

JAPAN'S SECOND WORLD WAR VICTORY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE REACTION OF THE JAPANESE IMMIGRANTS IN BRAZIL TO JAPANESE DEFEAT

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Abstract. In August 1945 Japan's unconditional surrender was widely reported by the Brazilian media but for the vast majority of Japanese immigrants and their descendants the war was over but Japan had not been defeated. However, not everyone was in agreement and some of them did recognise the defeat of Japan. The Japanese in Brazil were then split into two factions and confusion swept their communities. The main argument advanced in this article is that the inter-group conflict that divided people of Japanese descent in Brazil immediately after the war is to be understood in the context of a constellation of economic and social forces at work in the Japanese communities as well as in the historical context of forces that shaped the life of Japanese immigrants for much of the pre-war period.

A vitória do Japão na segunda guerra mundial: uma análise da reação dos imigrantes japoneses no Brasil para derrota japonesa

Resumo. Em Agosto de 1945 a rendição incondicional do Japão foi muito anunciada pela mídia brasileiros, mas para a grande maioria dos imigrantes Japoneses e dos seus descendentes a guerra tinha acabado mas o Japão não tinha sido derrotado. Contudo, nem todos concordavam e alguns deles reconheceram a derrota do Japão. Os Japoneses no Brasil dividiram-se então em duas facções e a confusão varreu as suas comunidades. O principal argumento apresentado neste artigo é que o conflito inter-grupal que dividiu os Japoneses no Brasil no período imediatamente a seguir à guerra tem de ser compreendido no contexto da constelação de forças econômicas e sociais nas comunidades assim como no contexto histórico das forças que moldaram a vida dos imigrantes Brasileiros durante grande parte do período anterior à guerra.

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Emigration to Brazil was encouraged and sponsored by both the Japanese government and business circles. It began in 1908 and by the 1930s Japanese immigrants had already formed the second largest Japanese community outside Japan.

Japanese immigrants remained isolated from their host society and attached to Japan throughout the pre-war period. Japan surrendered in August 1945; however, 90 per cent of the Japanese in Brazil refused to accept the fact and rebelled against those who wanted to acknowledge Japan's defeat. This had been explained in terms of their ethnic attachment to Japan. Drawing on a number of examples this article argues that ethnicity alone cannot fully explain what happened within the Japanese communities during the period immediately after the war.

Japanese emigration to Brazil

In the late 1880s Japan experienced numerous socio-economic problems such as overpopulation and the impoverishment of agricultural workers. Believing there to be little hope of making a living in their own country, a number of Japanese began to emigrate. However, Japanese immigrants soon found themselves facing strong resistance in the countries to which they had emigrated (the United States, Canada and Australia). By contrast, Brazil was looking for labourers following the abolition of slavery in 1888, and thus, Brazil promptly became their primary destination for them.

At first, between 1908 and 1923, Japanese immigrants were subsidised by the state of São Paulo but in 1924 this policy came to an end.¹ From 1924 onwards until the 1960s both private and governmental Japanese agencies sponsored emigration to Brazil and assisted immigrants in their settlement. By 1938 the Japanese community in Brazil was already the second largest Japanese community outside Japan.

Japanese immigrants remained isolated from the society at large for a long period, living in an atmosphere that was completely Japanese. This isolation occurred to some extent all over the country. The Japanese tended to

¹ The following reasons were given: Japanese immigrants had a high mobility, were not good at farming and could not be easily assimilated into Brazilian culture. It was also argued that it was far more expensive to bring immigrants from Japan than from Europe because of the distance between the two continents. Moreover, as European immigrants had fewer adaptation problems it would be a better investment to subsidise immigrants from Southern European countries. Arlinda Nogueira, 'Considerações Gerais sobre a Imigração Japonesa para o estado de São Paulo entre 1908 e 1922' [General Reflections on Japanese Immigration to the State of São Paulo between 1908 and 1922], in H. Saito and T. Maeyama (eds.) *Assimilação e Integração dos Japoneses no Brasil* [Assimilation and Integration of the Japanese in Brazil] (São Paulo, 1973), p.65.

settle together and form their own communities, whose social structure was a reproduction of the traditional Japanese rural community. Their separation from the society at large was made possible by the self-sufficient structure of their ethnic communities, which fulfilled all their needs. According to Saito, apart from their role in maintaining social control the communities acted as mediators between the Japanese and the outside world.² They identified themselves as *Zaibaku Douhou* (Compatriot Residents in Brazil) or *Zairyuu Imin* (literally, Immigrant Japanese Residents). The term *Hojin* (Japanese nationals) was also used and *Gaijin* (foreigner) was used to refer to Caucasian Brazilians and other immigrants. Very often they also called themselves the Children of the Emperor.

Japanese communities were connected with Japan as a nation through the Japanese Consulate in São Paulo that played an active and important role in the life of these communities. The community served all their needs and as foreigners they looked to the Japanese Consulate for registering births, deaths, and marriages, and for taking care of their problems as well as for protection. In each area where Japanese immigrants resided there was a vice-consul who had the task of 'guiding' the communities. The immigrants also regarded BRATAC and the emigration company KKKK as paternalistic protectors and as authorities representative of Japan.³

While the creation of ethnic enclaves was common to other immigrants, the interest of the government of the country of origin was not so common. Migration was seen by the Japanese government as a solution to the country's surplus population and as a contribution to the nation's wealth. Business circles were also interested in investing overseas and were in accordance with the government's position. Emigration was consistently encouraged and, in the case of Brazil, even sponsored.

The Japanese policy of promoting emigration and settlement overseas implied supporting Japanese immigrants. Because it was expected that their descendants might face problems of identity, it was seen as essential to develop settlement policies that would thwart their assimilation into their host societies.⁴ Furthermore, in the 1920s, Japanese nationalism had taken the form of ethnic nationalism. Representing the Japanese in ethnic national terms meant that the

² Hiroshi Saito, *O Japonês no Brasil: Estudo da Mobilidade e Fixação* [The Japanese in Brazil: a Study on Mobility and Settlement] (São Paulo, 1961).

