

## ***Transformation of Japanese Schools before and after WWII: Impact of Brazilian Nationalism on Japanese Immigrants' Primary Education and Self-identity***

**Hiromi Ehara**

e-mail: [eha-1201@main.teikyo-u.ac.jp](mailto:eha-1201@main.teikyo-u.ac.jp)  
*Teikyo University, Japan*

**Abstract:** This article discusses the changes in the role and function of Japanese schools in Brazil before and after WWII vis-à-vis the host country's social and political environment, with emphasis on the pressure from nationalism on Japanese immigrants' education exerted by the Vargas administration. The impact of the policy was both significant and turbulent. It had become one of the main causes of the drastic changes in the national identity and character of Japanese primary schools after the Pacific War, with tragic consequences for the Japanese immigrants. Before WWII, Japanese immigrants had gradually advanced their status from contracted labourers to independent farmers, forming Japanese *colonias* (settlements) on government-allocated uncultivated land. They were eager to give their children elementary level education, and in remote areas, they had no choice but to provide this education principally in the Japanese language. These schools therefore became targets of the anti-Japanese movement that began in the 1920s, peaked in the 1930's, and was phased out in the 1940s. Just before WWII, however, President Getúlio Vargas developed a nationalistic policy which encompassed education; foreign schools were oppressed, and in 1938, most Japanese primary schools were closed. In addition, there was a ban on holding meetings and public gatherings, and Japanese newspapers were abolished. This was a traumatic situation that made Japanese-Brazilians pessimistic about the future, and their despair pushed them closer to supporting the goals of their Japanese homeland. The conflict between Brazilian and Japanese nationalism took place in primary education, which saw a tragic confrontation among immigrant groups, and resulted in a radical change of public opinion, as well as in the primary schools themselves.

**Keywords:** Brazil; national identity; Japanese immigrants; Japanese language education; Japanese schools; anti-Japanese movement; Getulio Vargas.

Received: 28/11/2017  
Accepted: 15/04/2018

## 1. Introduction

The flow of Japanese-Brazilians into Japan has been attracting the attention of Japanese scholars since 1990 when the revised *Immigration Control and the Refugee Recognition Act* was promulgated to give special status to Japanese descendants within three generations and to be able to be residents without specific requirements. The booming Japanese economy witnessed a shortage in the labor force, especially in the industrial sector during the 1980's. The thriving automobile manufacturers recruited Japanese Brazilians who were not satisfied with the Brazilian economy, which was in recession. Brazil has the largest community of Japanese descendants outside of Japan, with a population of more than 1.5 million.

Most of the Brazilian born Japanese-Brazilians who came to Japan did not speak Japanese nor have knowledge of Japanese culture and lifestyle. However, the Japanese in Japan expected the Japanese-Brazilians to be more Japanese than they were. The children needed Japanese language instruction in public schools in Japan, which was often their first major experience in Japanese society. They are the descendants *within three generations* in Brazil that had already lost their ancestors' language. In this respect the history of Japanese language education in Brazil is especially suggestive because it gives us an opportunity to weigh and consider the meaning of education with regard to national identity.

The first Japanese immigrants' ship arrived at Sao Paulo in 1908, with Japanese traveling to work on coffee plantation. Before WWII, their identity was as «Japanese nationals in Brazil» who wished to make «a glorious return» to their homeland in the future. One of their highest priorities was to make sure that their children were fluent in Japanese.

However, following WWII, due to the vast destruction in Japan, they decided to settle permanently in Brazil. That was a dramatic change in their life styles and national identity, which caused substantial changes in their schools as well. History shows the important role of education regarding national identity.

Here the author uses the term «national identity» as follows: «National identity and nation are complex constructs of a number of interrelated components – ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic, and legal-political». And these components signify «bonds of solidarity among members of communities united by shared memories, myths, and traditions» (Smith, 1991, p. 15). Although Japanese immigrants identified themselves as Japanese, they in fact were considered as an ethnic minority in Brazil. Their colonies were like an enclave of Japan. National (or ethnic) identity is truly important because it gives members «sacred centers», objects of spiritual and historical pilgrimage (Smith, 1991, p. 16). This national identity is attained by a public mass education system (Smith, 1991, p. 16). It is a much broader, collective cultural phenomenon than nationalism, which is «an ideology, language and sentiment» (Smith, 1991, p. ix).

