostly focused on writing skills, it has been wondered why Japan has not recruited caregivers from other *kanji*-societies, such as China, that would have obviously come upon less hurdles in learning the language<sup>473</sup>.

However, it seems that the future exams “will focus more on testing knowledge that is essential in the nursing care field, including specific terms needed in the workplace”, although an advanced level of Japanese and the knowledge of technical terms will remain an essential requirement<sup>474</sup>.

It is very interesting to observe that the first two categories of foreign workers to reside in Japan as mid or long-term residents, at the end of 2015, were reported to be, respectively, students (246.679 out of the total foreign residents), immediately followed by those engaged in the so-labeled Technical Intern Trainings, accounting to 192.655 people distributed throughout four different categories of training programs<sup>475</sup>.

The migrants who entered Japan as interns have been reported to come from China (89.086), Vietnam (57.581), Philippines (17.740) and Indonesia (15.307), whereas it seems that foreign students mainly come from China (108.331), Vietnam (49,809) and Nepal (20,278).

Newly arrived students from China and Vietnam have been increasing since 2011, whereas Chinese presence as long-residents has suffered a slight loss.

Otherwise, foreign students who come from Vietnam and Nepal with a long-resident status has sharply increased since 2011. It has also to be highlight that, except for Chinese people, whose presence have registered a decrease in the latest years, generally, the number of foreigners with the residence status of “Technical Intern Training”, together with the new arrivals, has been growing since 2011.

However, even though it is illegal for interns to engage in unskilled jobs, it is known that the most of them will be exploited and placed in the agriculture, textile and construction sectors. Although the raising international concern about these training programs, which have been reported to approach to slavery, Japanese government had declared its intention to expand such programs to another 70.000 interns in sight of the 2020 Olympics games.

473 Arudou, D., "'Embedded Racism' in Japanese migration policies: Analyzing Japan's 'revolving door' work visa regimes under Critical Race Theory", *Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, Volume 3 No 1, Honolulu, (2013), pp. 167-168.

474 “Japan wants 10,000 Asian elderly care workers in 3 years”, *Nikkei Asian Review*, Tokyo. 13 June 2017; 21 January 2018. <<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/Policy-Politics/Japan-wants-10-000-Asian-elderly-care-workers-in-3-years>>

475 Immigration Bureau, 2016.

By 2020, indeed, Japan will need cheap labor to place in infrastructures. The director of the National Migrants Workers Network, Ippei Torii, has asserted<sup>476</sup>:

*"The Olympics are based on the notion of fair play. It is written in the Constitution that playing sports is a human right. To have Olympics built by interns instead of fairly treated workers is in violation of the very spirit of the Olympics". (TORII, 2015)*

Despite the accusations moved by the international community, several migrants continue to be victims of a serious exploitation of human rights. It is difficult to draw accurate estimates of the total number of unauthorised immigrants in Japan, since many of them are not registered in several official statistics<sup>477</sup>. In other words, they do not exist, according to the law. I would like to report an assertion made by Hiroshi Komai, a professor of the Hitotsubashi University<sup>478</sup>, which I believe deserve to be quoted:

*"The central government [of Japan] has consistently treated immigrant workers as 'they are present but non-existent,' but the measure has already met limitations. [...] Japanese people have a strong sense that Japanese society exists for people who have Japanese citizenship". (KOMAI, 2017)*

I would argue that "non-existence" can be interpreted in many ways. There are several categories of migrants to be invisible in Japan, for various reasons. Unauthorised migrants, such as overstayers, people who has been smuggled into Japanese borders, and disguised sources of cheap labor, are conveniently considered "invisible" since their illegal status do not grant them any sort of right. In other words, their condition of nonexistence submits them to mistreatments and abuses that they cannot denounce.

Afterwards, there are "generational foreigners" who had remained "foreigners" for generations before the Second World War, like those Koreans (or *Zainichi*) who acquired a "special permanent residence" status", racially and linguistically indistinguishable from native Japanese<sup>479</sup>. However, they cannot actively participate in political life or apply for certain job positions in the public sector or civil service. In other words, they do not exist, at social and political level.

476 The Worst Internship Ever: Japan's Labor Pains, Vice News, 30 April 2015; 21 December 2018. <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wt\\_IHCuH5g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wt_IHCuH5g)>

477 Spencer, S.A., "Illegal Migrant Laborers in Japan." *The International Migration Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, (1992), pp. 756-757.

478 Takaku, J., "Japan treats 1 million foreign workers as 'non-existent'". *The Asahi shimbun*, 27 July 2017. 20 January 2018. <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-discrimination-foreign/foreigners-in-japan-face-significant-levels-of-discrimination-survey-shows-idUSKBN1720GP>>

479 Arudou, D., "'Embedded Racism' in Japanese migration policies: Analyzing Japan's 'revolving door' work visa regimes under Critical Race Theory", *Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, Volume 3 No 1, Honolulu, (2013), pp. 161-163.

Sometimes, “non-existence” might be used as a shelter, many *Zainichi* Koreans have been reported to adopt Japanese-names, indeed, in order to avoid concealed discriminations. In a sense, the only way for them to be considered as Japanese equals was to abandon their own national identity.

Then, there are Latin American *Nikkeijin*, who, on the contrary, in spite of having the same restrictions as Koreans in political life’s participation, they have no restriction on jobs’ engagement.

Otherwise, unlike generational Koreans, they are not linguistically “invisible” and they do not satisfy Japanese expectation of conducting a “Japanese-style” life.

Thus, it might be argued that not only they are invisible in racial terms, but also politically speaking, such as Koreans, since they are not conferred with the suffrage, not even at local level.

Overall, it could be argued that migrants are physically acknowledged to be on Japanese soil, but that they are not treated as part of the society since only those people holding citizenship are considered to be effective members of the community.

Until Japan does not enlarge its view of citizenship, there will be a lot of present but not-existent migrants on its soil.

### 3.7 Future citizens or temporary guests?

In this section, I will investigate whether immigrants are considered as potential future citizens or temporary guest workers in Japanese society.

Firstly, I will briefly analyse the selective requirements to become a Japanese citizen. Then, I will examine the important role covered by local governments and non-state actors such as NGOs in delivering services to foreign residents, even without the support of the national government.

Afterwards, I will emphasise NGOs' struggle to expand the definition of "who is worth to be assisted", giving aid also to illegal migrants. Finally, I will shed light on the factors that gradually caused the extension of foreigners' rights in Japan, discussing visible achievements and future challenges.

In developed liberal democracies, it has been observed a tendency of convergence between citizenship laws and migrants rights<sup>480</sup>.

However, this is not the case of Japan. In other words, migration rights and citizenship laws are treated as two distinctive matters not expected to intersect. It has been argued that the "divergence" between nationality and citizenship dates back to 1910, when Korea was annexed to Japan after the Russo-Japanese War.

Many Koreans, who became naturalised Japanese citizens, were brought to Japan as labourers before and during World War II. As Japanese citizens, they had right to vote and they could apply for public jobs. However, after Japanese defeat in the Pacific War, Koreans' rights started to be undermined.

They were firstly deprived of their political participation in 1945, and, later, in 1952, after the signature of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, they lost their Japanese nationality and a series of rights that native citizens were entitled with.

Only in 1964, South Korea and Japan signed a treaty that normalised their relation and allowed Koreans to apply for a permanent residence status.

However, North Korean were excluded from the eligibility unless they acquire South Korean nationality. Despite that, Koreans remained victims of a series of discriminations for long, such as compulsory fingerprinting at registration entry and re-entry, eligibility for governmental jobs, discrimination in public housing and access to higher education.

<sup>480</sup>Surak, Kristin. "Convergence in Foreigners' Rights and Citizenship Policies? A Look at Japan." *The International Migration Review*, vol. 42, no. 3, (2008), pp. 550–575

Japanese Nationality Law relies on a *jus sanguinis* principle, based on bloodline. Since Japan has never seen itself as an “immigration Country”, this principle was not expanded to those applicants ineligible of citizenship by descent.

Furthermore, it has been argued that citizenship laws have not experienced any substantial change since the end of the Second World War, except for the expansion of citizenship’s attribution to both parents in 1985<sup>481</sup>.

Until 1985, indeed, although children of Japanese father had the right to inherit nationality, even though he was married with a non-Japanese woman, the same right was not granted to children of Japanese mother married with a foreign husband<sup>482</sup>.

The amendment of the Decree n. 45 in 1984, which came into force only in 1985<sup>483</sup>, regulated this unbalanced situation, allowing that citizenship could be bequeathed even by the mother’s side.

On the other hand, it seems that the immigration control system still considers foreigners as temporary sojourners, possibly temporary remedies to the current labor-shortage, rather than future citizens.

As a matter of fact, the 1990 revision of the Immigration Law formally cancelled the “nominal link”<sup>484</sup> between citizenship and those foreigners entitled of permanent residence.

Reading between the lines of this measure, it might be pointed out that its actual purpose was to prevent new migrants from thinking that, once admitted to the Country, they would eventually being conferred with citizenship.