³ KKKK is an abbreviation of *Kaigai Kogyou Kabushiki Kaisha* [the Overseas Development Company], a semi-official agency that became the only emigration company after 1917. BRATAC is an abbreviation of the *Burajiru Takushoku Kumiai* [the Brazilian Colonisation Society], which was established by the Japanese government to assist the process of emigration to Brazil.

⁴ John Dower, *Japan in War and Peace: Essays on History, Culture and Race*, (London, 1996), p. 278

Japanese living overseas could be incorporated into the description.⁵ Accordingly, the Japanese government made important contributions to the education of its emigrants and for most of the pre-war time, children were educated according to the Japanese educational system.⁶

The Japanese began to emigrate during the Meiji era (1860-1912), which inaugurated modern Japan. This era brought a desire for 'civilisation'. To achieve this, an ideology was necessary which would foster a sense of nation in order to create the national unity necessary to carry out the reforms.⁷ The Japanese were told that Japan was the land of the gods, inhabited by a people uniquely superior in the world, who lived together as a single family under the guidance of the divine Emperor. In contrast, Japanese immigrants in Brazil suffered badly, particularly in the early years, when they were treated according to the traditions of slavery: their disadvantageous status and the treatment received in Brazil was powerfully dissonant with this Japanese ethnocentric discourse. With lowered self-esteem and under the stress of a hostile environment they achieved a positive image of themselves as Japanese by identifying with Japan and drawing very sharp distinctions between themselves and 'foreigners' (the Brazilians and other immigrant groups). In addition, it should be noted that, although in Brazil there was a demand for labourers, the Brazilian authorities and the public in general were not very sympathetic to Asians. In fact, Japanese emigrants had been refused entry for a long time on racial grounds and were finally accepted only during a period of lowered European immigration to Brazil.⁸

Throughout the pre-war period, the orientation of Japanese immigrants was towards Japan. This orientation was furthered exacerbated in the 1930s when in Brazil a dictatorial regime (*Estado Novo*) engendered nationalist feelings amongst Brazilians and devised a policy of compulsory assimilation for immigrants. At the same time, Japanese military expansion in

⁵ Kevin Doak, 'Ethnic nationalism and romanticism in early twentieth-century Japan', *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1(1996), pp. 77-104.

⁶ The Japanese government encouraged the maintenance of Japanese culture through Japanese language schools, newspapers and other institutions in all countries where the number of Japanese immigrants was significant. This attitude is by no means unique to Japan. To a certain extent other countries did the same for their immigrants although probably not to the same degree.

⁷ Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period*, (Princeton and New Jersey, 1985).

⁸ Even though Japanese immigrants were accepted, they were seen as a danger. In the Brazilian Parliament it was claimed that the presence of 'yellow cysts' in Brazilian society would be a danger for the country and a number of articles were published in the press conveying an image of them as being incapable of being assimilated. For more detail, see Thomas Skidmore, *Black and White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (New York, 1974).

Asian countries was perceived as a threat by the Brazilian authorities. Beginning in 1931, as a consequence of the invasion of Manchuria, an anti-Japanese campaign took place in Brazil. In the Brazilian Parliament, there were heated debates. It was argued that Japanese immigrants were an advance guard of an army to conquer Brazil and that what had happened to Manchuria could happen to Brazil as well. It was even argued that Japanese immigration always preceded military penetration and that, therefore, Brazil should adopt a precautionary attitude by controlling immigration, neutralising foreign assistance for immigrants, and instituting a compulsory assimilation programme for the descendants of Japanese immigrants born in Brazil⁹.

With the development of international events, Brazilian insecurity was further reinforced. The situation was exacerbated by the 'discovery' and subsequent publication in Brazilian newspapers of a map supposedly made by Japanese military general staff, establishing the Amazon region as a future naval base for operations against the United States. As a result of the atmosphere in the country, largely generated by the dictatorial regime to justify its repressive actions, legislation was created in order to supervise not only the Japanese but also German and Italian immigrants.

In 1934, restrictions were imposed on immigration and the principle of quotas was incorporated according to which the number of immigrant arrivals could not exceed two per cent of the total of immigrants already in the country. Moreover, a compulsory assimilation programme was then established, designed to encourage a sense of 'love for Brazil'. Education was standardised throughout the country and courses in Brazilian history and geography were made compulsory. Teaching in foreign languages was strictly forbidden in 1937 and one year later German, Italian and Japanese immigrants were not allowed to run schools, and the study of foreign languages was permitted only for children over fourteen.¹⁰ The Minister of Education and Health was given the responsibility of supervising the educational aspects of the assimilation programme.

In 1938 the Ministry of Justice issued a directive according to which permission to publish in foreign languages was only granted if the work was accompanied by the Portuguese translation. Newspapers in foreign languages

⁹ The information presented here for the period 1930-46 was mainly drawn from Comissão de Elaboração dos 80 Anos de Imigração Japonesa no Brasil [Commission for the celebration of 80 years of Japanese Immigration], *Uma Epopeia Moderna: 80 Anos da Imigração Japonesa no Brasil* [A Modern Epic: 80 Years of Japanese Immigration to Brazil], (São Paulo, 1992), hereafter, Comissão; and Patrick Fukunaga, 'The Brazilian Experience: The Japanese Immigrants during the Period of the Vargas Regime and the Immediate Aftermath 1930-46', (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1983).

¹⁰ Comissão, op.cit., p. 247.

were placed under censorship by the government in 1940. At first, they were required to write half of their pages in Portuguese but later in the same year they were completely banned. Public gatherings of immigrants of the same origin were prohibited. The use of foreign languages was also banned. With the attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, the programme of compulsory assimilation was replaced by even stricter wartime measures. Brazil severed diplomatic relations with Japan in 1942 and from that moment, meetings consisting of more than three Japanese people were forbidden, they were not permitted to speak Japanese outside their homes and they were not allowed to travel internally.