What happened before and during the war to the Japanese immigrant society in Brazil? And how did they cope with it and what kind of role did education have in that process? What was the influence of the Japanese and Brazilian governments on education matters?

It is a long and somewhat twisted story. In this article, the author shows that the nationalistic pressure on immigrants as foreigners from «a hostile country» drove them to develop a peculiar psychology. Especially, the prohibition of Japanese language education was the major threat. Tracing the history, the author tries to point out that education is one of the important factors that forms their national identity. The author calls the schools built before WWII «Japanese Schools (Nihonjin Gakko)» or «Japanese Primary Schools (Nihonjin Shogakko)» as they were called. After the War, the author calls them «Japanese language schools (Nihongo Gakko or Nichigo Gakko)», according to the names used in Japanese Brazilians' society.

## **2. Japanese Immigrants in Brazil: Contexts**

### *2.1. Studies on Japanese Immigrants Education in Brazil*

There are several excellent studies on this era and on the education for children overseas. *Kojima's Study on Japanese Schools* (Kojima, 1999) and *Study on the Education of Children Overseas* (Kojima, 2003) deal with the Japanese policy for overseas schools and their education before WWII. It mainly discusses the cases in Southeast Asia and China but briefly mentions South America's case as well. Moriwaki wrote a history of Japanese language education in Brazil and criticized its insular characteristic of teaching Japanese as a mother tongue (Moriwaki, 2008). Negawa presented a synthetic study on education for Japanese immigrants in Brazil before the War. It describes the real life of immigrant schools based on first hand accounts of Japanese-Brazilian society (Negawa, 2016). Maeyama demonstrated a very interesting view on this theme. He analyzed the psychology of immigrants in the «Return to Japan Movement» and showed that it was a kind of millenarianism born in a minority group which had been oppressed socially and politically (Maeyama, 1982, p. 190). Millenarianism is a belief in a future age of happiness and peace when Christ will return to Earth (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 8th edition).

Maeyama's perspective is persuasive by evidence. Such a painful experience can be shocking and force immigrants to change in the formation of their life strategy and eventually their national identity. In this article, based on the findings of those studies, the author tries to see that process from an educator's viewpoint. The author thinks that education was one of the most important factors of that change. To deprive children of education can cause deep psychological damage to minorities. The change of character from Japanese formal primary schools (Nihonjin Gakko) to nonformal language institutions (Nihongo Gakko) represents the change of their national identity because formal schools adhered to the role of national identity formation according to Smith. So, we should study why and how they chose to have another type of schools. From this point of view, the author focuses on the process of prohibiting Japanese schools and the immigrants' adaptation. Also, she tries to analyze the roles of the Japanese and Brazilian governments. Were they so powerful and decisive in their educational policy for immigrants in Brazil? Whether that was the case, or was not, why did immigrants act as they did?

To understand the story, let's start from the beginning of the immigration.

## 2.2. *The Beginning of Japanese Immigration to Brazil*

The number of Japanese immigrants arriving in Brazil before and after the Second World War exceeded 240,000, which produced the largest Japanese descendant community outside of Japan (more than 1,500,000). First let us look at the origin of the community in the beginning of the 20th century.

At the end of the 19th century, the Japanese economy was in process of modernization after a long isolation policy that lasted for about 250 years. The preindustrial economic system and feudal political system had to be westernized, to create a modern monetary and banking system, to industrialize the economy, to establish a modern legal and political system, and to redesign the educational system, etc. Above all, the change to the economic system created an enormous, poor population.

Still in its early stage, Japanese capitalism could not absorb the excessive rural population, which fled into urban areas. Those millions of poor youngsters and adults were desperate for employment. At the same time there were employment opportunities in other countries which were attracting them.

The first Japanese emigrants went to sugar cane plantations in Hawaii in 1868. It was the beginning of a period of Japanese emigration to the United States. The number of Japanese workers grew rapidly not only in Hawaii but also in the U.S. mainland. At the time the US restricted Japanese immigrants to a very small number in 1908 according to a Japanese and U.S. Gentlemen's Agreement. Consequently, a large number of Japanese migrant workers began to head for Brazil.

