

Introduction

THE PACIFIC RIM IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD



The sixties and seventies were Brazil's "Diasporic Decades," and nowhere more so than in São Paulo. During these years Brazil tried to project a bigger role for itself in the world, and descendants of immigrants played an especially active role in shaping international and local connections. Capital from overseas poured into the city, with profits directed both to home in Brazil and to home abroad. Millions of Paulistanos constantly reshaped their identities to take advantage of ethnicities created by immigrant ancestors and Brazilian nationhood. No group more clearly defined São Paulo's Diasporic Decades than the hundreds of thousands of Japanese-Brazilians who became an integral part of life in the city.

As Japan reemerged as an economic powerhouse after World War II, Nikkei throughout the Americas were linked to international capital in ways that changed identity construction. Japan's position on the world stage meant that Nikkei were simultaneously viewed as "radically Other" and as part of a "common capitalist identity."¹ When Brazil's military took power in a 1964 coup, the generals and their civilian minions linked Japan with Brazil's "Japanese" just as a generation of Nikkei entered liberal professions. For the many Nikkei youth who had been born in immigrant farming communities, coming of age meant migration to the city of São Paulo for educational and professional advancement.

Generational change among Nikkei became part of a broader reformula-

tion of bourgeois youth as censorship, repression, and mobilization created particular pitfalls and opportunities for all Brazilians. Nikkei (like many other young people), even if they had long hair or listened to rock and roll, generally followed the paths laid out by their parents and the military regime, focusing on individual economic success. For many Nikkei the dictatorship represented an opportunity to take advantage of the Brazilian higher educational system and ascend the social and economic ladder. Staying out of opposition politics was the norm. The dictators argued that success came from conformity and discipline, and Nikkei both created and took advantage of a model minority myth that separated them from participation in activist politics. The variables of generation, international capitalism, and national politics linked the local and the global in intricate ways that shaped Nikkei identity and images of it.

The opportunities for the renegotiation of ethnicity that emerged during the dictatorship stemmed from São Paulo's nineteenth- and twentieth-century economic expansion, which had attracted immigrants from around the world. By the early 1900s São Paulo was a multicultural city with large populations of African, European, Asian, and Middle Eastern descent. By the 1930s, immigrants were at the forefront of political activism in São Paulo, seeking to redraw the society and their space within it. During the sixties and seventies the city grew enormously, at a rate much higher than that of Brazil overall (see table 2). Many Paulistanos saw themselves as situational "hyphenated-Brazilians" and moved fluidly between Brazilian, Paulistano, and Italo-, Afro-, German-, Arab-, Jewish-, or Japanese-Brazilian identities.

Analyzing ethnic identity in São Paulo in the latter decades of the twentieth century is useful for understanding Brazil more broadly. People migrated in and out of São Paulo in huge numbers. Politicians, activists, artists, and domestic and industrial workers who lived in São Paulo were often from somewhere else, and those who resided in other cities often spent formative years in São Paulo. Television and movies flowed from São Paulo to the rest of the country. Advertising produced primarily for the city's residents was used throughout the country because most markets were too poor to receive individual attention.

Many Paulistanos saw their city as a dynamic example that an otherwise static Brazil should follow. The vibrant ethnicity of São Paulo thus seemed at odds with a broader national culture that often denied the importance, or even existence, of ethnicity. If we attempt to generate demographic statistics about Japanese-Brazilians, the competing ideologies become clear. Brazilian censuses, for example, have never allowed for ethnicity, rather grouping all

TABLE 2. Population distribution, São Paulo state, 1940–80

Year	Rural	Annual % Change	Urban	Annual % Change
1940	4,012,205		3,170,051	
1960	4,789,488	0.89	8,021,703	4.75
1980	2,844,334	-2.57	11,191,754	1.68

Source: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, *Evolução da População Residente: Brasil, Estado de São Paulo, Grande São Paulo, 1960, 1980.*

citizens into six “color” categories based on a respondent model: white, black, yellow, mixed, indigenous, no declaration.² Brazilian census data thus makes it difficult to garner much sociological data on the Japanese-Brazilian population. The leadership of the constituted Japanese-Brazilian community, however, twice conducted censuses with the financial support of a Japanese government eager to know about “its” population abroad. The 1958 Japanese-Brazilian community census was published in Japan in two volumes with text in Japanese and English but not Portuguese. The second Nikkei census was conducted in 1987–88 and produced only in Portuguese, evidence of Nikkei identity’s new focus on a generation born and raised in Brazil.

The 1958 census counted just over 430,000 Brazilian Nikkei, with some 325,000 living in São Paulo state and about 120,000 in the city. Immigrants were about one-third of the total in 1958 but over the next two decades the population born in Brazil would increase dramatically, as did migration from rural areas to São Paulo city.³ By 1987 the Nikkei population had grown to about 1.2 million, with the overwhelming majority (887,000) living in the state of São Paulo. Some 326,000 Japanese-Brazilians lived in São Paulo city and another 170,000 lived in the regions immediately surrounding it. Today the numbers are even higher: São Paulo’s population of Japanese descent is much larger than that of the major U.S. cities: Honolulu (113,000), Los Angeles (45,000), New York (26,500), San Francisco (15,000), and Seattle (12,000).⁴ It is also larger than the entire Peruvian Nikkei population of about 55,000. Outside of Japan, there are more Nikkei in the state of São Paulo than in the rest of the world combined! (See tables 3–5.)