Measures employed against the Axis foreigners¹¹ were supposed to apply equally to all immigrant groups; however, they did not affect all of them in the same way. The Germans and the Japanese were more affected than the Italians who were not overly harassed by the Brazilian authorities.¹² Moreover, although the number of Japanese was relatively small (estimated at 230,000 in 1942) the Brazilian authorities were more suspicious of the Japanese than of the Germans, who numbered 1 million.¹³ It is unlikely to be mere coincidence that calls for a 'whiter' Brazil and other such racial issues also resurfaced at this time.

In 1936 a problem arose concerning the Amazon basin. According to a contract between the state of Amazon and the Japanese, it was planned that 300,000 Japanese would spread over 10,000 square kilometres of the state of Amazon. This was seen as a danger. In July 1943, as rumours of a possible invasion by Japanese armed forces coincided with attacks on the Brazilian coast, the Axis foreigners were evacuated from the São Paulo coastline to the interior.¹⁴

After mid-March 1942, it was becoming very clear that special attention was being paid to the Japanese. Suspected Japanese military spies were arrested in the states of São Paulo and Paraná. Special police units were

¹¹ Measures employed against the Axis foreigners in 1942 included prohibition of travel without permission; banning of manufacture or possession of firearms and explosives; dissolution of associations; the freezing of funds and the closing of commercial houses and banks owned by immigrants of German, Italian and Japanese descent. According to Fukunaga (op. cit., p.119), Japanese immigrants were not singled out for any special treatment like their counterparts in the United States but they were subjected to the same tactics that were employed elsewhere such as relocation and internment.

¹² Egon Schaden, *Imigrantes Alemães e Japoneses (Japanese and German Immigrants)*, in H. Saito (ed.) *A Presença Japonesa no Brasil [The Japanese Presence in Brazil]*, (São Paulo, 1980).

¹³ *New York Times*, 18 March 1942, p.13 in Fukunaga, op. cit., p.121.

¹⁴ Fernando de Azevedo, *Brazilian Culture: An Introduction to the Study of Culture in Brazil*, English translation by William Crawford (New York, 1950), p.37

created in São Paulo to handle 'the Japanese problem'. The government's press and propaganda agency (*Departamento da Imprensa e Propaganda*) permitted the release of a bulletin to the press claiming that a Brazilian of Japanese ancestry had informed the authorities of a Japanese plot, conceived in Tokyo, to launch a military attack to take control of São Paulo.¹⁵ According to the version of the story printed in the *New York Times*, there was not only a plot to create a new country in the Amazon region called 'New Japan' but also a suggestion that the port of Santos was already surrounded by a ring of Japanese subversives.

Tokyo denied any imperialist designs on Brazil. However, after this event, closer attention was paid to Japanese immigrants, who were thought to be potential enemies. The capture of Japanese spies was reported more and more frequently in the press. In the state of Amazon, a group of Japanese was accused of setting fire to a rubber plantation.¹⁶ Although this particular incident does not seem to have been verified, it should be noted that there were cases in which Japanese immigrants were involved in the destruction of crops, as will be discussed later.

The bombardment of Brazilian ships by German submarines in July 1942 aggravated the situation because it was interpreted as a result of sabotage conducted by Axis immigrants. Japanese houses were stoned and demonstrations against their presence in Brazil increased. The animosity towards Japanese immigrants was further aggravated when Brazil broke off diplomatic relations with Japan.¹⁷

Hence, Japanese company assets were taken over or put under government control. In May 1943, two Japanese bookshops had their stock confiscated.¹⁸ The Banco América do Sul owned by Japanese immigrants was obliged to include non-Japanese in management; the Japanese government agency for emigration to Brazil, BRATAC, was placed under government supervision; and most Japanese businessmen in Brazil were subjected to governmental control. The Japanese community of Acará (now Tomé Açu) in Pará, in the Amazon, was converted into an internment camp for the Axis elements in the area, most of whom were Japanese. There were reports of Japanese being arrested during the war and some being beaten to death. Some

¹⁵ *New York Times*, 22 March 1942, p.26-27 in Fukunaga, op. cit., p.124.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.135.

¹⁷ Brazil broke off diplomatic relations with Japan on 29 January 1942 and on 6 June 1945 declared war on Japan.

¹⁸ Maria Lúcia Hatanaka 'O Processo Judicial do 'Shindou Renmei': um Fragmento de História dos Imigrantes Japoneses no Brasil' [The trial of Shindou Renmei: a Fragment of the History of Japanese Immigrants in Brazil], (unpublished MA dissertation, PUC University, 1993).

were arrested for speaking Japanese, one group of Japanese was fined for singing a patriotic song and so forth.¹⁹

As a consequence of these developments, Japanese immigration declined significantly. A total of 4,230 Japanese entered the country between 1939 and 1941, according to Brazilian governmental sources. This contrasts with the 21,412 that arrived between 1935 and 1939. On 13 August 1941, the arrival of the ship Buenos Aires Maru, with 417 immigrants aboard, brought to a close the pre-war period of Japanese emigration to Brazil. Furthermore, a number of Japanese were willing to leave the country.

Wako reports that of the 12,000 Japanese interviewed by him, 85 per cent wanted to return to Japan. On examining his findings, it seems that among those who wanted to return to Japan there were many second generation Japanese who had never been there before. Among those who desired permanent residence in Brazil (ten per cent), were many immigrants who had just arrived. Of those wishing to return, 60 per cent were born in Brazil or were born in Japan and brought up in Brazil.²⁰

The number of those who actually returned to Japan is not known. Brazilian sources indicate that 17,250 Japanese left, while Japanese sources report that 2,000 persons returned to Japan during the pre-war period.²¹ It is reported that in 1939, the number of those who returned to Japan (2,011 individuals) surpassed the number of those who arrived in Brazil (1,546 individuals).²²

As many Japanese were apparently anxious to return to Japan and her new possessions, the Japanese consul in São Paulo published in the newspapers a notice advising caution, while the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Overseas Affairs in Japan supported this policy and published a document in April 1939 in which people were advised that 'It is very important to reinforce the ties of friendship and, at the same time, the economic relations with Central and South American countries... Given this, we recognise that the emigration of our compatriots to that region is extremely important'.²³

Therefore the principles that had guided emigration to Brazil in the past continued and the Japanese authorities encouraged emigrants to establish permanent residence in Brazil. BRATAC developed a movement called *Gatto*

¹⁹ Alice Asari, 'E eu só Queria voltar ao Japão: Colonos Japoneses em Assai' [And I only Wanted to Return to Brazil: Japanese *Colonos* in Assai], (Ph.D thesis, the University of São Paulo, 1992). Also in Comissão, p. 241.