In 1908 the first Japanese workers arrived in Brazil in family groups in accordance with Brazilian requirements. Brazil welcomed Japanese families into the labor force working in coffee plantations after Italian migrant workers had left Brazil due to harsh working environments. Brazil had just abolished slavery in 1888. Japanese workers also suffered very much from Brazil's pre-modern payment system and slave-like working conditions, and many of them escaped from the plantations.

In such a time, who became the prototypical migrant worker? From 1908 to 1923, they were mostly rural farmers who could prepare a considerable amount of money for transportation on their own. They were called immigrants of the first period (Ando, 1971, p. 47). Beginning in 1924, one year after the Great Kanto Earthquake, the Japanese government paid passenger fares in full for those wanting to emigrate to Brazil. Emigrants of those days were not only farmers but also those who had a variety of jobs from diversified regions including urban areas. They were called immigrants of the second period (Ando, 1967, p. 89). In both periods they were not illiterate, but had a certain level of basic education, or sometimes higher, because the Japanese modern education system had been implemented fully before the 20th century. They struggled to survive in a totally different culture, but little by little they settled and found their base of life in Japanese colonies where they tried to provide for their children's education.

### 2.3. *Mindset and Life of Immigrants*

Why did they decide to emigrate to a country so far from home? The reason was to earn big money in a short time and to make a glorious return to their homeland. Their target was ten thousand yen, which would make it possible to buy a home with land and to have a budget to live a decent life (Handa, 1954, p. 70).

But soon they knew it was impossible to earn such a big amount of money in a year or two. They worked as colons (contracted immigrant worker) under a special pre-capitalistic wage system based on family labor, by which saving money was almost impossible especially in the first year (Ando, 1971, pp. 33-40). A different life-style, low wages, with slave-like treatment led them to become deeply disappointed. The majority of them left farms and worked frantically to pay off their debt or to send money to their families. But eventually they discovered that the monetary benefit was not rewarding enough in pre-industrialized Brazil. They decided to extend their stay and began to lease land to engage in agriculture (Ando, 1971, p. 50).

In 1913, the São Paulo State Government decided to distribute an extensive jungle area dividing it into small plots in order to lay a railroad to develop the region. It attracted immigrant workers of various countries including Japanese immigrants. Knowing the difficulty of earning money in only several years, they chose to stay over 10 years to get more money for an honorable return. Since about 1915, they began to purchase divided land to become independent coffee farmers. It seemed a surer way for them than living as tenant farmers. As a consequence, they came to live in the same area and formed Japanese communities called *colonia*. So, the years from 1916 to the end of the 1920's were called the «Period of Building colonias» (60 Years of *Colonia* by Pictures, 1968).

There was also another reason to settle in the same place. Their school age children's education was an urgent issue for parents. Even if they managed to return to Japan, sometime in the future, it would make little sense if their children were illiterate. To live among westerners with different cultures as a minority was sometimes stressful, which made them hope for establishing «*colonia*», a stable agricultural community with a Japanese language school for their children.

Even if they lived long there, they did not decide to settle permanently in Brazil. Nonetheless, after 10 or 20 years in Brazil, they found themselves deeply rooted in Brazil. It seemed almost impossible to return to Japan. Children grew up as Brazilians and seemed distant from their parents. The first generation's feelings of isolation and nostalgia reinforced their willingness to return to their home country.

## 3. **Development of Japanese Language Education**

### 3.1. *Beginning of Japanese Schools*

As they wished to return to their homeland eventually, parents had a strong desire to give Japanese language proficiency and primary level education to their children. That was a big (sometimes the most important) objective of the establishment of Japanese *colonias*. As one immigrant said, «I came to this site because I heard it would have a school» (Handa, 1981, p. 297). Japanese immigrants were famous for

their passion for education. There was a saying, «Europeans build a church first, but the Japanese build a school first».

A colonia was not a simple administrative unit but an autonomous «community». They committed to the reclamation of subtropical jungle for agricultural purposes. The «Japanese Association» was an indispensable organization to resolve problems in the remote areas outside of the control of local governments. One of the important functions of the «Japanese Association» was school management. It was stipulated as an important role in the regulations (Daigo, 1981, p. 98).