Moreover, it has been observed that Japanese officials still make abundant use of the post-war discretionary power in migratory matters<sup>485</sup>.

However, the discretionary power exerted by the Japanese Ministry of Justice is widely applied also in the attribution of citizenship.

Citizenship might be conferred through naturalisation to those individuals who “are over twenty years old, had lived in Japan for at least five years, were of *upright conduct* and had the skills or assets needed to maintain their own livelihood”, under Article 5 of the Nationality Law<sup>486</sup>, beyond being strongly recommended to take a “Japanese-style name”, procedure that ceased to be compulsory since 1986.

481 Surak, K., “Convergence in Foreigners’ Rights and Citizenship Policies? A Look at Japan.”, *The International Migration Review*, vol. 42, no. 3,(2008), pp. 563-564.

482 Morris-Suzuki, T., *Borderline Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p 238.

483 Ibid., p. 243.

484 Surak, Kristin. “Convergence in Foreigners’ Rights and Citizenship Policies? A Look at Japan.” *The International Migration Review*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2008, p. 563.

485 Morris-Suzuki, T., *Borderline Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 241-242.

486 Nationality Law, Article 5, Ministry of Justice <<http://www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/information/tnl-01.html>>



Among the strict requirements that foreign residents qualifiable for naturalisation have to satisfy, it is worth to highlight the concept of “upright conduct”.

Despite the term might seem very generic, it has been interpreted as “cultural assimilation”<sup>487</sup>, that is, applicants should demonstrate of having assimilated Japanese culture and being able to behave in a proper “Japanese-way”.

This might explain why citizenship has not been conferred to many *Nikkeijin*, rather entitled with a long-residence status, despite the crippling national labor shortage.

The feature of Japanese blood is outstripped by Japanese high moral behaviour, which is regarded as a much more fundamental requirement to be considered pure Japanese. In other words, applicants might show not to have been contaminated by foreign cultural features. It has been argued that:

*[...] "ethnic minorities have not been totally excluded from rights of citizenship, but the conditions for obtaining Japanese citizens included the abandon of their cultural distinctive traits" (LU et al., 2008, p.101)*

Therefore, due to the unlikeliness of satisfying the requirement of “upright conduct”, citizenship has almost become undesirable, and many foreigners choose to apply for permanent residence instead, even though the length of wait required is five years longer with respect to citizenship (ten years for permanent residency and five years for citizenship).

Another requirement established by Article 5 of the Law is that double citizenship is not admitted: Japanese citizenship, indeed, is automatically revoked when another is conferred.

According to Article 14 of the Nationality Law<sup>488</sup>, indeed, Japanese citizens who were conferred citizenship before turning twenty-years-old and owned a double nationality must choose only one of them before turning twenty-two.

However, in case an individual already aged more than twenty-years-old would obtain citizenship, he must decide which one to keep within two years. As a consequence, the unchosen nationality will be lost and denaturalised.

What is more, in case an individual would not opt for a unique citizenship before the established time and after receiving a solicitation by the Ministry of Justice, he would automatically lose his Japanese citizenship within a month.

487 Surak, Kristin. “Convergence in Foreigners' Rights and Citizenship Policies? A Look at Japan.” *The International Migration Review*, vol. 42, no. 3, (2008), p. 564.

488 Nationality Law, Article 14, Ministry of Justice <<http://www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/information/tnl-01.html>>

As explained by the immigration lawyer Koji Yamawaki in 2016, the reason of this “deprivation” is simple: dual nationality is considered undesirable because dual citizens “may not be loyal to Japan”<sup>489</sup>.

In other words, individuals with double citizenship are feared not to show to Japan the same devotion as a pure citizen would do. Of course, it not only an identity issue. Double citizenship also implies uncertainties in determining which Country must be involved in dealing with some political matters, for instance until what extent the two Countries have to be judged responsible for the crimes committed by an individual of double citizenship.

It is also dreaded that denizens with double nationality may use their power of voting to the benefit of their favourite Country to the detriment of Japan, or that they would vote carelessly at Japanese national elections.

However, a lot of mixed-race Japanese do not find fair the obligation to give up one of their nationalities, retaining this measure a deprivation of one’s identity.

As a matter of fact, this disposition created the paradoxical situation for which, many descendants of Japanese living abroad are not Japanese citizens, even though the national law of their Country would approve double citizenship.

Thus, it might be concluded that one reason that citizenship policy is not changing is that foreigners in Japan are not considered future citizens.

It strikes me that there are two mistaken, or at least improvable, attitudes in Japanese considerations of foreigners.

The first one stems from the assumption that only those people who hold citizenship make part of the society, as we have seen in the previous paragraph. The second arguable assumption is that the supposed “temporary stay” of the migrants authorise the government not to grant them basic social services and rights<sup>490</sup>.

However, even if Japan lacks of a national policy of integration for foreigners, due to the relatively small percentage of aliens with respect to pure citizens, their presence cannot be ignored.

Although the hypothesis of “co-existence” is still the target of several objection, at national level, it becomes more realistic and acceptable if we shift to the local level. In fact, local governments are depicted as “independent policy-markers”<sup>491</sup> in term of migrants’ social inclusion.

489 Lewis, C., “Japan’s dual citizens get a tacit nod but keep their status in the shadows”, *The Japan Times*. 14 September 2016, 14 January 2018 <<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2016/09/14/issues/japans-dual-citizens-get-tacit-nod-keep-status-shadows/#.WltnyzaMDVp>>

490 Tsuda, Takeyuki “Local Citizenship and Foreign Workers in Japan”. *The Asia Pacific Journal*, Vol. 6, (May 2008), pp. 9-10.

491 Ibid.

If, on the one hand, national government continues to consider foreign workers as a “temporary” solution to a long-extinguishable issue, local authorities have already introduced several services available to their foreign community, such as language courses, translation services, health insurance and further kind of assistance.

**"Japanese local governments, while helping legitimate the extension of foreigners' rights at the national level, continue to locally extend foreigners' rights beyond the reach of the state" (TAKAO, 2003, p. 530).**

Although initially the practice of offering rescue to aliens in immediate need at local level had not been particularly condemned by the national government, the situation changed since the late 1980s, when a massive wave of migrants arrived in Japan to fill the urgency of labor shortage.

Despite the 1990 amendment of the Refugee and Recognition Act, these “newcomers” were subjected to a wide array of discriminations in various sectors and their protection resulted inadequate<sup>492</sup>. One reason that local communities are much more welcoming and supporter of a proper integration plan is that, contrarily to the nation-state, they are directly involved in the decision to keep immigrants inside or outside the society.

As a matter of fact, especially those communities that already count with a consistent number of foreign residents, have attempted to realise a proactive policy of integration so as not to create discontent<sup>493</sup>.

On the other hand, someone argued that aliens should be able to vote at local level since they pay taxes such as any other national and contribute to fill the national demand for labor shortage<sup>494</sup>.

In other words, they have proven to represent an advantage to the community itself. However, local governments' power is limited to the integration of legally admitted migrants, since it cannot deal with those who have not been registered at their entrance, that is, undocumented migrants.

Indeed, not only local officials are required to report the possible presence of unauthorised foreigners to the Immigration Bureau, but those category of migrants is not even considered part of the society.

492 Takao, Y., “Foreigners' Rights in Japan: Beneficiaries to Participants”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 3, University of California Press, (May/June 2003), p. 544.

493 Tsuda, Takeyuki “Local Citizenship and Foreign Workers in Japan”. *The Asia Pacific Journal*, Vol. 6, (May 2008), pp. 13-14.

494 Shipper, A.W., “Criminals or Victims? The Politics of Illegal Foreigners in Japan”, *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2, The Society for Japanese Studies, (2005), p. 323.

As a matter of fact, for decades, illegal migrants have been portrayed as harmful elements of disruption, prone to criminal behaviour, and this image has been enhanced both by Japanese political authorities and media<sup>495</sup>.

*"Conservative state officials portray illegal foreigners as "deviant" and potentially "dangerous" to the public". (SHIP-PER, 2005, p. 305)*

Therefore, the task of dealing with illegal migrants is up to non-governmental organisations, which are reported to be approximately two hundreds in Japan<sup>496</sup>.

NGOs are composed by groups of volunteers who allow illegal immigrants to defend their rights and give them access to different type of services.

Their role has shaped "the local government's definition of who is a legitimate community member worthy of local citizenship"<sup>497</sup>. In a sense, it might be asserted that non-governmental associations are more prone to deal with the "underground state", made of those invisible individuals that the national government refuses to acknowledge.

The work of NGOs and local authorities is precisely to draw attention to the fact that even non-citizens deserves to be listened and safeguarded.

The first support groups run by foreigners appeared in the pre-war period, in response to the economic recession of 1921. *Soaikai* was an association aimed at providing basic needs to Koreans living in Japan, subsidised by Japanese government<sup>498</sup>.

However, since 1931 militarists took on the imperial governance and foreigners' associations started to be regarded with suspect. By the outburst of the global conflict, the leaders of foreign organisations were replaced by local authorities and in that way, support groups became effective tools of control against subversive activities.