²⁰ Shungoro Wako, *Bauru Kannai no Houjin* (Compatriots of Bauru) (São Paulo, 1939).

²¹ Fukunaga, op.cit., p.72.

²² Comissão, op.cit., p. 251.

²³ Comissão, op.cit., p. 254, note 4

Undou Aido Eiju (literally, enjoy the land; *Goçar a Terra* in Portuguese, hereafter GAT) and the magazine *Bunka* (culture), published in São Paulo, encouraged the idea of permanent residence in Brazil. However, Brazil broke off relations with the Axis countries in 1941 and in July 1942 the staff of the Japanese Consulate abandoned the Consulate shouting *Banzai*.²⁴ The consul sent a message to the immigrants, on the behalf of the ambassador, exhorting them to behave with dignity.

At first sight, it appeared that the Japanese were acting in accordance with Brazilian regulations. However, an inspection conducted by the Council of Immigration and Colonisation in December 1939 revealed that the Japanese were not really complying with Brazilian laws. They found, for example, in a library in Bastos, that all the books that were written in Japanese and Nisei were still being registered at the Japanese Consulate. Furthermore, when Japanese schools became illegal in 1938, clandestine schools were established, and when newspapers written in foreign languages were forbidden in August 1941, the newspaper *Burajiru Jihou* (Brazilian News) continued secretly for some time.

Throughout the pre-war period the main focus of attention for Japanese immigrants had been on Japan. This attention was further increased during the 1930s with the news of Japan's continued victories. By 1939 patriotic movements were beginning to appear within the youth associations. The immigrants felt proud of Japan and wanted to make their contribution.²⁵ However, Brazilian nationalism repressed these patriotic manifestations and it was at this time that ultranationalistic secret societies were formed.²⁶ These

²⁴ Comissão, op.cit., pp. 158, 256 and 261

²⁵ During the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars (1894-1905), Japanese immigrants had already exhibited their patriotism. The same happened in Hawaii and in the continental United States. Many Japanese immigrants sent money to Japan and others returned to fight for their country. With the occupation of Manchuria the nationalistic campaigns developed further and the rhetoric used in Japanese overseas communities was the same as that in Japan, based on the orthodoxy of the Emperor and the Great Empire in Asia. In Peru, inspired by the propaganda in local Japanese-language newspapers, a fund-raising campaign was organised among Japanese residents in support of Japan. The same kind of campaign and chauvinistic fervour was in evidence within the Japanese community of Brazil. Some second generation Japanese who had been sent to Japan to study and had Japanese nationality or dual nationality were called on to fight for Japan during the Second World War. On the subject see, for example, Michiko Satsuma, 'Japanese Immigrants Patriotism during the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, 1894-1905' (unpublished MA dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1990). See also Comissão op.cit., p 239.

²⁶ There were many associations who claimed to promote unity among Japanese immigrants: On the subject see, for example, Takashi Maeyama, 'Ethnicity, Secret Societies, and Associations: the Japanese in Brazil', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol 21, No 4 (1979).

secret societies were fanatical in their beliefs and frequently a covenant of blood was made when a group was founded or accepted new members. The largest and the most famous of all these organisations, as will be discussed later, was *Shindou Renmei* (The Federation of Loyal Subjects).

Repercussions of Japan's defeat

In August 1945 Japan's unconditional surrender was widely reported by the Brazilian media and the speech of Emperor Hirohito acknowledging Japan's defeat was broadcasted via short-wave radio. Nevertheless, within a week the rumour that the Allied Forces fleet had been sunk in the sea of Japan spread within the Japanese communities in Brazil and many Japanese came out onto the streets to celebrate the event.²⁷

For the vast majority of the people of Japanese descent in Brazil the war was over but Japan had not been defeated. Quite the opposite: the allies had surrendered to Japan. However, not everyone was in agreement and some Japanese did recognise the defeat of Japan. All over the country, Japanese immigrants and their descendants were split into two factions: the *Kachi gumi* (literally, victory unit) and the *Make gumi* (literally, defeat unit). The victory unit faction was made up of the clandestine networks of secret societies that had existed before the war. They were organised immediately after the end of the war and rejected the information given by the 'foreign' newspapers. At first they argued that the Americans were trying to change Japan's 'glorious victory' into their own victory²⁸ and later complete silence on Japan's defeat became the rule. On the other side was the defeat unit whose objective was to convince their compatriots that Japan had lost the war and to promote the idea that their homeland was now Brazil. The victory group included 85 per cent

²⁷ Hiroshi Saito and Kumasaka Yorihiro, 'Kachigumi: uma Delusão [sic] Colectiva entre os Japoneses e os seus Descendentes no Brasil' [Kachigumi: a Collective Delusion among the Japanese and their Descendants in Brazil], in H. Saito and T. Maeyama (eds.) *Assimilação e Integração dos Japoneses no Brasil* [Assimilation and Integration of the Japanese in Brazil] (São Paulo, 1973), pp. 453-454.