What kind of schools were they, then? It is described well in *The History of Immigrants' Life* (1981) by Tomoo Handa. According to his book, schools had to be inexpensive. Any hut or shack would do. It would be built with the labor of residents on allocated land. If the land was spacious, they also made a playground and a main gate. It became a full-fledged school because people lived in humble huts. With displaying both the national flags of Japan and Brazil on New Year Day or National Foundation Day, the school served nicely as the center of the community.

Those schools had to function in accord with the Brazilian educational system. There were two ways to make their schools legitimate. One way was to register the school as an authorized private school and to employ Brazilian teachers. And the other was to donate the school to the county and ask them to send Brazilian teachers. But the fact was that almost nobody would come to teach in such remote areas, or even if someone was assigned as a teacher, constant commuting proved difficult. At the end, Japanese teachers had to be responsible for the education of children in the colonias.

The lessons were given in one classroom if the number of children did not exceed 20 or so. If Brazilian teachers came Portuguese classes were given in the morning and the Japanese classes in the afternoon. The different subjects were taught simultaneously. Half of them were dictation and the others were learning reading, for example. It was enough for parents that their children learned to read, write, and calculate. It was a very simple style of school (Handa, 1981, pp. 296-302).

The first Japanese primary school in Brazil was established in 1915. Since then Japanese primary schools were built one after another until the total number reached 61 at the end of 1926 (History of Development of the Japanese in Brazil, 1953, p. 194).

In 1931 it reached 122 with five thousand pupils and 190 teachers including 70 Brazilian teachers. In March 1939, there were 486 schools and the number of pupils was estimated of about 30,000 (History of Development of the Japanese in Brazil, 1953, p. 199).

What kind of education was done in these schools? A schoolmaster sent to Brazil by the Japanese government left a report entitled as «A Report on Education for Japanese Children Overseas», written in 1928.

The number of schools was stated as 88 in July 1928, but it is said that there were more. Among these 88 schools, 24 were authorized Brazilian schools where the Brazilian curriculum was taught by Brazilian teachers and Japanese teachers taught extra lessons in the Japanese language. Five schools had a supplementary Portuguese section. The rest of the 59 schools mainly taught the curriculum of Japanese language instruction.

In 75 surveyed schools, 3,161 pupils (1,782 boys and 1,375 girls.) were registered, which meant that an average of 42 children belonged to one primary school. The Portuguese section consisted of three or two years of lessons, while the Japanese section constituted of six grades. Portuguese classes were given in the morning and Japanese in the afternoon because Japanese classes had to be given as supplementary lessons. The Portuguese section's subjects were Portuguese, history and the geography of Brazil. The Japanese section's curriculum was almost the same as that of Japan. The subjects announced as obligatory were Japanese, shushin, arithmetic, geography, history, science, physical education, and songs approved by the government. Because of variety of restrictions from geographical shipping and other conditions, most of the schools only had classes of Japanese, shushin, and arithmetic. Shushin is the name of moral education, which teaches respectable behavior to others aiming at constructing a good society. It was based on the Imperial Rescript on Education, demands shows high moral standards of loyalty and faithfulness in a society looked living as a family under the emperor.

Then how did those schools employ teachers? São Paulo State's stipulation said that any school in any remote area with more than 20 pupils would be sent teachers paid by the state and would be given textbooks and teaching materials, if they had donated school buildings built by themselves and asked to have teachers appointed by the local government (A Report on Education for Japanese Children Overseas, 1928). But in rural areas Japanese communities paid for the cost of schools including the employment of teachers. If they couldn't provide a Portuguese section, they sent their children to other Brazilian schools. Or Japanese teachers taught very basic Portuguese. Teachers' working conditions were bad and their wages were sometimes worse than that of uneducated laborers (Association of Japanese Language Schools in Brazil, 1966, p. 110).

Japanese schools improved their administrative and academic systems gradually. The proliferation of Japanese schools became an easy target of nationalistic sentiment in Brazil.

### *3.2. Organization of Japanese Schools*

What kind of policy did the Japanese government have for emigration to other countries? Japan made many efforts for modernization and won the Sino-Japanese War in 1894 and the Russo-Japanese War in 1904. Entering into the 20th century, Japan began to send hundreds of thousands of emigrants to the US and Brazil. But while emigration to Manchuria increased drastically from 1931, and in contrast, emigration to Brazil declined after the 1934 amendment to the Brazilian Constitution.