In 1952, it was created the Public Security Investigation Agency to control suspected anti-Japanese organisations.

However, long-generations Koreans and Chinese were allowed to maintain or create new associations that would not interfere with public security or deal with inappropriate activities. As long as peace dominated, the government adopted a general principle of non-intervention on foreigners' activities in the post-war period<sup>499</sup>.

495 Shipper, A.W., "Criminals or Victims? The Politics of Illegal Foreigners in Japan", (2005), pp. 302-306.

496 Tsuda, Takeyuki "Local Citizenship and Foreign Workers in Japan". *The Asia Pacific Journal*, Vol. 6, (May 2008), pp. 11-13.

497 Ibid, p. 12.

498 Shipper, A.W., "Foreigners and Civil Society in Japan", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 2, University of British Columbia, (2006), pp. 271-273.

499 Ibid., pp. 272-274

In the latest years, Japan has assisted to the emergence of several support groups, divided in six categories, especially in order to deal with migrants who overstayed their visa.

There are Christian NGOs financed and run by church's member, who mainly address Christian migrants coming from Latin America but do not deny assistance to anyone in need. They offer aid concerning working and familiar issues, but they have also been proven to arrange prison visits to foreign detained. Then, there are communities workers' unions dealing with specific fields of labor disputes, supported by their membership fees.

Although they offer different services concerning working problems to "anyone", such as simple consultancy, foreign migrants turn to them just in time of need, having no interest in becoming permanent members.

Abused women and escaped prostitutes can turn to women's support groups, which were created to assist especially women from the Philippines and Thailand with the provision of temporary shelter, legal advice and protection<sup>500</sup>.

These groups are subsidies by their same members' fees, but they are also largely supported by church donations and subsidises from local governments. Furthermore, foreign overstayers are not eligible for a medical insurance scheme.

There are two types of medical insurance: company employees are usually covered by the Health Insurance System whereas self-employed workers are eligible for the National Health Insurance, often extended to registered foreigners.

However, short-term registered foreigners who cannot apply for either insurance scheme are not protected by job injuries and often cannot afford medical expenses<sup>501</sup>.

In 1986 the Ministry of Wealth and Welfare approved the application of the National Health Insurance Law to registered aliens, event though since 1992 they are required to demonstrate to have been living in Japan for at least one year to be entitled with that right.

Thus, both less-than-one-year registered foreigners and illegal foreigners were implicitly excluded from the insurance scheme<sup>502</sup>.

As a consequence, some doctors have created medical NGOs to cure those patients who are ineligible for a national insurance scheme, providing them medical assistance, hiring professionals for medical translations and giving them the possibility to claim accidents occurred at work.

<sup>500</sup>Shipper, A.W., "Foreigners and Civil Society in Japan", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 2,(2006), pp. 275-278.

<sup>501</sup> Takao, Y., "Foreigners' Rights in Japan: Beneficiaries to Participants", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 3, University of California Press, (May/June 2003), p. 529.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid., pp. 542-543.

Moreover, legal consultation and dispute settlement is also provided by lawyer's NGOs, which offer assistance to foreigners who have been subjected to unfair treatments, usually rejected by public defenders.

Finally, there are support groups established by the same citizens' concerns, typically observable in communities that count with a large number of foreigners, financed by membership's fees and possibly by additional funds bestowed by local governments. Not only these groups fight to extend legal right and advocacy to foreigners, but also to socially marginalised people, such as the *burakumin*<sup>503</sup>.

It is interesting to notice that each group has acquired a sort of expertise in dealing with specific ethnic groups.

After the issuance of the 1998 Nonprofit organisation Law, civic and volunteer groups can apply to obtain a non-profit status<sup>504</sup>. Incorporation into the nonprofit sector would ensure these groups with financial support by local governments, so as to expand their activities and range of services provided.

However, many support groups have shown some reluctance in applying for a non-profit status either because of the greater responsibility that taking on that status entails or the dread that cooperation with local authorities would exercise an intrusive supervision on the groups' work. In some cases, however, partnership between NGOs and local governments have achieved some positive results<sup>505</sup>.

Since 2000, for example, the Basic Plan for Immigration Control introduced a new provision to extend "special permissions" to overstayers who retained particular ties to Japanese society<sup>506</sup>. Although some support groups set up by foreigners have been proven to sway state actors in their decision-making,

Japanese government have demonstrated to give a preferential treatment to manipulable civic organisation rather than NGOs, which may undermine to national power<sup>507</sup>.

Therefore, in the latest years, local authorities have been able to ensure the extension of foreigners' rights without the interference of the national government, due to their strategic position and their more direct dialogue with communities members<sup>508</sup>.

Otherwise, it has to be pointed out that even local governments and NGOs, in spite of being constantly renewing their networks, are subjected to several limits.

503 Shipper, A.W., "Foreigners and Civil Society in Japan", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 2, University of British Columbia, (2006), pp. 278-280.

504 Ibid., p. 270.

505 Ibid, pp. 284-287.

506 Immigration Bureau, 2000.

507 Apichai W. Shipper, "Foreigners and Civil Society in Japan", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 2, University of British Columbia, (2006), pp. 270-271.

508 Takao, Y., "Foreigners' Rights in Japan: Beneficiaries to Participants", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 3, University of California Press, (May/June 2003), pp. 530-531.

First of all, since the national government has never implemented policies to guarantee uniform rights to all foreigners, the extent to which an authorised migrant is provided with certain services heavily depends on the local authorities' experience with the incorporation of aliens into the society.

For example, Gabriela<sup>509</sup> asserted that the city where she used to live, Minakuchi, in Shiga prefecture, provided several services to foreigners thanks to the long-coexistence between locals and ethnic minorities, which allowed local authorities to acquire expertise with migrants' needs.

*"In the city where I used to live, called Minakuchi, there were a lot of Brazilians and this facilitated everything. Since many Brazilians were working there, it was easier to find shops selling Brazilian products or Brazilian restaurants. Both the prefecture and the central hospital were provided with translators for Brazilians and Peruvian, so you only had to ask for them at your arrival. After the hospital was refurbished, we could even read billboards both in Japanese and Portuguese. [...] In my experience, Japanese public institutions always provided me with everything I needed, from information to problem solving, and issues like housing, health and employment." (GABRIELA, 2018)*

As a result, communities with a higher number of foreign residents will likely engage more actively in migrants' integration, whereas the less expert local governments, which usually exhibit a minor number of foreigners, will be likely less organised.

For example, Kawasaki, Sapporo and Yokohama have been the first cities that extended the National Health Insurance to all registered foreigners in their communities in 1971, according to the Livelihood Protection Law (1950)<sup>510</sup>.

On the other hand, since NGOs are not uniformly spread across the Country, there could be some immigrants, both legal and illegal, who might not benefit of the services provided.

In additions, often NGOs are run by Japanese citizens unable to grasp what the migrants actually need, or, sometimes it is the same foreigners to see themselves as "temporary" stayers, just like as the national government does, and thus unwilling to engage in local participation or unaware of the right they are entitled with<sup>511</sup>.

509 See Appendix, Entrevista 3.

510 Takao, Y., "Foreigners' Rights in Japan: Beneficiaries to Participants", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 3, University of California Press, (May/June 2003), p. 542.

511 Tsuda, Takeyuki "Local Citizenship and Foreign Workers in Japan". *The Asia Pacific Journal*, Vol. 6, (May 2008), pp. 15-16.

According to Takao, the progressive extension of foreigners' rights is the outcome of several social and, historical economic factors<sup>512</sup>.

First of all, as we have already mentioned, the increasing influx of foreigners have changed Japanese demographic pattern, compelling the government to grant social benefits to the “newcomers” by the end of the 1980s<sup>513</sup>.

Furthermore, during the years of the “bubble economy” the government recorded an increase in its revenue, that made it able to invest money in support groups' activities. International pressures also played a role in enhancing the need to overcome the principle that “citizenship belong exclusively to national”, in sight of the new transnational migrations. Although international norms are “non-binding”, the adhesion of several states to international law established non-written standards that states are tacitly invited to conform to.

Many Countries have already adhered to the concession of suffrage to foreign residents, at least at local level. Finally, local governments are among the stronger supporters of the extension of foreigners' rights, because they have a direct interaction with their community members, included foreigners.

Although there were no explicit prohibition of service delivery to foreigners at local level, the government instructed local authorities not to give foreigners certain privileges, such as employments in public positions and suffrage.

Many political authorities are not willing to concede local voting right to foreigners, since they still feel threatened by their presence in areas such as national security and education. Therefore, change is hampered by several issues.

First of all, it might be observed that the government tends to make large use of its discretionary power, “recycling” already existing laws, rather than issuing new proper directives to conform to international norms.

***“In response to labour migration, governments struggle to reinterpret or reform existing immigration laws and entitlement schemes in light of both economic and demographic change” (SHIPPER, 2006, p. 269)***

512 Takao, Y., “Foreigners' Rights in Japan: Beneficiaries to Participants”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 3, University of California Press, (May/June 2003), pp. 531-540.