This huge population emerged from a series of contacts between Brazil and Japan that began in 1894 (see table 6). Brazilian coffee planters, preoc-

TABLE 3. Population growth, Brazil and São Paulo (state and city), 1890–1980

Year	Annual %		Annual %		Annual %	
	Brazil	Change	São Paulo State	Change	São Paulo City	Change
1890	14,333,915		1,384,753		64,934	
1900	17,318,557	1.91	2,282,279	5.12	239,820	13.96
1920	31,652,472	3.06	3,667,032	2.40	57,982	4.51
1940	41,236,315	2.19	7,180,316	2.91	1,326,261	4.37
1960	70,072,417	4.51	12,809,231	7.20	3,781,446	10.99
1980	111,308,732	2.34	25,040,712	3.41	8,493,226	4.13

Source: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, *Evolução da População Residente: Brasil, Estado de São Paulo, Grande São Paulo, 1960, 1980*.

TABLE 4. Population growth, Brazilians of Japanese descent, 1958 and 1988

Region	1958	%	1988	%	Annual %
Brazil	105,870	24.61	340,000	28.25	3.97
São Paulo State	255,520	59.38	562,000	45.60	2.66
São Paulo City	50,000	16.27	326,000	25.50	6.45
Total	430,135	100	1,228,000	99.80	3.56

Sources: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), *Estatísticas históricas do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 1987); IBGE, *Anuário estatístico do Brasil, 1987–88* (Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 1988); Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros (CENB), *Pesquisa da população de descendentes de japoneses residentes no Brasil, 1987–88* (São Paulo: CENB, 1990); CENB, *Uma epopéia moderna: 80 anos da imigração japonesa no Brasil* (São Paulo: Hucitec–Soc. Brasileira de Cultura Japonesa, 1992).

cupied with the transition from African slavery to free labor, became disillusioned with European laborers who seemed more interested in protesting labor and social conditions than in working as replacements for slaves.⁵ The landowner's hunt for submissive labor melded well with the Japanese government's desire to export what they believed to be a surplus agricultural population. When the United States banned most Japanese entry with its "Gentleman's Agreement" in 1907, Japan and Brazil removed all administra-

TABLE 5. Population distribution, Brazilians of Japanese descent, 1958 and 1988

Year	Rural	Annual %	Urban	Annual %
1958	263,762		193,207	
1988	124,000	-2.4	1,104,000	5.9

Sources: IBGE, *Estatísticas históricas do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 1987); IBGE, *Anuário estatístico do Brasil, 1987-88* (Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 1988); CENB, *Pesquisa da população de descendentes de japoneses residentes no Brasil, 1987-88* (São Paulo: CENB, 1990); Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros, *Uma epopéia moderna: 80 anos da imigração japonesa no Brasil* (São Paulo: Hucitec-Soc. Brasileira de Cultura Japonesa, 1992).

tive and diplomatic hurdles to immigration. Between 1908 and 1941 some 189,000 Japanese immigrants settled in Brazil (followed by another 50,000 after World War II), almost all arriving as subsidized labor. Japanese immigrants were well received by many in the Brazilian elite who accepted the Japanese government's claim that its people were the "whites" of Asia. In Japan, there was similar enthusiasm for migration to Brazil, believed to be a country of immense potential wealth.

Japanese immigrants did more than work on plantations. Many Brazilian elites, who had seen first Europe, then the United States as sources of modernity in the nineteenth century, added Japan to this list in the twentieth, following the country's victory over Russia and its subsequent rise to international military, economic, and technological power. In many respects, the experiences of Japanese-Brazilians in the sixties and seventies represented how elites before World War II had imagined what Brazil might become.

The search for modernity abroad to create the Brazilian nation at home is seen clearly in Anita Malfatti's painting *The Japanese* (figure 6), shown at a controversial 1917 exposition that set the stage for São Paulo's paradigm-shifting Modern Art Week five years later. While most of the fifteen thousand Japanese immigrants who had settled in São Paulo state between 1908 and 1915 were farmers, Malfatti's 1915 image did not portray a rural worker.⁶ The subject was confident and dressed for life in the big city in a three-piece suit and bow tie. He was a modern man and a model for other Brazilians.

For elites, the desire to use immigration to import modernity meshed easily with a sense that Japanese were uniquely hard and productive workers.



FIGURE 6. Anita Malfatti, *O japonês* (1915–16).

Used by permission of the Coleção de Artes Visuais do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros, University of São Paulo

In the twenties, firms linked to the Japanese government began to purchase large plots of land in areas of São Paulo state where little agricultural development had taken place. The Japanese formed cooperatives that operated networks of distribution, not just production. At the same time Brazilian commercial interests significantly expanded their Japanese market for goods like rice and coffee. Japanese immigrants and their production were crucial to this expansion, since many products traveled via Japanese-Brazilian and Japanese middlemen to Japan for sale. By the 1930s, Nikkei visibility in the Brazilian economy, and Japan's growing international presence, created

TABLE 6. Japanese immigration to Brazil, 1908–79

Years	Number
1908–14	15,543
1915–23	16,723
1924–35	141,732
1936–41	14,617
1942–52	— ^a
1952–59	30,610
1960–69	18,619
1970–79	3,610

Sources: 1908–41: Hiroshi Saito, “Alguns aspectos da mobilidade dos japoneses no Brasil,” *Kobe Economic and Business Review*, 6th Annual Report (1959): 50; Comissão de Elaboração da História dos 80 anos da Imigração Japonesa no Brasil, *Uma epopéia moderna: 80 anos da imigração japonesa no Brasil* (São Paulo: Editora Hucitec, 1992), table 2, p. 424.