A retrospective enquiry revealed that only three per cent of the Japanese cited Brazilian newspapers and radio as their primary source of information about Japan's defeat. Sixty-four per cent relied on orally transmitted information and 20 per cent mentioned clandestine publications or short-wave radio broadcasts. Seiichi Izumi, 'A Estrutura Psicológica da Colônia Japonesa no Brasil' [The Psychological Structure of the Japanese Community in Brazil], in Hiroshi Saito and T. Maeyama (eds.) *Assimilação e Integração dos Japoneses no Brasil* [Assimilation and Integration of the Japanese in Brazil] (São Paulo, 1973), pp. 361-385.

²⁸ From the diary of Seiichi Tomari, a leader of the *Tokkotai* on 15 August 1945: 'Today should have been a day of joy but I hear people who were deceived by the United States who are talking about Japan's surrender. We have, thus, a day of shame'. Quoted in Comissão, op.cit., p. 270.

of the Japanese in the south, the region where 96 per cent of the Japanese resided.²⁹

It was argued that if Japan had been defeated, the Emperor and the political leaders would have been killed or committed *harakiri* (suicide).³⁰ Numerous rumours spread throughout the Japanese communities. A photograph showing Truman flanked by the United States naval officers bowing to the Japanese Emperor was produced.³¹ Confusion swept the country. False promises were spread to the effect that the immigrants would settle in one of the new territories conquered by Japan in Asia where their experience in Brazil would be very useful. Acts of fraud were committed such as the sale of return tickets to Japan, of land which had supposedly been occupied by the Japanese army, and of devaluated yen. Fortunes were made in this way.³²

On the other hand it was claimed by some that the Emperor was so concerned about his loyal subjects in Brazil that he had sent an official mission to help them to adjust to the trauma of the defeat, and a contingent of the Imperial Navy was being dispatched to take aboard those who wished to return to Japan. Hundreds, or even thousands of Japanese sold all they had and travelled to the coast to wait for the ships. The rumour that sixteen Japanese ships would arrive in Santos on the 24 September 1945 led two thousand people to travel from the interior to Santos. Later, when it was claimed that the ship would arrive in Rio, they changed direction to head for Rio instead.³³ Many in the interior of the country were waiting for a Japanese military aeroplane and made Japanese flags so that the plane could identify

²⁹ According to research conducted by Izumi and Saito in 1952-53 and reported in Izumi Seiichi (ed.) *Brazil Imim no Jittai Chousa* [Research on Brazilian Immigrants] (Tokyo, 1957), p.82.

³⁰ During the trials of the Shindou members, prisoners often argued that the only possible attitude for a Japanese who had lost the war was to commit *harakiri* [suicide]. They used to say - victory or death. Hatanaka, op.cit, pp.113-114. Seijiro Mihara of the newspaper *Burajiru Jibou* was found to be involved in promoting the idea that immigrants, as Japanese subjects, should commit *harakiri*. Since its foundation on the day of the Japanese Emperor's birthday, *Burajiru Jibou* was ideologically very nationalist and supported the *Kachi gumi*.

³¹ Robert Smith, 'The Ethnic Japanese in Brazil', *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, 5 (Winter, 1979), pp.53-70.

³² Mizumoto, founder of one of the newspapers of the Japanese communities in Brazil, *São Paulo Shinbun*, was accused of being responsible for the sale of devalued yen. On account of his activities many people went bankrupt. Nevertheless, Mizumoto was appointed to receive a *kenshou* (prize) from the Japanese government according to Hoshino Toyosaku, *Burajiru Gekki no Nihonjin Iminshi; Tokkeon 100 Nen* [Use the Strength of the Spirit to Open a Space] (Tokyo, 1990).

³³ Comissão, op.cit., p. 274

them as Japanese subjects. Some reported that they had seen the Japanese plane.³⁴

All these unusual activities amongst people of Japanese descent came to the attention of the Brazilian authorities who tried to convince them of Japan's defeat. A number of attempts were made to convince those who did not accept that Japan had lost the war. In October 1945, the Red Cross brought to Brazil the Imperial Edict accepting defeat which was to be distributed amongst the Japanese communities. A former director of the Japanese emigration company KKKK received the document relating to Japan's surrender and had it distributed in the largest concentrations of the Japanese, but this initiative did not meet with much success. Representatives of the Japanese communities were called to the seat of government along with prominent members of Brazilian society. In this meeting a Swedish Minister read the Imperial Edict and explained in detail the terms of the surrender. However, this formal meeting also failed and was soon discredited.³⁵ The Brazilian government appealed for the United States to provide corroboration. At least one delegation of Issei was dispatched to Japan and the Japanese government was allowed to send emissaries to persuade the sceptical Japanese immigrants of the reality of the defeat.

Thus, all the above efforts failed, and tension increased within the Japanese community and in 1946 a wave of violence broke out with a number of assassinations being reported. In fact, the violence had already begun during the war, when Brazil was asked by the United States to increase the production of mint and silk, necessary raw materials for armaments and parachutes. As 90 per cent of this production was in Japanese hands, some Japanese immigrants organised themselves into a secret society in order to prevent an increase in production, which was seen as an act of treason against Japan. Even so, producers of both silk and mint become wealthy during the war.³⁶

In 1943 one sub-group of the victory unit set fire to a farm where silkworms were being raised. Later, in February 1944, as the number of members increased, a society called *Koudousha* was founded. One year later, when the name of this society was no longer felt to be appropriate, it was

³⁴ Junji Nakadate, 'O Japão Venceu os Aliados na Segunda Guerra?: o Movimento Social *Shindo Renmei* em São Paulo' [Did Japan defeat the Allies in the Second World War? The Social Movement of *Shindou Renmei*], (unpublished MA dissertation, Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 1988).

³⁵ Comissão, op.cit., pp.281 and 302

³⁶ What follows is based on Comissão and Hatanaka, op. cit.

changed to *Shindou Renmei*.³⁷ Within *Shindou*, sub-groups were formed such as the *Kesshitai* (Suicide Unit) and the *Tokkoutai* (Special Attack Unit, a term used to refer to *Kamikaze*).