513 Ibid., pp. 531-532.



In other words, change will not be possible as long as the State continues to modify norms to its convenience. Furthermore, as observed by Monica<sup>514</sup>, another problem is intrinsic to the voting system itself.

As a matter of fact, due to Japanese ageing population, the majority of the voters are elderly people, who hamper the process of change. According to her, politicians, rather than encouraging the younger generations to express their opinion, prefer to please elderly people so as to ensure their votes.

*"Among voters, the majority are retired people. Thus politicians care a lot about elderly people's opinion. And that's what makes any change difficult. [...] Perhaps, the government needs to foster the young to vote so as to dare them to give a new voice to the future". (MONICA, 2018)*

Overall, the efforts of both NGOs and local governments have drawn to some positive achievement, such as programs to recruit a higher number of Japanese professors for foreign students, or shifting the payment of medical bills for foreigners uncovered by health insurance under the competent Ministry of Health and Welfare<sup>515</sup>.

However, it strikes me that a proper plan of integration should be promoted through the mutual cooperation of local authorities and national government in order to be completely successful.

Only national government, indeed, can issue an even integration policy to be applied on the whole territory. However, in order to do so, it should extend its conception of "citizenship" and officially admit that foreign residents make part of the society.

In other words, in developed Countries like Japan, there is some evidence to hypothesise that both the process of globalisation and internal social changes are possibly leading to the creation of a multicultural society, and that co-existence will not be avoidable for long.

514 See Appendix, Entrevista 4.

515 Tsuda, Takeyuki "Local Citizenship and Foreign Workers in Japan". *The Asia Pacific Journal*, Vol. 6, (May 2008), pp. 18-19.

## Conclusion

One of the reasons that I decided to focus my thesis on Japanese-Brazilian return migration to Japan, beyond personal experiences, is that I found the relation between these two Countries unique. Not only for the cultural differences between Brazil and Japan, but also for the particular condition of Japanese-Brazilians as socially affirmed minority in Brazil and the social phenomenon that transformed an ethnic return migration into one of the largest foreign nationalities in Japan. One might wonders: why did Japan choose Brazil? There is evidence of Japanese emigration also in other Latin American Countries, such as Peru, for example. In this Country, however, Japanese assimilation into the society did not take place. As I have emphasised in my research, the Japanese-Brazilian convergence of needs has been reported to be mainly a matter of timing. Indeed, when the first Japanese emigrants arrived to Peru, they found an already formed society, where the upper-class was composed of figures proud of their European ancestry, unwilling to lose their racial purity. On the other hand, Japanese emigrants themselves had no interest in social incorporation, since on the international sphere Peru covered an insignificant role compared to Japan, which boasted a rather relevant influence. In Brazil, indeed, on the same historical moment, the society presented a "middle-class vacuum"<sup>516</sup> left by the former lords of slavery, and it was precisely that power void that Japanese farmers eventually occupied. The fact that social status, in Brazil, is defined by socio-economic class rather than racial preconceptions allowed Japanese-Brazilians to achieve high-ranking social positions, upgrading that has not been feasible in Japan. As a matter of fact, in Japan the topic of racial homogeneity still lies at the base of its founding principles, therefore foreigners, including their co-ethnic Japanese-Brazilians, are likely relegated to carry out undesirable jobs, albeit essential to keep some industrial sectors powerful. Otherwise, it might be argued that Japan is not the only developed Nation to exploit cheap labor for filling low-skilled job positions. However, what if among this cheap-labor there are qualified professionals? This is what happened to many Japanese-Brazilians, who have undergone a declassification with respect to the profession they used to practise in Brazil, regardless of their previous socio-economic status. It is also what happened to Philippines and Indonesian nurses, enrolled in "training programs" and required to pass a further examination in Japan before practising their profession, in spite of being already graduated in their home Country. Japanese assumed cultural superiority is settled in the Country's historical path and it is still reflected in its approach to racial diversity. This might be observed also in the low evidence of exogamy with respect to other developed Nations. When I asked Monica what did she think about the pronounced racial homogeneity of Japan, she asserted<sup>517</sup>:

***"The entire world was just this island shared among shogun. The rest was anything but another planet. Being an extremely ancient and unique Asian Country, Japan wants to keep pure bloodline without miscegenation."* (MONICA, 2018)**

516 Reichl, C., "Stages in the Historical Process of Ethnicity: The Japanese in Brazil, 1908-1988", *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Duke University Press, (1995), pp. 35-36.

517 See Appendix, Entrevista 4.

Of course, the vision of Japan is no longer so close-minded. Nowadays, tangible frictions are emerging in politics as well, where parties split on the issue of promoting a culture that accepts foreigners, disclosing some grounds for improvement. On the other hand, it is unripe to assert that the Country will eventually embrace a multi-cultural society, since there are still many unsolved problems in foreigners' integration. First of all, the government lacks of a national plan to ensure immigrants' incorporation into the society and thus the reception of foreigners is left to local authorities that, despite their visible efforts in expanding the rights of ethnic minorities, use to take different measures. As a result, there is no guarantee to find services available to foreigners anywhere in Japan, because the designed institutions are unevenly distributed across the Country and the services they provide vary a lot depending on the local degree of expertise with migrants. Another issue arose concerns illegal migrants, who are not entitled with any social assistance under the law. Although NGOs and other non-profit organisations have fought to grant these people some basic rights, they are still largely treated as they would not exist. Moreover, many of these unregistered migrants are victims of abuses or mistreatments that they cannot report to the authorities because they fear to be repatriated. Despite having signed several international treaties on human rights, Japan have set severe requirements to the acceptance of refugees, that discourage many people to apply. Perhaps Japan should consider to modify its rigid policies, otherwise people in need will have no other option but to enter the Country through illegal means. On the other hand, there are foreign workers who enter Japan legally to engage in disguised illegal activities, such as many technical trainees. In fact, even though trainees should prove to acquire useful skills that could be applied at their return, they quickly realise that they will not bring any benefit back to their undeveloped Countries of origins. Many technical traineeships have revealed to be a "back door" for unskilled labor, which go to the advantage of industrial sectors that have experienced a severe labor shortage, like the one of infrastructures. Japan has committed to prepare adequate infrastructures that will host the Olympics by 2020. However, where is it going to find available workforce for the constructions? Exploitation of foreign workers is a critical issue in Japan, that has a few chances to be stopped as long as official authorities retain a large amount of discretionary power, that allow them to fool the rules to their convenience. I believe that the current immigration policies should be modified so as not to leave large room for the implementation of "side doors". It has to be emphasised that, despite Japan desperately needs foreign workers in sight of the threatening population ageing, discrimination against foreigners has not ceased, on the contrary has been reported to be "deeply rooted"<sup>518</sup> in the society. In other words, foreign residents receive different treatments with respect to nationals, whether they have been living in Japan for a few months or for years.

518 Minami Funakoshi, "Foreigners in Japan face significant levels of discrimination, survey shows", Reuters, March 31st, 2017; December 12th, 2017. <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-discrimination-foreign/foreigners-in-japan-face-significant-levels-of-discrimination-survey-shows-idUSKBN1720GP>>

Albeit they might consider Japan their home, many foreigners are still not considered part of the society. Citizenship is the key to acceptance, but it is also a privilege reserved to few people. Those who do not hold citizenship, regardless of their “special” residence status, are implicitly socially excluded and regarded as “outsider”. Introducing a national plan for integration might be a first step towards the acknowledgement that diversity “exists” and it has to be adequately protected from social discrimination.

If Japan continues to consider foreigners as temporary guests rather than future citizens, how will it cope with the national decline of births that will turn the society into an ageing population and cause a urgency of available workforce? Japan is already working on that. One of the most threatened sector by labor shortage is health care. It is estimated that by 2025, there will be about 370.000 less professional care-workers figures than today<sup>519</sup>. Although the elevated cost of robotics will not offset completely the lack of caregivers, it might partially contribute to mitigate the severe loss of personnel. On the other hand, technology cannot completely substitute human touch in providing some kind of cares, nonetheless nursing care robots are expected to relieve some daily needs, such as accompanying the patient to the toilet, for instance. Of course, there is also an ethic issue involved: elderlies have to accept the possibility to being assisted by robots, idea that might be initially rejected or seen with some reluctance. In the meantime, several nursing homes are already testing robots, so as to be ready to face future challenges. Furthermore, the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has recently proposed to extend the retire age at eighty for public employees who would like to continue to work after the mandatory limit set between sixty and seventy years old. In sight of the national lack of workforce and shrinking birthrate, both public and private sectors are threatened by the unavailability of personnel. Many older age people are already reported to keep on working voluntarily after their expected retirement because they have no other options. As a matter of fact, the sharpening increase in life expectancy is also severing the budget designed to pensions<sup>520</sup>. By the way of conclusion, Japan is aware of the forthcoming challenges that the Country is going to face and the government has already started to take precautionary measures, equipping health care structures with robots, extending the retire age of national workforce and considering a greater introduction of foreign workers into the society. However, in a few decades, all the feasible options proposed might not be enough to cope with the demographic crisis and they will need further enhancement. Thus, unless Japanese mindset changes in sight of the aforementioned crippling issues, the effective realisation of these new measures might result troublesome.