^aInsignificant because of World War II and its aftermath.

some resentment, and a number of political movements sought to limit Japanese immigration. In the mid-thirties Brazil’s elites fought a political and cultural battle among themselves over whether Japanese immigrants would save or ruin Brazil. In 1933, members of the Constitutional Convention, charged with producing what would become the Constitution of 1934, debated Japanese immigration in detail, discussing its relation to imperialism, assimilation, and nationalism. The constitution established a quota system, and while the immigrant stream from Japan slowed between 1933 and 1950, the social place of Japanese and their descendants remained a topic of national political and cultural discussion.⁷

When the proto-fascist *Estado Novo* (New State) dictatorship was established in 1937, one of its major new policies was the *brasilidade* (Brazilianization) campaign. This state-driven homogenization program sought to preserve an idealized national identity from the encroachment of ethnicity. New legislation controlled immigrant entry and prevented resident aliens from congregating in farming colonies. Decrees required that all schools be directed by native-born Brazilians and that all instruction be in Portuguese and include “Brazilian” topics. Foreign-language publications had to be accompanied by Portuguese translations, and the Ministry of War began drafting children of foreign residents into the army and stationing them outside the

regions of their birth. Speaking foreign languages in public and private was banned, and the Brazilian children of foreign residents were prohibited from international travel.⁸

The *brasildade* movement, ostensibly aimed at all foreigners, targeted “resident enemy aliens” when Brazil entered World War II in 1942 on the side of the Allies. Many Japanese immigrants and their Brazilian children were forcibly removed from “strategic areas” along the coast and in major cities, often losing their businesses and land in the process. The reaction of Nikkei to the anti-Japanese movement was to construct a number of new Japanese-Brazilian identities. Some insisted on Portuguese as a language of both internal and external communication and sought to prove their Brazilianness through national loyalty. Others became increasingly “Japanese,” often by supporting secret societies linked to emperor worship. These societies garnered wide support after Brazil sent twenty-five thousand troops to Italy in July 1944 and war fever led to intense anti-Japanese propaganda.⁹ They grew even stronger after 1945 as postwar ultranationalism mixed with a desire to reinforce a space for Japanese-Brazilian identity.

The most powerful secret society was the Shindo Renmei (Way of the Subjects of the Emperor’s League), which became public in August 1945, following Japan’s surrender. Its goals were to maintain a permanent Japanized space in Brazil through the preservation of language, culture, and religion among Nikkei and to reestablish Japanese schools. It also denied that Japan itself had been defeated in the war. By December 1945 the Shindo Renmei claimed a membership of fifty thousand and over the next decade supporters would number one hundred thousand. The movement came to the wider Brazilian public’s attention when fanatical young members of the Shindo Renmei assassinated, physically abused, or destroyed the homes and fields of Nikkei who admitted Japan’s loss in the war, murdering sixteen people and destroying silk, cotton, and mint farms owned by Japanese immigrants and their Brazilian children.¹⁰ By mid-1946 Shindo Renmei propaganda included altered photos of President Harry S Truman bowing to Emperor Hirohito, “press” reports of Japanese troops landing in San Francisco and marching toward New York, and notices that Brazil’s recently deposed dictator Getúlio Vargas would be signing surrender documents in Tokyo.

The secret societies were marginalized by the early fifties just as Nikkei began to migrate in large numbers to São Paulo city and establish themselves in the middle classes. At the same time new immigrants from Japan (mainly Okinawa) entered Brazil in significant numbers, intensifying coex-

isting positive and negative stereotypes.¹¹ The new immigrants' presence in the ethnically diverse city reinforced memories of the secret societies and by extension Japanese-Brazilians as militaristic, violent, and secretive.¹² For Nikkei, the childhood memory of ethnic violence in their birthplaces was strong, even after they moved to the city.

In the postwar decades Nikkei, like many other ethnic groups, were alternately glorified and vilified by other Brazilians. Many Japanese-Brazilians sought to combat the negative stereotypes by melding commemorations of São Paulo's four hundredth anniversary with those marking fifty years of Japanese immigration in 1958. A huge "Japanese Pavilion" was constructed in São Paulo's Ibirapuera Park and was inaugurated on 18 June 1958, fifty years to the day after the arrival of the first ship bringing Japanese immigrants to Brazil. That day was even decreed a state holiday by Governor Jânio Quadros. As historian Célia Sakurai notes, "from the fifties, the Japanese colony began to gain a different kind of visibility . . . It was no longer the 'Yellow peril' . . . but now a glorification of labor, of the hard work that generates success."¹³

In the 1960s and 1970s positive Nikkei visibility stemmed from economic success and the presence of Japan as a world economic power. Paulistanos came into contact with Japanese-Brazilians, or images of them, constantly. Nikkei were studying in college, were selling fruits and vegetables, were small shop owners and liberal professionals, and were playing roles in advertising and in films. Many held local, state, and national political offices. Popular culture played on the new visibility. One popular song from the fifties told of frugal immigrant farmers driving old trucks who became urban professionals with money to spare and no real sense of how to maneuver a fancy new car in the city.¹⁴ Journalistic articles about São Paulo frequently emphasized the Nikkei presence. The British Sunday newspaper the *Observer* reflected that "office departments seem to be entirely manned by them. . . . [In] horticulture they are brilliant. . . . [On] some days the airport seems to be half-full of them, grasping their identical briefcases, smoking their cigarettes in the stiff style of beginners, posing for numerous photographs."¹⁵