Shindou Renmei intended to unite all people of Japanese descent into a ultranationalistic system. It was thought to be essential to turn the Japanese in Brazil back into 'real Japanese' through worship of the Emperor and the preservation of Shintoism.³⁸ Leaders insisted that emigration to Brazil had never been a fundamental policy of the Japanese government. It was merely a desperate attempt to ease the pressure of overpopulation and, as such, was just a temporary measure. Therefore, all Japanese in Brazil were expected to return to the country of their ancestors. They also suggested that Japanese who were born outside Japan and had the nationality of the country where they were born should choose the nationality of their parents because soon all the Japanese living outside Japan would become part of 'the Great East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere' and therefore had to be prepared.

Shindou members advised people of Japanese descent to speak nothing but Japanese, to work enthusiastically and to help each other. The easy life-style of Brazil was believed to be to blame for the degeneracy of the Japanese and their descendants. Particular emphasis was placed on children's education. They should learn the Japanese spirit and how to be a 'Japanese'. The rhetoric used was the same as that of Japanese militarism and expansionism. However, although *Shindou* members called on Japan to support their ideology, no evidence was found to suggest that Japan was directly encouraging their activities.

The activities of this movement caused serious disturbances within Japanese communities throughout the country. Several terrorists attacks occurred against those Japanese and their descendants who supported the idea that Japan had been defeated. From around April 1944 fires were started and attacks on mint and silkworm producers were carried out. Within a short period of time fifteen Japanese and one Brazilian were killed and eleven injured. On 7 March 1946, the director of the Cotia co-operative in Bastos

³⁷ *Shindou Renmei* had eighty branches and more than 100,000 members (101,305), 87 per cent of them in the state of São Paulo and Paraná. See Francisca Vieira, *O Japonês na Frente de Expansão Paulista: o Processo de Absorção do Japonês em Marília* [The Japanese Immigrants in the State of São Paulo: the Process of Absorption in Marília] (São Paulo, 1973), p. 255. According to one leader, Hekisui Yoshii, in his manuscript of memories of his imprisonment in 1948, *Shindou* was born when the members of the Japanese Consulate 'abandoned the immigrants to their luck'. Quoted in Comissão, op.cit., p.262.

³⁸ Tomo Handa, *Imin no Seikatsu no Rekishi* [A History of the Life of Japanese Immigrants in Brazil] translated into Portuguese, *O Imigrante Japonês no Brasil: História da sua Vida no Brasil* (São Paulo, 1987), p. 673.

was killed. In April the editor of one of the newspapers of the Japanese community in Brazil, *Diário Nippak*, and the former general secretary of the Society for the Diffusion of the Japanese Language in Brazil) were murdered. Soon after that, the owner of a banana plantation was attacked. Between 7 March 1946 and 6 January 1947, forty-nine criminal assaults were reported, among them murders, attacks on homes, explosions, and fires.

It should be noted that *Shindou Renmei* had, at one time, the support of 90 per cent of all Japanese residents in Brazil and that this movement was not limited to first generation Japanese. In particular *Tokkoutai* was made up specifically of second generation Japanese.³⁹

Between September and December 1946, 170 Japanese were expelled from Brazil or were held in detention on the island of Anchieta. It is worth noting that neither the Brazilian nor the Japanese governments wanted to accept financial responsibility for their deportation.

The opinion of the Brazilian people about all these events was at first one of shock and then subsequently one of extreme negativity, as is reflected in the following extracts from editorials: 'Japanese Gestapo organised in São Paulo'⁴⁰; 'Japanese fanaticism'⁴¹; 'The Japanese government must be held responsible for the belief in Japan's victory upheld by its subjects living overseas'.⁴²

Common stereotypes were reinforced. In this regard it is interesting to note how often the word 'yellow' was used at that time in the Brazilian press. When an arms cache was found it was generally assumed that there was no doubt that a Japanese invasion was being planned. Since it was not possible to expel all the Japanese because of their number, it was necessary to prevent them from grouping together in associations.⁴³

In Parliament the issue of Japanese immigrants was once more taken up. The disputes that took place after the end of the war were seen as the fulfilment of the prophecy that Japanese immigrants would be a danger to

³⁹ Not all the second generation Japanese were on the side of the *Kachi gumi*. A group of them expressed their desire to fight for Brazil and some of them such as José Yamashiro and Kenro Shimomoto served as volunteers against the government of Getúlio Vargas in 1932. José Yamashiro, of Okinawan descent, became a famous journalist and has contributed much to the study of the history of Japanese emigration to Brazil.

It should also be noted that the Journal of the *Gakusei Renmei* (Students Union) created in 1934 defended the right of the second generation not to identify themselves with Japan. The war put an end to the activities of the Union in 1941.

⁴⁰ *Folha do Norte*, 1 April 1946

⁴¹ *O Estado de São Paulo*, 4 April 1946

⁴² *Correio Paulistano*, 4 April 1946 in Hatanaka, op.cit., p.63

⁴³ *Correio Paulistano*, 5 April 1946 in ibid., p. 65

Brazil, and the argument that 'after all the yellow danger was real' was evoked in the Parliamentary debates over the continuation of Japanese emigration to Brazil after the war.

An anti-Japanese attitude developed and disturbances occurred, such as attacks on Japanese residences. Slogans such as 'kill the *Shindou*', and 'fanatic yellows' were often heard. The most serious incident occurred in July 1946 in Osvaldo Cruz where, after an argument that degenerated in to a riot, a Japanese killed a Brazilian. The Brazilians, shouting 'let's finish with the Japanese', attacked Japanese residences. As a result, many Japanese were wounded.⁴⁴

It was fully 16 months after the end of the war that the Brazilian authorities put a stop to terrorist activities. It is reported⁴⁵ that by the end of 1946, 90 per cent of the people of Japanese descent in Brazil had understood that Japan had been defeated. Even so, on 1 January 1947 *Burajiru Jion*, one of the newspapers of the Japanese community in Brazil, in a special edition, had the following headline: 'Japan's Glorious Spring of Victory' (*Primavera da vitória do Japão na Guerra*).