519 Daniel Hurst, “Japan lays groundwork for boom in robot carers”, The Guardian, Tokyo. February 6th, 2018; February 9th, 2018. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/06/japan-robots-will-care-for-80-of-elderly-by-2020>>

520 “Giappone, la decisione del governo: i dipendenti pubblici potranno lavorare fino a 80 anni”, Il messaggero, February 12th, 2018; February 14th, 2018. <[http://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/esteri/giappone\\_lavoro\\_pensione\\_eta\\_shinzo\\_abe-3544214.html](http://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/esteri/giappone_lavoro_pensione_eta_shinzo_abe-3544214.html)>

## APPENDIX

### Entrevista 1 - Matheus

**PEQUENA INTRODUÇÃO: explique qual é a sua relação com o Japão, de qual geração japonesa você faz parte e descreva em breve a sua experiência (quer dizer quantas vezes já foi para o Japão ou se já morou lá, em que período etc.)**

*Meu nome é Matheus S., sou sansei. Meu avô veio com 18 anos ao Brasil, oriundo da região de Tokyo. Eu nunca fui para o Japão, mas nasci e cresci em uma região onde a cultura japonesa é muito forte no Brasil (norte do Paraná). Sendo assim, sempre tive certo contato com algumas tradições mantidas pela colônia japonesa no Brasil. Da mesma forma, muitos amigos e parentes meus já foram ou ainda residem no Japão, de forma que eu sempre acompanhei relativamente de perto histórias de decasségus.*

**1- Porque você escolheu ir trabalhar/estudar no Japão? Quais eram as suas expectativas antes de chegar? Pode afirmar que tais expectativas foram satisfeitas?**

*Quando eu estava no segundo ano da faculdade eu tentei fazer ARUBAITO no Japão, durante as minhas férias de verão. Porém a documentação de aprovação para minha ida não chegou em tempo hábil para eu fazê-lo. As minhas expectativas em ir pro Japão sempre foram muito boas, mas nunca pensei em ir pra ficar trabalhando. Morro de curiosidade e vontade de conhecer desde os grandes centros tecnológicos até os lugares mais antigos e tradicionais do Japão. A cultura japonesa me fascina.*

**2 - Em que setor e como você encontrou trabalho no Japão? Foi fácil procurar e encontrar emprego?**

*Na época em que eu iria para o Japão, existiam muitas agências de turismo no Brasil que faziam a intermediação Brasil-Japão para o dekassegui. Meu tio trabalhava numa dessas agências. Eles faziam tudo: cuidavam do certificado de elegibilidade para entrada no Japão, visto, toda a documentação e também conseguiam empregos em determinadas fábricas. Era tudo muito organizado. O ano era 2007 e não era difícil conseguir um emprego no Japão sendo dekassegui. Mas já ouvi que hoje em dia é um pouco mais complicado. Apesar de existirem fases de alta e baixa oferta de empregos.*

**3 - Conhece a língua japonesa? SE SIM: foi suficiente para se comunicar com o pessoal local e para se integrar na sociedade japonesa? SE NÃO: teve dificuldade no processo de adaptação na sociedade japonesa? As vezes pode-se criar a situação paradoxal onde os *nikkeijin* mais “japonesados” são discriminados pelos seus mesmos compatriotas pelo fato de terem se assimilado mais facilmente na sociedade japonesa. Você passou por esse tipo de experiência?**

*Conheço um pouco. Sempre tive contato pois as gerações passadas sempre falavam em japonês dentro de casa, além das músicas tradicionais e outros detalhes culturais. Isso facilitou eu aprender a língua. Fiz dois anos de nihongakko, mas a maior parte do que eu sei aprendi de forma autodidata. Não tenho o que dizer a respeito das outras perguntas.*

**4 - Sabemos que os estereótipos influenciam a concepção de uma cultura bem antes de uma pessoa tomar contato com a mesma. O que significa para você “ser japonês”? Pode afirmar que a sua visão de “ser Japonês” reflete a realidade, quando chegou no Japão?**

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**5 - Antes de chegar no Japão, sentia-se mais Japonês ou Brasileiro? A sua identidade cultural foi sujeitada a alguma mudança depois da estadia no Japão?**

*É uma pergunta interessante. Aqui no Brasil a gente é chamado de japonês por termos descendência. Mas somos brasileiros e talvez esse seja o primeiro preconceito que sofremos. Porque nos leva a um sentimento de não-pertencimento. Eu me lembro que quando estava no colégio, conversava sobre isso com uma grande amiga minha que também é nikkeijin. Que no Brasil somos chamados de japoneses. E no Japão, somos chamados de Gaijin. É meio como não tivessmos um lugar no mundo para chamar de nosso. A gente brincava que se icasse milionário, compraríamos uma ilha e lá seríamos nós mesmos, sem estereótipos. Hahaha*

*Bom. Falando sério agora, hoje eu bem entendo e sei que sou brasileiro. Assim como um descendente de africanos, de nativos brasileiros, de italianos ou alemães. O Brasil é um país multiétnico e multicultural, e nada é mais brasileiro do que essa mistura toda. Me sinto plenamente brasileiro, porque sou.*

**6 - Como Nikkeijin, você já se sentiu discriminado na sociedade brasileira? Se sim, que tipo de discriminações observou e em que contexto (escolar, de trabalho)? Nunca se sentiu discriminado na sociedade japonesa? Se sim, que tipo de discriminações observou e em que contexto (escolar, de trabalho)?**

*Continuando da pergunta anterior, sim. Não sei se você conhece o canal do youtube chamado de Yo Ban Boo. Mas ele mostra bem a questão do preconceito que o brasileiro descendente de asiáticos sofre por aqui no Brasil. É uma coisa bastante normalizada a ponto de a maioria de nós não ligar muito. E o estereótipo que o descendente de japonês tem aqui no Brasil é favorável (mais do que o do chinês, por exemplo). O descendente de japonês aqui no Brasil é considerado estudioso, inteligente, respeitoso, correto. É um estereótipo preconceituoso, porém que nos favorece. Isso talvez também tenha levado à normalização de outros tipos de preconceito como os apelidos e brincadeiras relacionadas com a etnia asiática.*

**7 - Que tipo de trabalho você fazia no Japão? Acha que foi sujeitado a uma desclassificação com respeito à sua ocupação precedente (quer dizer a que desenvolvia no Brasil)?**

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**8 - Lembra-se com que tipo de contrato foi empregado em Japão? Esse tipo de contrato garantiu-lhe uma adequada proteção ao trabalho? O seu emprego no Japão permitiu poupar bastante para enviar/investir uma parte do ganho no Brasil? Conseguiu voltar ao Brasil?**

*Como você sabe, não tenho experiência direta com isso. Mas o que sempre ouvi dos meus amigos e parentes é que é muito difícil conseguir juntar dinheiro. O Japão oferece um estilo de vida consumista que é difícil de resistir. Assim as pessoas que dizem ter conseguido juntar dinheiro sempre relataram muita disciplina e mesmo abstinência de algumas coisas como lazer e conforto para poder juntar mais dinheiro e trazer pro Brasil ou mandar pra família. Existe também diversos casos de decasséguis que vão, juntam um pouco de dinheiro, voltam, ficam um tempo no Brasil sobrevivendo com aquele dinheiro, mas não tem condições de investir ou usar bem o dinheiro e tem que voltar para o Japão, pois se vêm sem outra alternativa quando o dinheiro acaba. Tem pessoas que ficaram muito tempo presos nesse ciclo.*

(partial interview since Matheus has no direct experience of Japan)

## Entrevista 2 - Artur

**PEQUENA INTRODUÇÃO:** explique qual é a sua relação com o Japão, de qual geração japonesa você faz parte e descreva em breve a sua experiência (quer dizer quantas vezes já foi para o Japão ou se já morou lá, em que período etc.)