Nikkei were particularly overrepresented in higher education in the sixties and seventies, making up a little over 2 percent of the population of the state of São Paulo but more than 10 percent of its university students. In 1967, according to the Japanese consulate, there were 40 Nikkei professors in the São Paulo university system as well as graduates numbering 560 engineers, 1,350 physicians, 5 judges, and 450 lawyers. This was in addition to the some 2,900 Nikkei who held university degrees in other areas and 3,300



FIGURES 7, 8. Stamps commemorating Japanese immigration to Brazil, 1958 (Japan) and 1974 (Brazil)

enrolled students.¹⁶ According to Sussumu Miyao’s analysis of census and university entrance data in 1977, 5 percent of all professors and 10 percent of all students entering São Paulo’s universities were of Japanese descent, with the highest percentage enrolled at the Aeronautical Technological Institute (Instituto Tecnológico de Aeronáutica, ITA) (15.9 percent), the Getúlio Vargas Foundation School of Business Administration (12.5 percent), and the University of São Paulo (12.9 percent). Some 14.6 percent of all students in the exact sciences were of Japanese descent, with 12.2 percent in the biomedical fields and 7.4 percent in the humanities and social sciences.¹⁷

Educational patterns among Nikkei generated much discussion among elites. Minister of Foreign Relations Antônio F. Azeredo da Silveira used the numbers of students and professors at the University of São Paulo to hail the “assimilative power” of Nikkei in a 1978 speech marking the seventieth anniversary of Japanese immigration to Brazil: “They say that the Japanese can make pearls like nature, watches like the Swiss, and whiskey like the Scotch. In Brazil, the Japanese immigrant made himself Brazilian like the Brazilians!”¹⁸ Not all public comments were as enthusiastic, but the link of Nikkei to educational achievement was strong. The news magazine *Istoé* noted ironically in 1979 that “the Faculty [of Arts and Sciences] starts with ‘F,’ for Fukuda.”¹⁹ Advertisements for preparatory centers that helped secondary school students train for university entrance examinations often featured Japanese-Brazilians. As educated Nikkei became a visible “racial other,” ugly jokes started to circulate: “Guarantee your place at the University of São Paulo tomorrow—kill a Jap today” went one, while another, found

in university toilet stalls, was “as you sit here and shit, it’s the books the Japanese hit.”

The growing numbers of Nikkei in higher education led to a significant overrepresentation in certain areas of the liberal professions like corporate management (6.3 percent), dentistry (8 percent), economics (9 percent), and chemistry (11.8 percent).²⁰ While these forms of economic insertion were independent of the authoritarian nature of Brazil’s government after 1964, certain regime policies did provide new opportunities. The military was eager to expand law, economics, science, engineering, and medicine as counterweights to the social science and humanities curricula that seemed to lead students to nonproductive dilettantism or, even worse, political activism. University growth was targeted at areas that trained students to develop and produce material goods like refrigerators and televisions that would go with middle-class culture. Into these sectors Nikkei flowed. When University of São Paulo physics professor Shigeo Watanabe was appointed to the National Research Council with much fanfare in 1971, Japanese immigrant parents, most of their children, and non-Nikkei policy makers all agreed that he was a perfect role model for all Brazilians.²¹

Educated Nikkei also became important members of the regime’s policy-making apparatus, and their ethnicity was always a point of public comment. Fábio Riodo Yassuda, the former head of São Paulo’s Cotia Cooperative, founded by Japanese immigrants, was named minister of industry and commerce in 1969. Press reports hailed the appointment for its importance to relations with Japan and suggested that Brazil’s population was changing for the better. Brazil’s most widely read newsmagazine, *Veja*, noted that “it took almost three hundred years for the ‘Portuguese of Brazil’ to consider themselves Brazilians. . . . For the ‘Japanese of Brazil’ it took much less.” This statement was backed up by pictures of families with one “Japanese” and one “Brazilian” parent and a “blond Japanese” child representing “Brazil.”²² Yassuda’s brother, São Paulo’s secretary of public works, was only one of many Nikkei to hold important public positions. In 1970 the state of São Paulo boasted one federal deputy, three state deputies, eleven mayors, seventeen vice-mayors, twelve city council presidents, and over two hundred city councilmen of Japanese descent.²³

Nikkei generational change and Brazilian government policies also reinforced economic ties between Japan and Brazil. The government of Juscelino Kubitschek (1956–61) encouraged Japanese investment as part of its import-substitution industrialization (ISI) policy, partly responsible for the establishment of the joint venture Usiminas steel plant in the state of Minas

Gerais in 1958. The following year the Ishikawajima Corporation funded some 70 percent of the Ishibrás shipyard in Rio de Janeiro.²⁴ Japanese products streamed into Brazil, and vice versa, after the military regime signed a 1967 tax treaty with Japan.²⁵ Many Japanese corporations located factories in the Manaus Free Trade Zone, increasing the presence of Japanese products in the Brazilian marketplace.

In early 1972, Japanese investment in Brazil was at about 170 million U.S. dollars, behind the United States, West Germany, Canada, Britain, and Switzerland. By the end of the year, however, there was a marked increase to almost 600 million dollars, placing Japan only slightly behind West Germany. That same year Mitsubishi announced a five-year, 1.2-billion-dollar investment, with most of that money for infrastructure and export of raw materials (minerals and food). Brazil's trade with Japan also expanded massively, from 3 percent of the total in 1960 to 6 percent of a much larger total in 1971.²⁶ In 1960 45 Japanese companies were operating in Brazil. By 1970 that number had jumped to 113 and by 1976 to 537. In the 1970s Japan ranked as the third-largest direct investor in Brazil, at nearly 2.8 billion dollars.