Immigration to Brazil was promoted nationwide by all kinds of exciting slogans. Eventually, Japanese vested interests, politically, economically, and militarily focused mainly upon Asia, and consequently the education of immigrants in Brazil was largely ignored for a long time. Then, as Japanese colonias grew in numbers, the Japanese government started to support to improvement of the curriculum of education there in the 1920s.

In March 1927, Sukeyuki Akamatu, the Consulate General of Japan in São Paulo, celebrated a consulting meeting of representatives of Japanese schools and

organized the «Association for Education of the Japanese in Brazil» as the center of Japanese language education in Brazil (50 Years of Colonias, 1958, p. 74). Its objective was to unite the direction for Japanese children to be able to have quality education. There were ten divisions and each division selected a director to make up a board of directors. Its secretariat was put in the consulate general.

But those divisions were not inter-connected well. Two years later, Seiichirou Nakajima, the next consul general, consulted with directors and interested persons again and set up the «Association of Fathers and Brothers of Japanese Schools in São Paulo» (50 Years of Colonias, 1958, p. 74). This was registered as a formal incorporated association and took over the property and duties of the «Association for Education of Japanese in Brazil». Unfortunately, this new Association was not economically self-sufficient and had to keep its status mainly by subsidies from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Association of Japanese Language Schools in Brazil, 1966, p. 107). Its principal duties for more than 170 Japanese primary schools were the following:

1. School management:
  - a) Preparation for application for subsidies and the procedure of receipt.
  - b) Supply and purchase of school facilities and teaching materials or aids.
  - c) Employment of teachers.
  - d) Response and measures for educational decrees.
  - e) Mediation of disputes among schools.
  - f) Work related to storage of school properties.
  - g) Instruction on general school administration.
2. Editing textbooks.
3. Publication of bulletins.
4. Maintenance of facilities in the dormitory.
5. Management of São Paulo School.
6. Education and training of regular teachers.
7. Celebration of academic lecture meetings (Association of Japanese Language Schools in Brazil, 1966, p. 107).

It was expanded in 1935 when 36 local sections and one special area were established as one group to improve the contact network among the primary schools. In 1936, the next year, the association changed its name to the «Association for Promotion of Japanese People's Education» and restructured the organization, though its purposes had not changed much, even though its function was broadened during these years. In 1935 it received three teachers sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and posted them to six branches to make them function as supervisors and consultants. In 1936, the next year, another three teachers from Japan arrived at São Paulo.

Meanwhile Brazilian nationalism gained momentum again. Japanese authorities were worried that this type of association would be a cause of friction with the executive authorities. Its name was changed again. This time it was named the «Association for Promotion of Culture and Education for Brazilian Japanese». Its activities were the following:

1. Guidance of Japanese language education.
2. Editing textbooks.
3. Providing subsidy for schoolhouse construction.
4. Providing subsidy for teachers' salary.
5. Distributing teaching materials free of charge.
6. Scholarships.
7. Movie playing tour.
8. Management of student dormitory.
9. Promotion of athletics and sports (Association of Japanese Language Schools in Brazil, 1966, p. 110).

These functions were to help managing the system of schools and not intended to break the law nor impose any ideology. But these measures couldn't protect schools from harsh nationalistic policies based on «Nipophobic» (Suzuki, 2008, p. 2) sentiment that had been continued since 1920s.

#### **4. Brazil's Policy toward Immigration and Japanese Immigrants Reactions**

##### *4.1. Origin of Conflicts: Reaction of Brazilian Society*

What was the reaction of the Brazilian local administration to the establishment of Japanese schools?

At first, they were grateful and welcomed the efforts of Japanese immigrants who built schools in the remote areas, because the authorities were not able economically or administratively.

But in the broader context, there was «the first anti-Japanese movement» in the 1920's (The Course of Anti-Japanese Problems in the Brazilian New Constitutional Assembly, 1934, p. 93). Japanese immigrants did not feel oppression in their daily lives as farmers then, but anti-Japanese sentiment took a more confrontational stance in 1930's.