*Sou descendente de terceira geração, porém como meus pais possuem dupla nacionalidade, sou considerado segunda geração perante o Japão.*

*Estive por 2 vezes no Japão:*

*- A primeira em visita à matriz da empresa japonesa em que trabalhava aqui no Brasil, em 1989 – 40 dias;*

*- A segunda como “dekassegui”, mão de obra braçal brasileira em indústria japonesa, em 2006 – 100 dias.*

### **1- Porque você escolheu ir trabalhar/estudar no Japão?**

*- Desemprego no Brasil.*

### **Quais eram as suas expectativas antes de chegar?**

*- Não eram boas, por causa da distância familiar.*

### **Pode afirmar que tais expectativas foram satisfeitas?**

*- Não, pois retornei porque não aguentei a pressão da distância e pela doença do meu pai.*

### **2 - Em que setor e como você encontrou trabalho no Japão?**

*- Trabalhei na indústria, e eu já conhecia a empresa porque trabalhei como intermediário entre ele e os brasileiros que iam trabalhar no Japão.*

### **Foi fácil procurar e encontrar emprego?**

*- Sim, pelo motivo acima. Já conhecia a empresa do Japão e fui com o emprego garantido.*

### **3 - Conhece a língua japonesa?**

*- Sim, o básico.*

### **Foi suficiente para se comunicar com o pessoal local e para se integrar na sociedade japonesa?**

*- Sim. Foi suficiente.*

**As vezes pode-se criar a situação paradoxal onde os *Nikkeijin* mais “japonesados” são discriminados pelos seus mesmos compatriotas pelo fato de terem se assimilado mais facilmente na sociedade japonesa. Você passou por esse tipo de experiência?**

*- Sim, existe uma certa INDIVIDUALIZAÇÃO nos serviços prestados pelos brasileiros. Cada um vive individualmente, sem solidariedade ao outro trabalhador do mesmo país, uma concorrência desnecessária ao meu ver, mas que existe. E se você possui “características” que te privilegiam, tipo entender e falar a língua japonesa, isso pode ser um fator de discriminação, para alguns, mas é real.*

### **4 - Sabemos que os estereótipos influenciam a concepção de uma cultura bem antes de uma pessoa tomar contato com a mesma. O que significa para você “ser Japonês”?**

*4. A sociedade em geral cria o PRECONCEITO para qualquer indivíduo DIFERENTE. Se é diferente da maioria existente, haverá PRECONCEITO POR ALGUÉM com certeza.*

*- Cresci com as pessoas dizendo que eu era japonês. Estudei em paralelo em escola japonesa. Sofri alguns preconceitos tipo: “zoinho puxado”... quando criança. Mas quando pisei pela primeira vez no Japão, deixei de ser “japonês” e me senti brasileiro como nunca. Pela total diferença do Japão que me falaram e a realidade presente.*

### **Pode afirmar que a sua visão de “ser Japonês” reflete a realidade, quando chegou no Japão?**

*- Pelo exposto acima, no meu caso, a realidade entre japonês nato e descendente de japonês possuem poucos parâmetros semelhantes.*

**5 - Antes de chegar no Japão, sentia-se mais Japonês ou Brasileiro? A sua identidade cultural foi sujeitada a alguma mudança depois da estadia no Japão?**

*- Já coloquei isso, a minha primeira visita ao Japão, como estagiário, me definiu como BRASILEIRO! A educação japonesa recebida em paralelo à educação brasileira, não é a EDUCAÇÃO ATUAL existente no Japão. No meu caso, fui educado no sistema japonês do meu avô materno, que se distanciou da realidade da sociedade japonesa atual.*

**6 - Como Nikkeijin, você já se sentiu discriminado na sociedade brasileira? Se sim, que tipo de discriminações observou e em que contexto (escolar, de trabalho)?**

*- Sim, como citei, na escola a gente era chamado de “zoinho puxado”, mas nada de anormal que pudesse ter alterado minha personalidade ou coisa parecida.*

**Nunca se sentiu discriminado na sociedade japonesa? Se sim, que tipo de discriminações observou e em que contexto (escolar, de trabalho)?**

*- Não. Pelo pouco tempo que vivi no Japão.*

**7 - Que tipo de trabalho você fazia no Japão?**

*- Foi trabalho de operário. Hoje o governo japonês separa bem o visto de trabalho e visto de turismo, você não consegue mais transformar o visto de turismo em visto de trabalho.*

**Acha que foi sujeitado a uma desclassificação com respeito à sua ocupação precedente (quer dizer a que desenvolvia no Brasil)?**

*- Não. Não existe desqualificação, pois você é contratado como operário, e está ciente disso. Seu título de ensino superior não é solicitado e nem avaliado.*

**8 - Lembra-se com que tipo de contrato foi empregado em Japão?**

*- Assinado com a empresa.*

**Esse tipo de contrato garantiu-lhe uma adequada proteção ao trabalho?**

*- Com relação ao emprego, tudo garantido.*

**O seu emprego no Japão permitiu poupar bastante para enviar/investir uma parte do ganho no Brasil?**

*- Pelo tempo que permaneci, deu para pagar as despesas de retorno.*

**Conseguiu voltar ao Brasil?**

*- Sim, sem problemas com a empresa (rescisão contratual).*

**9 - No Japão, sentia-se mais à vontade com os Nikkeijin ou com os Japoneses? Durante a estadia no Japão, teve bastante relações com o pessoal japonês fora do ambiente de trabalho? Por exemplo, participou de atividades recreativas/culturais com os Japoneses?**

*- Morei em alojamento exclusivo para brasileiros que trabalhavam na empresa. O relacionamento era exclusivo com companheiros de trabalho.*

**10 - Alguma vez participou de manifestações ou atividades tradicionais brasileiras no Japão (por exemplo, paradas de samba na rua)? Se sim, já estava acostumado a tomar parte destes festivais tradicionais no Brasil, antes de chegar no Japão ?**

*- Não.*

**11 - Diz-se que os Nikkeijin são aceitos mais facilmente com respeito a outros estrangeiros por causa de um sentido de familiaridade, devido à semelhança racial, sobretudo de primeira impressão. Porém, você já observou reações de surpresa ou negativas na comunidade japonesa ao se manifestar culturalmente como Nikkeijin, por exemplo, de uma maneira mais “abrasileirada” de se comportar?**

*- Com o passar dos anos e pelo volume de brasileiros descendentes que foram ao Japão à trabalho, os japoneses facilmente nos identificam. Mas a aceitação depende das pessoas individualmente, pelo fato de você saber se comportar e aceitar as culturas japonesas (regras). No Japão se trabalha muito, e quem se enquadra nesse perfil é respeitado por eles.*



**12. Se você pudesse escolher entre cidadania japonesa e brasileira, qual escolheria? Quais acha que sejam as vantagens (e também as desvantagens) de se ter cidadania japonesa e morar no Japão?**

- *O Brasil é um país multi-cultural, acolhedor com todos os estrangeiros.*
- *O Japão, na minha opinião, é um país que sofreu como um todo.*
- *Viver num ou no outro, depende da sua filosofia de vida.*

**13 - Na sua experiência, acredita que no Japão haja adequada estrutura local e governamentais para acolher e oferecer serviços aos residentes estrangeiros ?**

- *Sim.*

**14 - Nos últimos anos, a população japonesa está envelhecendo e enfrentando uma grave crise demográfica. A introdução de trabalhadores estrangeiros foi inicialmente anunciada como possível remédio a tal crise. Porém, ao mesmo tempo, sempre foi realçado o poder ambíguo, benéfico e danoso, derivado da introdução de estrangeiros na sociedade japonesa. Por que, na sua opinião, o governo japonês é tão relutante em promover uma política a favor da imigração estrangeira? E por que a questão da homogeneidade racial é tão significativa na cultura japonesa?**

- *O ponto crucial é justamente a questão da homogeneidade da sociedade japonesa. Isso pode se perder com a miscigenação étnica e cultural (vide Brasil), trazendo mais malefícios do que benefícios.*

**15 - Acredita que o Japão tenha que aliviar as suas políticas migratórias? Se sim, quais soluções poderiam ser adotadas? Acha que o direito de voto e a *ius soli* (cidadania por nascimento) tenham que ser concedidos aos residentes estrangeiros que moram no Japão?**

- *Não acho que o Japão deva alterar em nada suas políticas migratórias e nem nas leis e normas existentes com relação aos estrangeiros.*

Entrevista 3 - Gabriela

**PEQUENA INTRODUÇÃO: explique qual é a sua relação com o Japão, de qual geração japonesa você faz parte e descreva em breve a sua experiência (quer dizer quantas vezes já foi para o Japão ou se já morou lá, em que período etc.)**

*Me chamo Gabriela M., sou da terceira geração (sansei), fui uma vez para o Japão e morei lá por 6 anos (2008 – 2014).*

**1- Porque você escolheu ir trabalhar/estudar no Japão? Quais eram as suas expectativas antes de chegar? Pode afirmar que tais expectativas foram satisfeitas?**

*Decidi ir ao Japão porque quase toda minha família já tinha ido, e eu gostava muito da cultura em si, minha expectativa era de muito trabalho e ganho superfaturado. Em parte essa expectativa é verdade, no entanto, depende muito da empresa em que se trabalha, o salário de cada uma é bem diferente da outra.*

**2 - Em que setor e como você encontrou trabalho no Japão? Foi fácil procurar e encontrar emprego?**

*Para os estrangeiros no geral, é fácil conseguir emprego na parte de produção das fábricas, geralmente procuramos uma empreiteira terceirizada que nos oferece os empregos disponíveis*

*veis no momento, em seguida eles veem se encaixamos no perfil que as empresas pedem. Para as pessoas de idade é um pouco mais difícil de conseguir emprego, porque na maioria são trabalhos que exigem algum tipo de esforço físico.*

**3 - Conhece a língua japonesa? SE SIM: foi suficiente para se comunicar com o pessoal local e para se integrar na sociedade japonesa? SE NÃO: teve dificuldade no processo de adaptação na sociedade japonesa? As vezes pode-se criar a situação paradoxal onde os *nikkeijin* mais “japonesados” são discriminados pelos seus mesmos compatriotas pelo fato de terem se assimilado mais facilmente na sociedade japonesa. Você passou por esse tipo de experiência?**