Japan's growing economic ties with Brazil were the result of a number of factors. At the global level, Japan's huge capital reserves needed to be invested overseas and Brazil, with its raw materials and potential for growth, was a logical choice. Investment in Brazil also helped Japanese multinationals cut labor costs and export some of their most polluting plants. There was an imagined diasporic factor as well, since "a unique attraction for Japan is the large and influential Japanese-Brazilian community to which it will look for much of its management and clerical force."²⁷

This combination of global and local factors was not lost on Antônio Delfim Neto, the economist who was Brazil's minister of finance from 1967 to 1974, following a well-regarded stint as economic secretary for the state of São Paulo.²⁸ For Delfim Neto, Japanese investment had two advantages: (1) a lack of the imperialist baggage associated with the United States and (2) frequent involvement with minority partnerships. Japanese-Brazilians also made an impression on Delfim Neto: the Nikkei technocrats whom he chose to work in the Finance Ministry to help "reduce investor apprehension" were his "Japanese Team."²⁹ Paulo Yokota was considered by São Paulo's *Diário Nippak* to be "one of [his] most loyal assistants" and was later named president of Brazil's National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária, INCRA).³⁰ Brazil's "Japanese Team" did not go unnoticed in Japan. In a 1976 meeting at Aka-



FIGURE 9. Brazilian stamp commemorating the visit of Crown Prince Akihito in 1967

saka Palace in Tokyo between Brazilian president general Ernesto Geisel and Japanese prime minister Takeo Miki, the latter commented (much to the general's delight) that the number of Nikkei in positions of political power was an indication that in Brazil "there is no racial prejudice."³¹

The ties between Brazil and Japan, and their linkage to Japanese-Brazilians, allowed the military regime to hail its special relationship with Japan.³² In 1967, and again a decade later, Crown Prince (now Emperor) Akihito's visits to Brazil were highly visible and carefully orchestrated, including meetings with the president and leading members of the Japanese-Brazilian community (see figure 9). In 1967, some twenty-five thousand people greeted the royal couple on their arrival from Tokyo, and newspapers estimated that one hundred thousand people surrounded their hotel in downtown São Paulo hoping for a glimpse.³³ When Japan's Prime Minister Tanaka visited Brazil in September 1974, he and President General Geisel both commented on the special relationship between the "two countries[, which] are ready to develop closer ties and more harmony."³⁴ When the Brazilian leader visited Japan two years later, he left with a promise of 3 billion dollars in aid as well as Japanese investment in a number of heavy industrial projects.³⁵

The transnational discourses about trade, investment, migration, and people were linked to local discourses that were critical to creating identity. The military government took great care, as did all regimes before and after, to protest any suggestions that Brazil was not a "white, modern nation" of which Nikkei were an integral part.³⁶ A plan to send a group of children of

Japanese mothers and African-American servicemen to the Japanese-founded colony of Tomé-Açu (some 400 kilometers north of the Amazonian city of Belém do Pará) was rejected after the Brazilian government defined the orphans as “undesirables.”³⁷ While politicians in Japan believed that these “mixed” children would fit perfectly in “mixed” Brazil, Brazilian politicians and Nikkei elites alleged that the plan made their country a dumping ground for nonwhites.

These minor tensions, however, did little to weaken the growing relations between Japan and Brazil. Sérgio Mendes performed his “Latin rock” to sold-out theaters in Japan, and his interviews with the Japanese press were relayed immediately back to Brazil.³⁸ Other cultural products also strengthened ties: Brazilian films were frequently sent to Japan, and in 1968 the Brazilian government sponsored a Carnival parade that brought three thousand people to the streets of the port city of Kobe to watch some of Rio de Janeiro’s most famous samba schools.³⁹ In the city of São Paulo, “Japanese” products (made in both Japan and Brazil) became increasingly common.

Japanese goods, presumed to be superior to locally made ones, led many Brazilians to associate the same qualities with Japanese-Brazilians. Brazilian newspaper and magazine articles about the 1970 World Exposition in Japan frequently suggested that high-tech gadgets would flow into Brazil via its Nikkei community.⁴⁰ Exotic and subservient female sexuality was also associated with Nikkei. In many cases, the images were combined. Take, for example, an advertisement for imported Yamaha motorcycles (figure 10). The image was of a naked white woman lying on the seat of a motorcycle and the tag line “Have her at your feet” with a prominent Japanese translation under it.⁴¹ Few, if any, readers could understand the Japanese script (which was a faithful translation of the Portuguese), but the presence of Japanese letters next to a Japanese motorcycle sold in Japanese-Brazilian dealerships spoke to quality of technology, an image nearly as powerful as that of the naked woman.

A similar set of ideas lay behind the advertisements that surrounded Varig Brazilian Airline’s first direct flights to Japan in 1968. The promotional event for the inaugural flight showed President General Arthur da Costa e Silva and his wife standing with Japanese-Brazilian stewardess Takeo Ouchi dressed in an outfit worthy of Carmen Miranda, including a fruited head-dress! Mrs. Costa e Silva (who flew to Japan on that flight) and Ms. Ouchi could be termed traditional, and the imagery found in advertising for Japan Airlines (JAL) in Brazil was similar, focusing on the attention businessmen would receive from women (figure 11).