1930 saw the establishment of the provisional government of Getulio Vargas (1882-1954), who came from a rich family in Rio Grande do Sul, and who put up resistance to the old monopoly of power by big landowners from the colonial era. The Great Depression of 1929 put Brazilian coffee production in crisis. It was a time of modernized, centralized nation building in a Brazil influenced by European thought. The president, who depended on vulnerable populist support, needed such centralized government, and his labor policy and nationalization policy was its base. He stressed the prioritized treatment of domestic workers and tried to nationalize all foreign factors: foreign private companies and foreigners' schools (70 Years History of Japanese Immigrants in Brazil, 1981, p. 73). He established a strong nationalistic policy influenced by German ideology (Kinshichi *et al.*, 2000, p. 141).

In this context, movements of social and institutional discrimination against Japanese immigrants grew. Miguel Couto (1865-1934), a famous doctor and member of the National Constitutional Assembly, played a decisive role in the constitutional amendments of 1934 against Japanese immigrants with his discussion based

on social Darwinism and eugenics (Suzuki, 2008). Oliveira Vianna (1883-1951), sociologist and ideologues of racial eugenics, insisted on the repatriation of Japanese immigrants. They insisted that immigrants to Brazil should be white, Christian, and nationalist. This unfortunate racial attack intensified during WWII (Kinshichi *et al.*, 2000, pp. 140-141).

Finally, it led to the approval of immigration restriction by the National Constitutional Assembly on May 24th of 1934. The article 121 Clause 6 of Section for Society and Economy of the new Constitutions prescribed that the annual number of each country's emigrants could not exceed two percent of the total number of emigrants of each country who entered and colonized Brazil during the past 50 years (Irie, 1938, p. 399).

Literally this regulation was for the immigrants of all the countries, but the real target was Japan (Kinshichi *et al.*, 2000, p. 14). The number would be limited to only about 3,000, one seventh of each year's total number of immigrants from Japan because the first years of the 1930's were the peak of Japanese immigration to Brazil and its number exceeded 20,000 in 1933 and 1934. Its impact was not so big for other countries because they had large numbers of settled immigrants already and numbers of new immigrants were in decline. On the other hand, this policy was a terrible shock for the Japanese in Brazil.

Also, the Brazilian federal government put new policies for immigrants into practice immediately: New Foreign Immigration Law, its Enforcement Details, Foreigners' Organizations Control Act, Foreign Language Publications Control Act, Order on the Promotion of Assimilation of Brazilians with Foreign Origin, etc. They also imposed restrictions on the education for children of immigrants. The impact of this process will be explained in detail below.

#### 4.2. *Foreign Policy of Japanese Government and People's Mindsetting*

As previously mentioned, the Japanese Associations changed names and statutes frequently to correspond to the growing pressure of Brazil's nationalistic policy. As an unintended result, however, their relation with the Japanese Consulate grew closer and the Japanese-Brazilians become more influenced by the social atmosphere of their homeland which was moving increasingly towards war.

But this doesn't mean that the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself tried to encourage Japanese spirit and militarism directly. On the contrary, many notable bureaucrats addressed the necessity of persuasion for immigrants to settle permanently in Brazil and to groom model Brazilian citizens with a Japanese work ethic. The Ministry's internal documents also showed the same direction (Kojima, 2003, pp. 176-177). Japanese language textbook, published in 1937 by immigrants and Japanese teachers, promoted the image of good Brazilian citizens with Japanese «souls» through a successful combination of Japanese education and Brazilian education (Negawa, 2016, p. 126). Simply put, it demonstrated their hope of idealistic fusion of the both national cultures.

School ceremonies, national festivals, sport festivals, all such other school events were held in a similar manner to like schools in Japan. They were part of regular school life and not a peculiar expression of radical nationalism. There were

some examples of nationalistic behavior among people inside and around the consulate especially, since the relationship between Japan and China became worse by the Manchurian Incident in 1931. There were testimonies of the strict teaching of Japanese morals by teachers sent from Japan or training by a military officer attached to the Japanese Embassy (Trail of A Quarter of A Century After the War, 1958, p. 23; 50 Years of Colonias, 1958, p. 124). They were not regular exercises, however, but were sporadic cases. There was a nationalistic «mood» in this era but there was not systematic mobilization for that purpose by the Japanese government.

The first half of the 1930's was the peak of Japanese immigration to Brazil. New immigrants brought information not known to people in Brazil. Old immigrants, who were always eager to have information of their country, might have been influenced by news and articles that conveyed the nationalism of that time. People voluntarily donated their money and precious belongings to their country and sent bags of gifts to soldiers abroad. Whole families engaged in the «Movement of Contributions on the Home Front» (Negawa, 2016, pp. 514-533). But it was never an invasion movement as anti-Japanese activists criticized.