*Não falo japonês e me adaptei rapidamente. As coisas no Japão são muito intuitivas e explicadas visualmente. Tudo vem com manual de instrução desenhado, inclusive comidas. Na cidade em que eu morei chamada Minakuchi (em Shiga-ken), tinham muitos brasileiros e isso facilitava muito. Muitos brasileiros empreenderam por lá, então tinha mercado, salão de beleza, restaurantes, lojas, todos com produtos brasileiros. Tanto na prefeitura quanto no hospital central da cidade, possuíam tradutores para brasileiros e para peruanos, então era chegar no local e pedir pelo tradutor. Após o hospital da cidade ser reformado, podíamos ler placas em japonês e português.*

**4 - Sabemos que os estereótipos influenciam a concepção de uma cultura bem antes de uma pessoa tomar contato com a mesma. O que significa para você “ser japonês”? Pode afirmar que a sua visão de “ser Japonês” reflete a realidade, quando chegou no Japão?**

*Para mim, japonês é quem nasce no Japão e é filho de japoneses nativos. Filhos de estrangeiros nascidos lá são considerados estrangeiros. Sim, porque apesar de eu ser descendente de japoneses, lá eu sou considerada “estrangeira”. A distinção que se tem de ser nativo ou estrangeiro é bem grande, no trabalho, por exemplo, havia líderes brasileiros, mas, o chefe era sempre um “japonês” ou “japonesa” mas, nunca um estrangeiro, por mais que esse estrangeiro tivesse uma perícia maior do trabalho ou falasse japonês fluente.*

**5 - Antes de chegar no Japão, sentia-se mais Japonês ou Brasileiro? A sua identidade cultural foi sujeitada a alguma mudança depois da estadia no Japão?**

*Aqui no Brasil, eu me sentia muito japonesa rsrsrs, por gostar muito da cultura. Fiz parte de grupo de taiko, ia à maturas, ouvia música japonesa, assistia muitos animes. Sim, lá me vi muito brasileira, todas essas coisas que eu fazia aqui como japonesa, não fiz por lá, na verdade sentia falta do Brasil, de ouvir gente falando português, de ouvir samba, de conversar com pessoas mais acolhedoras.*

**6 - Como *nikkeijin*, você já se sentiu discriminado na sociedade brasileira? Se sim, que tipo de discriminações observou e em que contexto (escolar, de trabalho)? Nunca se sentiu discriminado na sociedade japonesa? Se sim, que tipo de discriminações observou e em que contexto (escolar, de trabalho)?**

*Nunca me senti discriminada no Brasil e nem no Japão. No entanto, os brasileiros tem um certo preconceito sobre os descendentes de japoneses, que sejamos muito bons em matemática ou coisas relacionadas a tecnologia, o que não ocorre sempre.*

**7 - Que tipo de trabalho você fazia no Japão? Acha que foi sujeitado a uma desclassificação com respeito à sua ocupação precedente (quer dizer a que desenvolvia no Brasil)?**

*Trabalhei em uma fábrica chamada Tsujiko que produzia lâmpadas, as quais, eram bem finas e cumpridas e eram utilizadas dentro de televisões de led, outra fábrica que trabalhei chamada Sumitomo produzia chip de eletrônicos, as que eu produzia eram para o vídeo-game Nintendo Wii.*

*Não vejo dessa forma, quando fui ao Japão sabia que tipo de trabalho eu teria, fui preparada para isso.*

**8 - Lembra-se com que tipo de contrato foi empregado em Japão? Esse tipo de contrato garantiu-lhe uma adequada proteção ao trabalho? O seu emprego no Japão permitiu poupar bastante para enviar/investir uma parte do ganho no Brasil? Conseguiu voltar ao Brasil?**

*Os contratos de trabalhos são intermediados pelas empreiteiras que explicavam verbalmente as condições de trabalho, dificilmente alguém lê o contrato, então não saberia dizer se me protegia de certa forma. Porém nunca tive nenhum problema com relação a pagamentos ou direitos, como o seguro desemprego por exemplo.*

*Alguns empregos sim, outros não. Teve empregos que ganhei muito pouco e outros que ganhei muito bem. Sim, consegui voltar ao Brasil.*

**9 - No Japão, sentia-se mais à vontade com os *Nikkeijin* ou com os Japoneses? Durante a estadia no Japão, teve bastante relações com o pessoal japonês fora do ambiente de trabalho? Por exemplo, participou de atividades recreativas/culturais com os Japoneses?**

*Eu tinha um contato maior com os estrangeiros em geral, onde eu morava e trabalhava tinham muitos peruanos, chineses e filipinos, alguns descendentes de japoneses outros não. Com os japoneses meu contato foi somente no trabalho.*

**10 - Alguma vez participou de manifestações ou atividades tradicionais brasileiras no Japão (por exemplo, paradas de samba na rua)? Se sim, já estava acostumado a tomar parte destes festivais tradicionais no Brasil, antes de chegar no Japão ?**

*Onde há comunidades brasileiras é bem comum ter festinhas típicas, eu só participei de festas juninas em escolas brasileiras e sim, participo aqui também.*

**11 - Diz-se que os *nikkiejin* são aceitos mais facilmente com respeito a outros estrangeiros por causa de um sentido de familiaridade, devido à semelhança racial, sobretudo de primeira impressão. Porém, você já observou reações de surpresa ou negativas na comunidade japonesa ao se manifestar culturalmente como *Nikkeijin*, por exemplo, de uma maneira mais “abrasileirada” de se comportar?**

*Na verdade não, nunca vi tal reação negativa. Na verdade eles eram bem curiosos e sempre procuraram algum tipo de interação, perguntando do Ayrton Senna por exemplo, provando as comidas brasileiras ou até aprendiam algumas palavras em português para tentar “conversar”.*

**12 - Se você pudesse escolher entre cidadania japonesa e brasileira, qual escolheria? Quais das duas cidadanias aconselharia ao filho? Quais acha que sejam as vantagens (e também as desvantagens) de se ter cidadania japonesa e morar no Japão?**

*Alguns dos brasileiros com cidadania japonesa que conheci, escolhem a japonesa mas, guardam o passaporte brasileiro com muito carinho rsrsrsrs, dizem que lá eles são "japoneses" mas, aqui no Brasil são o que quiserem ser. Então aconselharia que optasse pela cidadania japonesa.*

*Acho que as vantagens seriam de oportunidades de emprego fora da fábrica, facilidade de compra de imóveis por exemplo. A confiabilidade para quem é japonês para esse tipo de coisa é maior. A comodidade de ter uma vida mais "fácil".*

**13 - Na sua experiência, acredita que no Japão haja adequada estrutura local e governamentais para acolher e oferecer serviços aos residentes estrangeiros ?**

*Na minha experiência sim, os órgãos públicos japoneses sempre me ofereceram tudo que precisei, desde informações a solução de problemas, assuntos como moradia, saúde e emprego. E tem também o consulado brasileiro que oferece diversos serviços como documentos pessoais (passaporte, visto, CPF, certidões, entre outros).*

**14 - Nos últimos anos, a população japonesa está envelhecendo e enfrentando uma grave crise demográfica. A introdução de trabalhadores estrangeiros foi inicialmente anunciada como possível remédio a tal crise. Porém, ao mesmo tempo, sempre foi realçado o poder ambíguo, benéfico e danoso, derivado da introdução de estrangeiros na sociedade japonesa. Por que, na sua opinião, o governo japonês é tão relutante em promover uma política a favor da imigração estrangeira? E por que a questão da homogeneidade racial é tão significativa na cultura japonesa?**

*Tradição talvez, acredito que em países orientais sejam assim. Os japoneses gostam do modo como vivem da organização, do silêncio, da honestidade. Os estrangeiros possuem outros costumes o que acaba por "perturbar" tal modo de vida. E a criminalidade aumentou com a imigração o que faz com que eles se fechem ainda mais.*

**15 - Acredita que o Japão tenha que aliviar as suas políticas migratórias? Se sim, quais soluções poderiam ser adotadas? Acha que o direito de voto e a *ius soli* (cidadania por nascimento) tenham que ser concedidos aos residentes estrangeiros que moram no Japão?**

*Sim, é um país com a natalidade muito baixa que necessita de mão de obra estrangeira, eles não aceitam a quarta geração de descendentes mas, aceitam chineses que não possuem descendência japonesa. Acho que deveriam liberar visto para quem quiser e estiver disposto a trabalhar por lá, com certo controle para que não haja superpopulação.*

*Sim acho que a cidadania por nascimento deveria ser concedida às crianças nascidas no Japão, muitas delas crescem em creches e escolas japonesas, falam japonês mais do que português e não tem ambição alguma de voltar ao país de seus pais.*

Entrevista 4 - Monica

**PEQUENA INTRODUÇÃO: explique qual é a sua relação com o Japão, de qual geração japonesa você faz parte e descreva em breve a sua experiência (quer dizer quantas vezes já foi para o Japão ou se já morou lá, em que período etc.)**