YAMAHA

Tenha "ela" aos seus pés
 きっとお気に召します

BAHIA: AUTOBASA S/A
 Rua Coronel Pereira, 30
 Salvador

BOAS: MECÂNICA IMPORTADORA
 Rua Dória s/nº 11 - Goiânia

MINAS GERAIS:
VOLPONI & FILHO
 Rua Tamara s/nº 816
 Belo Horizonte

PÓRTO ALEGRE: AUTO RIG
 Av. Ferreira, 1207/115 - Porto Alegre - RS.

PARANÁ:
MOTORAMA
 Rua Francisco Otaviano, 67

SÃO PAULO - CAPITAL
TAMURA & CNO
 Av. Brig. Luiz Antônio, 2870

EDGAR SOARES
 Alameda Barão de Limeira, 175

MOTO JAP'S LTDA.
 Rua Manoel de Souza, 969
 Capital

COMERCIAL D'ARCIA
 Rua José Bonifácio, 64 - São Amaro

SÃO PAULO - INTERIOR
SHIGURO ITO
 Rua Casanova, 1143 - Mogi das Cruzes

BRASÍLIA: PECAS
 Rua José Bonifácio, 69 - Ribeirão Preto

CEARÁ: CIDIN
 Rua Gen. Glória, 4500 - S. José do Rio Preto

PARANÁ: S/A
 Rua Bernardino de Campos, 3422
 S. José do Rio Preto

LUIZ BEZZI
 Av. São Francisco, 174 - Santos

TOLMÃO FABRICO S.A. IMP. E COM.
 Rua do Brasil, 387
 Curitiba - SP

REPRESENTANTE EXCLUSIVO PARA O BRASIL — MOTOSPORT — R. BUTANTÁ, 206-B - PINHEIROS - SÃO PAULO

FIGURE 10. Fairplay: A Revista do Homem 34 (1969).
 Both the Japanese and Portuguese captions read, "Have her at your feet"



FIGURE 11. Advertisement for Japan Airlines service from São Paulo to Tokyo (1968). The caption reads, “This is where the Japan of JAL begins”

The stamp commemorating that first Varig flight to Japan also suggested a sexual diaspora (figure 12).⁴² A woman in traditional Bahian dress and a kimonoed geisha represented how the two different countries were coupled by African and Asian sexuality and the modern airplane overhead. The advertising jingle created to promote the new service used “a Rip-van-Winkle-like Japanese folk tale that almost all Japanese learn as children” mixed with images of Brazilian national identity.⁴³ The lyrics and music, written by Archimedes Messina, won the prize in 1970 for “Brazilian Jingle of the Year.” It was performed by Rosa Miyake, host of the Rede Record television network musical show *Images of Japan*. To this day the Varig jingle is sung at Japanese-Brazilian festivals.

URASHIMA TARO
 Urashima Taro, a poor fisherman
 Saved a turtle
 And it, as a reward, took him to Brazil!
 To the enchanted kingdom
 He fell in love and stayed here



FIGURE 12. Stamp (1968) commemorating that first Varig flight to Japan

He stayed many years, but suddenly
 Homesickness came upon him
 He received a mysterious chest as a present
 When he opened it, what joy
 It touched his heart
 He found a Varig ticket
 And he flew, happily, to Japan!⁴⁴

THE JINGLE

Academic lectures always lead to surprises, especially when audiences have lived experiences with the research that I am presenting. Such was the case when I had the pleasure to speak at Unisinos, a large university with a long tradition of historical research in ethnicity, located in the city of São Leopoldo, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. During my talk I showed a slide of the 1968 Brazilian stamp commemorating Varig's first flight to Japan. At the conclusion the professor Maria Cristina Martins approached me with a huge smile. "Your talk brought back memories for me," she said. "Did you ever hear the advertising jingle that Varig produced for the flight?" I said no and to the delight of the group, she sang the entire song, which she had not heard for decades.

The mixture of technology, ethnicity, and sexuality were not confined to motorcycle and airline advertising. An advertisement for a shirt that could



FIGURE 13. “O que é mulher bonita?”
Realidade, October 1967, 92–101.
 The title reads, “Love Is Born in the East”

“go around the world” without being ironed showed a man dreaming of his international experiences. His fantasy was a geisha who appreciated the technological quality of his shirt because she was modern and who was sexually subservient because she was traditional.⁴⁵ In Japanese-Brazilian beauty contests young women were hailed for maintaining Japanese ethnicity and giving off a special Brazilian sensuality.⁴⁶ An article on male ideas of beautiful women in the widely read magazine *Realidade* (which had a format similar to *Life*) used six examples, including the expected “blonde” and “mulata.” Aduato Serapião de Oliveira, a twenty-five-year-old linotypist, told of his fantasy: “A pretty woman? Ah, she must be Japanese! She has straight hair, sweet eyes, and she is very loving” (figure 13).