In March 1947, the leaders of the victory faction organised the Committee for the Relief of War Victims in Japan to send money and items to help people in Japan. The intention was to reunite the Japanese through helping Japan together, and their efforts constituted the first organised activity within the Japanese community during the post-war period. According to Handa, only ten per cent of the Japanese joined the campaign, which ended in July 1950.⁴⁶ In the same year, the police discovered a terrorist conspiracy and arrested 60 Japanese with weapons. Between 1950 and 1952 there were a number of attempts to resuscitate *Shindou Renmei*. In 1954, in response to a request by the São Paulo government, the Japanese communities contributed to the fourth centennial celebrations of the foundation of the city of São Paulo. The celebrations were a success. The factionalism which had so deeply divided the Japanese in Brazil seemed to have been overcome. Nevertheless, in 1955 the two factions were still in dispute.⁴⁷ Even today, there are still traces of the rupture that occurred within the Japanese communities. For instance, in Promissão (São Paulo State) there are two separate Japanese associations, each directly descended from one of the two factions.

The reaction to Japan's defeat

⁴⁴ Hiroshi Saito and Kumasaka Yorihiro, op cit., p. 458.

⁴⁵ Izumi (1973), op.cit., p.384.

⁴⁶ Handa, op.cit., pp. 743-745

⁴⁷ Izumi (1957), op.cit., pp.13-127

The fact that 90 per cent of the population with Japanese ancestry was predisposed not to accept Japan's defeat in the Second World War deserves special attention. In much of the literature on the subject, interpretations of this attitude are centred both on ethnic attachment to Japan and 'assimilation' difficulties which were aggravated during the period of compulsory assimilation policies. This view is endorsed by Saito, and many others. Willems and Saito interpret *Shindou* as a 'cultural shock' and a reaction against Brazilian policies.⁴⁸ Similarly, Maeyama claims that *Shindou* was an expression of anti-acculturation. Handa⁴⁹ shares the same view and explains the victory group in terms of an attachment to the past and to the 'Japanese spirit'. Many more authors could be cited to make the same point.⁵⁰

Admittedly, the immigrants had been caught between the Japanese nationalist discourse and the Brazilian assimilation policies. Under the pressure to assimilate into Brazilian society it was only natural that Japanese immigrants and their descendants should feel resentful towards imposed restrictions such as not being allowed to speak their mother tongue, and this manifested itself in expressions of Japanese nationalism. Moreover, as already mentioned, since they initially occupied a very low social position in Brazilian society they could find support in Japanese propaganda which was continuously promoted by Japanese officials. Conversely, to recognise the defeat would mean the destruction of their beliefs and dreams, in particular for those who had organised their lives around the idea of returning to Japan. Highly suggestive of this is the fact that thousands of Japanese immigrants sold what they had and went to the coast to wait for the ships that the Emperor would dispatch to Brazil to take aboard his loyal subjects who wished to return to Japan. This pathetic incident poignantly illustrates the sense of alienation felt by the immigrants during the disturbed historical period through which they lived.

Nevertheless, it is unlikely that those who supported the victory unit faction knew nothing about Japan's defeat. Although interaction with the dominant society was actually reduced, it is possible that they learnt about Japan's surrender and preferred to ignore it. This could be interpreted as a case of cognitive dissonance: Japan's defeat was dissonant with their

⁴⁸ Hiroshi Saito and Emilio Willems 'Shindo-Renmei: um Problema de Aculturação' [Shindo Renmei: a Problem of Acculturation], *Sociologia*, Vol 9, No 2. (1974), pp. 133-52.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Takashi Maeyama, 'O Antepassado, o Imperador e o Imigrante: Religião e Identificação de Grupo dos Japoneses no Brasil Rural (1908-1950)' [Ancestors, the Emperor and the Immigrant: Religion and Identification of a Group of Japanese People in Rural Brazil between 1908 and 1950], in H. Saito and T. Maeyama (ed.) *Assimilação e Integração dos Japoneses no Brasil* [Assimilation and Integration of the Japanese in Brazil] (São Paulo, 1973), p. 458.

representations of Japan.⁵¹ We also need to consider that the ground was fertile for this dissonance: uncertainty increases anxiety and stress, which in turn enhance the transmission of rumours. The bad transmission of Hirohito's speech might have contributed to increasing doubts about its truth and the majority of immigrants had never heard his voice before.⁵² Furthermore, by the end of 1946 it is reported that 90 per cent of people of Japanese descent in Brazil had understood that Japan had been defeated.⁵³ Yet the conflict continued. The resentment was too deep to vanish easily and inter-group conflicts tend to be self-replicating.

The above considerations, however, do not take into account the economic and social relations that existed within the Japanese communities. In spite of their apparent harmony, conflicts existed long before the war. In the 1920s and 1930s, there were many conflicts between the wealthiest Japanese residents in São Paulo, who formed a group called *ue machi* (upper city) and the less prosperous, the *shita machi* (lower city). Indeed, the conflicts were so numerous that the Consul General of Japan, in order to put an end to them, made unsuccessful attempts to create an association of all the Japanese residing in the city of São Paulo.⁵⁴

The fact is that not all immigrants prospered equally. Differences in social promotion and distribution of resources became more obvious during the 1930s and 1940s, when there was a reorganisation of the immigrants' economic activities. The small retailers disappeared and commerce became concentrated in the hands of few individuals connected with the co-operatives. With the war there was a significant rise in the price of silkworm products, and those involved with these products became wealthy. Businesses related to silkworm products generated large turnovers, and between 1930-41 the number of agencies run by BRATAC financial institutions increased from 15 to 35, in spite of Brazilian nationalist policies. The Banco América do Sul,

⁵¹ Cognitive dissonance theories claim that cognitive inconsistency is unpleasant to the individual; therefore the individual will be motivated to reduce dissonance by changing one or more contradictory beliefs so that the set as a whole will be in harmony. Several strategies are possible. For example, the individual can change his/her own position so as to be closer to others; or conversely he/she can try to influence others so as to move their position nearer to themselves. In this case, the belief that Japan was a country that could not be defeated and their pride of being Japanese was dissonant with Japan's defeat. Reinforcing the belief in Japan's victory would be a way of reducing the dissonance.