*Trabalho aqui a 25 anos, vou ao Brasil de a cada 2 ou 3 anos, morei em três províncias diferentes, meu trabalho mais longo foi o de golfe caddie (23 anos), agora trabalho numa fábrica de cosméticos. Faço taichi por 20 anos, jogo golfe, e sou nissei.*

**1- Porque você escolheu ir trabalhar/estudar no Japão? Quais eram as suas expectativas antes de chegar? Pode afirmar que tais expectativas foram satisfeitas?**

*A época em que sai da faculdade era da hiper-inflação, fiz home stay nos USA e a experiência de morar num país (de primeiro mundo) me encantou)  
Apesar de já ter me distanciado, caddie foi um serviço muito especial. Conheci pessoas e mundos que jamais poderia ter visto em outro lugar.*

**2 - Em que setor e como você encontrou trabalho no Japão? Foi fácil procurar e encontrar emprego?**

*Procurar emprego e como procurar um pouco do seu modo de viver. As vezes leva tempo mas e preciso procurar. Empreiteiras, internet, amigos.*

**3 - Conhece a língua japonesa?**

*Falo fluentemente e frequento uma escola de kandi*

**SE SIM: foi suficiente para se comunicar com o pessoal local e para se integrar na sociedade japonesa? As vezes pode-se criar a situação paradoxal onde os *Nikkeijin* mais “japonesados” são discriminados pelos seus mesmos compatriotas pelo fato de terem se assimilado mais facilmente na sociedade japonesa. Você passou por esse tipo de experiência?**

**SE NÃO: teve dificuldade no processo de adaptação na sociedade japonesa?**

*Divido o apto com uma japonesa e no meu trabalho não tem brasileiros. Tenho primos e amigos brasileiros.*

*Sim , tem muitos japoneses preconceituosos. Assim como no Brasil vi preconceito em relação aos haitianos. mas tenho muitos amigos japoneses e eles têm um mundo mais aberto. Sim, acho difícil o relacionamento com Nikkeis no trabalho. Talvez o alto estresse da competição no trabalho seja duplo no nosso caso. Competir com japoneses e tentar ser o melhor trabalhador brasileiro. Assim acabei me distanciando da comunidade brasileira em si. Tinha que viver e conhecer o país ( Japão).*

**4 - Sabemos que os estereótipos influenciam a concepção de uma cultura bem antes de uma pessoa tomar contato com a mesma. O que significa para você “ser japonês”? Pode afirmar que a sua visão de “ser Japonês” reflete a realidade, quando chegou no Japão?**

*Não, na realidade minha visão era bem diferente. No Brasil os Nikkeis ,( na minha época) eram os antigos japoneses. O Japão tinha mudado muito no pos guerra.*

**5 - Antes de chegar no Japão, sentia-se mais Japonês ou Brasileiro? A sua identidade cultural foi sujeitada a alguma mudança depois da estadia no Japão?**

*Acho que me sentia mais japonesa ou me orgulhava em ser descendente e tinha preconceito com os (gaijins) como costumávamos falar incorretamente na época.  
Hoje posso dizer que mudei....tenho menos preconceitos.*

**6 - Como *Nikkeijin*, você já se sentiu discriminado na sociedade brasileira? Se sim, que tipo de discriminações observou e em que contexto (escolar, de trabalho)? Nunca se sentiu discriminado na sociedade japonesa? Se sim, que tipo de discriminações observou e em que contexto (escolar, de trabalho)?**

*Morava em uma colônia de japoneses e estudava em uma escola em que até os professores eram nikkeis. Eu própria era preconceituosa.*

*No Japão o preconceito é como em todo lugar, medo do diferente (novo) e ter que se sentir superior. Tem pessoas que não respondem a um simples cumprimento ou faz questão de fazer vc saber que não será convidado a um encontro entre companheiro de trabalho.*

**7 - Que tipo de trabalho você fazia no Japão? Acha que foi sujeitado a uma desclassificação com respeito à sua ocupação precedente (quer dizer a que desenvolvia no Brasil)?**

*Não cheguei a realmente a trabalhar no Brasil. Bom..portanto isso não aconteceu realmente, mais acho que o Japão em si é muito preconceituoso em relação a mulheres...tinha amigas formadas em faculdades como eu no campo de golfe e minha companheira de apto e formada pela faculdade de Waseda. Agora como outras japonesas sofro o preconceito pela idade.*

**8 - Lembra-se com que tipo de contrato foi empregado em Japão? Esse tipo de contrato garantiu-lhe uma adequada proteção ao trabalho? O seu emprego no Japão permitiu poupar bastante para enviar/investir uma parte do ganho no Brasil? Conseguiu voltar ao Brasil?**

*Era contratada como "shain" com todos os direitos garantidos, agora pela idade sou "part time" mas tenho todos os direitos garantidos*

*Tenho sim uma poupança. Mas minha intenção não é voltar ao Brasil definitivamente, gostaria de poder ir morar num quarto país.*

**9 - No Japão, sentia-se mais à vontade com os Nikkeijin ou com os Japoneses? Durante a estadia no Japão, teve bastante relações com o pessoal japonês fora do ambiente de trabalho? Por exemplo, participou de atividades recreativas/culturais com os Japoneses?**

*Escolhei trabalhar onde não tinha muito contato com brasileiros porque queria conhecer realmente a sociedade japonesa. Participava de bonenkais e atividades da empresa. Hoje tenho hobbies onde não tem estrangeiros mais isso é por acaso. Na minha escola de kandis tem pessoas de varias nacionalidades. Falando em preconceitos, sofri em passar pela imigração na França e minha amiga que tem dupla nacionalidade (japonesa e brasileira) nem foi atendida de modo preferencial.*

**10 - Alguma vez participou de manifestações ou atividades tradicionais brasileiras no Japão (por exemplo, paradas de samba na rua)? Se sim, já estava acostumado a tomar parte destes festivais tradicionais no Brasil, antes de chegar no Japão ?**

*Não.*

**11 - Diz-se que os Nikkeijin são aceitos mais facilmente com respeito a outros estrangeiros por causa de um sentido de familiaridade, devido à semelhança racial, sobretudo de primeira impressão. Porém, você já observou reações de surpresa ou negativas na comunidade japonesa ao se manifestar culturalmente como Nikkeijin, por exemplo, de uma maneira mais "abrasileirada" de se comportar?**

*Sim, se digo que meus pais nasceram no Japão. Eles dizem, Ha! Então você não tem mistura sanguínea....mas se assustam quando rio alto ou não faço o serviço como manda o regras.*

*E também as vezes não respeito muito os senpais. Isso é um problema.*

**12 - Se você pudesse escolher entre cidadania japonesa e brasileira, qual escolheria? Quais acha que sejam as vantagens (e também as desvantagens) de se ter cidadania japonesa e morar no Japão?**

Pelo que sei, o Brasil aceita dupla nacionalidade. E se escolhe ser japonês oficialmente mas não se perde a nacionalidade brasileira.

**13 - Na sua experiência, acredita que no Japão haja adequada estrutura local e governamentais para acolher e oferecer serviços aos residentes estrangeiros ?**

Bom...melhor que a do Brasil, pelo menos.

Não que aqui não tenha por exemplo desvio de dinheiro. Mas os olhos do povo e mais crítico.

Ha sim muita roubo no governo. A diferença é que não se rouba tudo, pelo menos o estádio olímpico vai ficar pronto.

E o japonês leva pra casa sim o papel higiênico do banheiro....mas deixa o suficiente para o uso da empresa.

**14 - Nos últimos anos, a população japonesa está envelhecendo e enfrentando uma grave crise demográfica. A introdução de trabalhadores estrangeiros foi inicialmente anunciada como possível remédio a tal crise. Porém, ao mesmo tempo, sempre foi realçado o poder ambíguo, benéfico e danoso, derivado da introdução de estrangeiros na sociedade japonesa. Por que, na sua opinião, o governo japonês é tão relutante em promover uma política a favor da imigração estrangeira? E por que a questão da homogeneidade racial é tão significativa na cultura japonesa?**

*O pais e uma ilha e temia muito "os mucos no shito" pessoas de qualquer outro lugar.*

*O mundo era essa ilha dividido entre shoguns. O resto era quase um outro planeta.*

*E como um pais exemplarmente asiático e muito antigo querem manter o sangue japonês sem misturas.*

*Voto e livre e quem vota e um grande maioria são os aposentados. Portanto a opinião dos velhos e muito importante aos políticos. O que dificulta as mudanças.*

**15 - Acredita que o Japão tenha que aliviar as suas políticas migratórias? Se sim, quais soluções poderiam ser adotadas? Acha que o direito de voto e a *ius soli* (cidadania por nascimento) tenham que ser concedidos aos residentes estrangeiros que moram no Japão?**

*Sim, mas temem por exemplo se uma guerra ocorra entre as Coreias e a quantidade de refugiados. E provavelmente o governo tenha que incentivar o voto dos jovens para que o pais ouça a voz dos futuro.*

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