Advertising using images of Japanese-Brazilians, which became common in the sixties and seventies (and has continued to this day), was a constant point of ethnic interrogation. Advertisements fell into three broad categories: Japanese companies in Brazil focused on the “Brazilianness” of Nikkei,

Japanese-Brazilian firms promoted a “natural” Nikkei ability to improve Brazil, and non-Nikkei firms marketed intelligence and high productivity by conflating Japan and Nikkei. Representative of the first type was a 1972 Sony advertisement for recording equipment with the tag line “Who would have guessed? Sony is even teaching Portuguese in Brazil!”⁴⁷ This was similar to a 1978 Ishibrás advertisement created to take advantage of the publicity surrounding the seventieth anniversary of Japanese immigration to Brazil. It showed a child’s face, emphasizing his “slanty” eyes, along with the sentence “They believe in Brazil with their eyes closed.” The second type can be seen in an advertisement for CEAGESP (Companhia de Entrepósitos e Armazéns Gerais de São Paulo, a Japanese-Brazilian agricultural cooperative and distributor) which claimed that “the arrival of Japanese in Brazil led to a great future.” Advertisements for Anglo, a firm that prepared students for university exams, were typical of the third type. They showed a group of Nikkei students: “They are already known for being intelligent—Anglo helps to get it [a degree and being known as intelligent].” The Atlantic Petroleum Company took a similar approach. Its cartoon mascot, a small karate master, claimed that he, like the firm, was stronger than he appeared: “If you are not the biggest, you have to be the best” (figure 14).⁴⁸

The presumed bond between Japan and Japanese-Brazilians via industrial discipline and high-quality products was not only seen in commercial advertisements. A propaganda film on personal hygiene produced by the military used “Japanese” (read Japanese-Brazilian) characters to show viewers a model of how proper Brazilians should act. A government advertisement for savings accounts used a drawing of a samurai and text in Japanese and Portuguese to inculcate values of economy: “Those who are perseverant, organized, and provident deserve to make more from their savings account. And they will.”⁴⁹

During the sixties and seventies images of Japanese-Brazilians were omnipresent in São Paulo. Residents of the city met real Japanese-Brazilians who were part of its industrial and commercial expansion. They saw Japanese-Brazilians in advertisements for banks, laundry detergent, and insect repellent, all asserting that “Japanese” were modern, hard-working, and serious Brazilians. Nikkei actors performed in art films and in erotic comedies. Children who watched television (and in Brazil the numbers were huge) were enthralled by the arrival in 1964 of the live-action series *National Kid*, which created a generation that sang along with the Japanized English of the theme song “*Nationaro Kiido, Kiido, Nationaro Kiido . . .*”

The popular São Paulo music group *Premeditando o Breque* was formed



FIGURE 14. Advertisement of the Atlantic Petroleum Company, 1968. The caption reads, “If you are not the biggest, you have to be the best”

in the mid-1970s but, because of censorship, only released its first record in 1983. They played their own version of the “Nacionaro Kiido” theme song as part of their repertoire. And when the group sang its anthem to the city, “São Paulo, São Paulo,” the lyrics about a stroll through the megalopolis were not surprising:

It is always lovely to walk
in the city of São Paulo
The weather fools you, life is money,
in São Paulo
The blond Japanese
The darkish Northeasterners of São Paulo
Punk babes
The Yankee way of São Paulo.⁵⁰

A scene from the 1979 Bruno Barreto film *Amor Bandido* drove home the point. A man arriving in Rio de Janeiro by plane is asked by his taxi driver

about São Paulo. The response, “Same as always. Lots of rain, lots of Japanese,” certainly drew the same comfortable laugh from the audience as it did from the character in the film.⁵¹

SOME ORIENTING COMMENTS

While pre-1950 Japanese immigration and Japanese-Brazilian ethnicity have comprised a small but vibrant area of research in Brazil and Japan for many decades, later periods have received far less attention.⁵² The Brazilian state was deeply focused on questions of national identity formation during the early twentieth century, and immigrants were always connected to this issue. Given the two hundred thousand Japanese immigrants who settled in Brazil between 1908 and 1940, the integration of the newcomers and their descendants was viewed by academics as a policy question. The focus of research was on government reports, immigration policy debates, newspapers, and books. In the immediate postwar period, studies of Brazilians of Japanese descent focused on two issues: the Shindo Renmei and identity “problems” among the Nissei generation.⁵³ After 1960, from the state perspective, Nikkei had become Brazilian citizens and did not merit much mention. Ignoring Nikkei was also part of the post-World War II idea that race and ethnicity in Brazil were only functions of class, and research attention was thus oriented toward the economically disenfranchised. More recently, scholarship on the military dictatorship has understandably focused on politics and not ethnicity.

The paucity of research on ethnicity during the Brazilian dictatorship also indicates the unique ways that race and ethnicity are understood in Brazil. Japanese-Brazilians had little to gain by asserting their minority status in a country where “minority,” “oppressed,” and “impoverished” were part of the same equation. Majority Brazilians had an equal stake in publicly dismissing Nikkei ethnicity, even if they commented on it constantly. By asserting that Japanese-Brazilians were not “real” minorities (i.e., not impoverished), one could continue to use a series of stereotypes about Nikkei with impunity. While it is understandable that Brazilian academics have followed these lines, it seems that scholars of Brazil from other countries have as well. In fact, in spite of academic cautions that Brazil is a place of particular racial transience, Japanese-Brazilians are often treated as a monolithic community, in the rare cases when they appear in academic discussions.

The lack of scholarship is also related to how the dictatorship is remembered in Brazil. Brazilians often say that “Brazil is a country with no histor-

ical memory,” and the 1979 judicial decision to grant amnesty to all those accused, or potentially accused, of political crimes (including state torture) during military rule is often pointed to as an example. This rejection of memory has been particularly noticeable as former militants have come into positions of political and economic power since the return to democracy in 1985.⁵⁴ At the same time, certain sectors of popular culture have turned the period into either a joke (as did the 2003 film *Casseta e Planeta: A Taça do Mundo é Nossa*) or marketing strategy (Burger King’s 2005 entrance into the Brazilian market with an advertising campaign using fast food “guerrillas” taking to the street “in revolution” against the “dictatorship” of hamburger choices—eating at Burger King was thus a “democratic” act). The “Brazilianization” of the memory of the dictatorship also includes a rejection of the period’s violence, of which Japanese-Brazilians, as I will show, were often considered the most extreme purveyors. As a result, studying ethnicity as part of the memory of the dictatorship has not taken place.