⁵² Marco Castro, 'Entre o Japão e o Brasil: a Construção da Nacionalidade na Trajetória de Vida de Hiroshi Saito' [Between Japan and Brazil: the Construction of Nationality in the Course of Life of Hiroshi Saito], (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 1994).

⁵³ Izumi (1973), op.cit., p.384

⁵⁴ Comissão, p. 228

BRATAC, Cotia and sericulture production were, thus closely related.⁵⁵ It is plausible to conclude that those who had been economically and socially successful were those who were interested in acknowledging and spreading the news of Japan's defeat. Those who had nothing to gain from Japan's defeat wanted to retain their image of Japan as 'symbolic wealth'. In what follows, I shall be presenting some evidence and examples that suggest this.

The attitude of Cotia, the most important co-operative, gives an idea of the attitudes of big business towards the issue of Japan's defeat. Suffice it to say that the decision to distribute the Imperial Edict had been made in a meeting held at the Cotia Co-operative and this co-operative used its distribution network to spread the news of Japan's surrender. The targets chosen by *Shindou Renmei* further illustrate what has been said. Their list of persons to be killed included the president of the Cotia Co-operative, a member of the Japanese emigration company KKKK, traders, retailers and pub owners. There are no references to poor farmers having been persecuted. The justification given by one member of the victory unit faction for refusing the Imperial Edict of Japan's surrender illustrates the same idea. Arguing that members of the Cotia Co-operative did not translate the Edict correctly, he used the following terms: 'You Sirs, who belong to the **upper class** of the Japanese community in Brazil, translated for your own ends the Imperial Edict...' (my emphasis).⁵⁶ Other examples of social inequalities were expressed by *Shindou* members during their trial.

There were numerous references both to the greed and individualism of those who proclaimed Japan's defeat and to the exhortation of Japanese traditional values as excluding material wealth. Those who got rich during the war were 'bad Japanese' and they did not deserve the honour of being called Japanese; 'If the Japanese people valued only money, Japan would have disappeared'.⁵⁷ Graffiti on the walls with the words 'traitors' and 'Jews' (a reference to the stereotypical association between the words Jew and money) were frequent.

From this and other evidence, it seems that ethnic attachment to Japan or acculturation difficulties alone cannot adequately explain the events that occurred immediately after the war. However, the method used by the

⁵⁵ Hatanaka, op. cit., p.127, note 45

⁵⁶ The Red Cross in Brazil distributed the Imperial Edict with the preamble written in French and the Edict in English. Chibata Miyakoshi, former director of the KKKK, and other representatives of the Japanese communities in Brazil decided to translate it in to Japanese. See Comissão.

⁵⁷ Magazine *Shu-bou*, *Shindou Renmei*, 24 February 1946, p.3 in Hatanaka, op.cit, p.141; Magazine *Shu-bou*, *Shindou Renmei*, Lins 17 March 1946, p.9 in *ibid.*, p.142.

Brazilian police to identify the suspects and oblige them to confess shows how deeply the Japanese nationalistic ideology was inculcated and how complex the issue is. In order to interrogate the suspects, the police used the Japanese flag and a photograph of the Emperor. The prisoners were ordered to step on the photograph and to clean their shoes with the flag. If they refused to perform one of these acts, they would be suspected of belonging to *Shindou Renmei*.

It seemed natural to expect that attachment to Japan meant a rejection of Brazil. However, this was not the case. During the trials it was clear from the statements of prisoners that they did not have a hostile attitude towards Brazil. Obviously their loyalties were to Japan, but their emotional attachment to their country of origin did not make them forget their gratitude towards their host country, as the following quotation illustrates: 'In spite of being our second home, Brazil became an enemy of Japan. However, the governmental authorities' magnanimity and the Brazilian people's friendliness must never be forgotten by Japanese residents in Brazil'.⁵⁸

To conclude, it is important to note that there is no evidence of encouragement on the part of Japan for the activities of *Shindou*. In this regard, reference should be made to the telegram sent in July 1946 by Shigeru Yoshida, then Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister, which was attached to the Imperial Edict, explaining the situation of Japan: 'We hope that the Japanese in Brazil live in peace and contribute to the construction of their country of adoption, Brazil'.⁵⁹ It is clear from the message that immigrants were not called to return to Japan. Quite the opposite: they were expected to remain in Brazil.

Conclusion

Japanese immigrants and their descendants remained strongly attached to Japan not only because of the continuous support and encouragement of the Japanese government and officials but also due to the hostile reaction of their host society particularly between 1930 and 1940. Furthermore, the social and historical context was one of an intersection of two nationalisms: on the one hand, the Japanese nationalist discourse, and on the other Brazilian nationalism. Nevertheless, reduction of the conflict to ethnicity neglects sociopsychological aspects and does not adequately account for the role played by power and money in the communities, which were important in determining the inter-group conflict that divided people of Japanese descent in Brazil immediately after the war.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Hatanaka, p.105

⁵⁹ 1992:300

The language of those times was patriotic but the issue was not merely a question of nationalism and ethnicity. Ethnicity was indeed mobilised by all of those who conducted business in the name of the Japanese spirit. The situation allowed a lot of money to be made by those who sold land in the 'Co-prosperity Sphere' and tricked the immigrants into buying devalued yen at inflated rates. Loyalty to Japan and the Emperor alone could not explain this.

Certainly, ethnicity was an important issue but not the only one. A complete understanding of the phenomenon is surely only possible if we take due account of the complex mix of economic and social forces at work in the Japanese communities as well as the historical context of destabilising forces that shaped the life of Japanese immigrants for much of the pre-war period. It is from this perspective that I have attempted to explain the events that took place in Brazil after the war.

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