My research, however, moves in a different direction by analyzing ethnic phenomena that occurred during the dictatorship but were not the result of it. Why did so many films include Japanese-Brazilian actors and actresses? Why were the Brazilian press and police so focused on Japanese-Brazilian militants? Why did a guerrilla group kidnap the Japanese consul in São Paulo to trade for a militant known as “Mário the Jap?”

To understand the unplanned effect of certain policies on ethnic identity, I have dug into a variety of sources that often elude the gaze of scholars.⁵⁵ These include films (including notes scribbled on video cassette boxes and in the margins of scripts, publicity posters, and audience reactions), oral histories, wanted posters, advertisements, photographs, and police reports. The richness and often unusual nature of these sources demanded that I add some of the techniques of anthropology and cultural studies to traditional historical methods of document analysis. Finding sources, be they the ones above or newspapers, government records, and diplomatic correspondence, was for me always an adventure. Thus I have tried to offer readers insights into where and how I found sources, and how the experiences of discovery may have influenced my analysis.

The words “memory” and “remember” appear frequently in this book, and readers should be aware that the subjects of this volume, even when public or semipublic figures, rarely speak about their ethnicity to the public.⁵⁶ Repeatedly they expressed surprise at my questions, and published interviews confirmed that this surprise was genuine and not a stock response. In this regard the responses I quote do not seem to conform to Alice

and Howard Hoffman's archival memory concept whereby recollections "are rehearsed, readily available for recall, and selected for preservation over the lifetime of the individual."⁵⁷

My questions led to the reconstruction of memories. Indeed, rebuilding political and artistic activism in a context of ethnic militancy often led to a kind of warped nostalgia for a past that was created via my interventions. Thus in this book I am not trying to piece together a factual chronology of events. Rather the oral histories, together with many other sources, have helped me to analyze the ethnic scenarios that prodded an always fluid notion of national identity in a city where hundreds of thousands of people considered themselves, and were considered, both nonnormative and the best Brazilians of all.

The first section of *A Discontented Diaspora* investigates artistic militancy, mainly in film. It begins and ends with two movies shown at the Cannes Film Festival, Walter Hugo Khouri's *Noite Vazia* (1964) and Tizuka Yamasaki's *Gaijin* (1980). In these chapters I trace the continuity between many different kinds of films by analyzing scripts and images as well as published documentation.⁵⁸ I conducted oral histories with some of the actors and directors and I found published interviews with others. That said, my attempts to get information were far from completely successful: some participants had died and others were unreceptive to my approaches. Films including Nikkei characters helped to spread ideas of Japaneseness and its link to Brazil among significant sectors of the population. Nikkei actors and actresses constantly bumped up against presumptions about their identities just as did most Nikkei. This helps to explain why the Japanese-Brazilian political activists who are the focus of the second part of the book had such similar experiences to performers examined in the first part.

The chapters on political militancy form a kind of prosopography, or collective biography, of Japanese-Brazilian activists. Almost all were born in rural areas with large populations of Japanese immigrants. As children they had intense experiences hearing about violent secret societies. Most moved to São Paulo city for education and there sought to assert their Brazilianness. While the specific stories of political activism diverge from the norm in Japanese-Brazilian life, readers will see that the images that surrounded Nikkei militants were extraordinarily similar to those of nonmilitants. For this section I was able to conduct numerous oral histories, find a wide range of documentation from the press and the government, and to consider a historiography in which images of Japanese-Brazilians are frequent.

The final chapters of the book are about three individuals. Two died

decades ago, and my focus is on how they were remembered. The third person is Shizuo Osawa, the famous (or infamous) Mário Japa (Mário the Jap). My ability to conduct many hours of interviews with Osawa was the result of a personal connection that gave me an introduction and the former guerrilla's confidence that his comments would not end up as lurid stories in the popular press. Osawa, who had been interested in Japanese-Brazilian ethnicity since his youth, was a particularly perceptive interlocutor.

•••

This book began with the famous advertisement “Our Japanese are more creative than everyone else’s Japanese.” The slogan plays with ideas of race, nation, and ethnicity in a way that allows for multiple interpretations. This became clear when I showed it to a large class on comparative race relations that I taught as a Fulbright Fellow at the University of São Paulo in 2001. I began with a simple question about the phrase—who were “our Japanese” and who were “everyone else’s Japanese?” The students all agreed that “our Japanese” were Brazilian and that the Brazilian nation was represented by the word “Japanese.” While the majority of students saw this as a positive representation, Nikkei students noted that denominating “Brazilians” as “Japanese” suggested that Nikkei were simultaneously Brazilian and foreign. There was much less agreement on the meaning of “everyone else’s Japanese.” Some students thought this was a comparison to other Latin American Nikkei, notably those in Peru and Paraguay. Others thought it meant “Japanese” from Japan. But what made “our Japanese” “better” or “more creative” than everyone else’s? Here the answers from my students were consistent—Japanese (from Japan) were techno-nerd automatons, and Japanese-Bolivians and Japanese-Peruvians were “Indianized.” Japanese (from Brazil), however, kept their hard-working Japanese side and added to it a creative Brazilian side. For my students the only thing odd about the advertisement was that we were discussing it in class. Japan was so deeply embedded in Brazil that it required no attention.