Since they understood that they wouldn't be able to return to Japan easily, they embraced the idea that they had a noble mission of becoming the pioneers in Japan's overseas expansion (Handa, 1954, p. 75). At the same time, they couldn't throw away their hope to return to their hometown as a successful people. Their homeland's crisis made them even more patriotic. On the other side, there was strong pressure from Brazil's nationalistic policy. Immigrants experienced conflict between Brazilian and Japanese nationalisms. And it was the situation surrounding Japanese schools which made the conflict more painful when it was materialized.

## **5. Brazilian Nationalistic Restriction on Japanese Primary Schools**

### *5.1. The Process of Restriction from 1920's and Japanese Immigrants Reactions*

There was oppression on teaching of Japanese language since the 1920's even before Vargas took office and it continued into the 1930's (Lone, 2001, p.63). Already in 1928, an order to prohibit Japanese language education for all authorized primary schools was issued in regions of Northwest and Juquiá of São Paulo State and temporarily Japanese language education was ceased. Corresponding to this order, each Japanese school went through the necessary formalities to be authorized and registered as a private school and requested the dispatch of Brazilian teachers to each school (Telegram No.100 from São Paulo, in Miscellaneous Subjects, November 30, 1928).

In January of 1934, there was a telegram from the Consulate General to the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs stating that the problems surrounding Japanese education in Brazil vis-à-vis Brazilian authority had reached an extreme deadlock (Telegram No.3 from São Paulo, in Miscellaneous Subjects, Jan. 12, 1934). In 1933, a renewed government ordinance on private schools made a rule that the teachers without command of Portuguese could not teach foreign languages. Japanese society celebrated a Portuguese training course of 50 days from the 11th

of December 1933 to the 28th of January 1934 in three cities in São Paulo State. It was successful and Japanese teacher participants made a good impression on the Brazilian authorities. The above-mentioned telegram was issued because such a restriction had continued since 1933, and people took it very seriously. He also informed the minister that the expense for that purpose would be paid by the budget for overseas education expenses (Telegram n. 19 from São Paulo, in *Miscellaneous Subjects*, Feb. 1, 1934).

In 1935, Japanese textbooks became a subject of criticism. Students up to the age of ten (the third grade) were required to use textbooks edited in Brazil. So, the consulate general asked the Japanese government to dispatch some experts of textbook-editing to Brazil, to translate them later into Portuguese. Since this kind of Japanese support could provoke the Brazilian authorities, this attempt was put into action without much publicity (Telegram n. 174, from São Paulo, in *Miscellaneous Subjects*, July 31, 1935).

In 1936, the import of textbooks from Japan became more difficult. So Japanese-Brazilians decided to print them in Brazil. A report from the consulate general explained this situation by saying «The import of a large number of textbooks will run the risk of being a target of the anti-Japanese movement. Here we will print and distribute them quietly» (Telegram n. 67-1, from São Paulo, in *Miscellaneous Subjects*, June 8, 1936). And in August of the same year, a request was issued to Japanese schools to submit the list of textbooks in use including those for foreign language teaching. In October, the colonias claimed that the present textbooks were only for that year and they would wait for the new textbooks in the next year (Telegram n. 150, from São Paulo, in *Miscellaneous Subjects*, Oct. 9, 1936). In such situations, the import of Japanese books and the dispatch of Japanese experts were carried out in secret.

## 6.2. *Movement of Anti-Japanese Activity*

For the anti-Japanese activists, education was its focal point. The «Association of Alberto Torres», organized in 1933, began to launch a campaign against Japanese immigrants putting articles in several newspapers. They criticized Japanese schools severely for not being assimilated into Brazilian society. The Immigration Committee began the investigation based on the charge, but their report was a favorable to Japanese schools. (*Problems of Education for Second Generation*, p. 2). Japanese people felt relieved then, but anti-Japanese activists gained strength by the testimony of a former school principal in Iguape, São Paulo. He insisted that Japanese schools were powerful institutions trying to separate Japanese-Brazilian children from Brazilian Society by «Japanizing» them. They not only could become obstacles to Brazilian educational institutions but could become a threat to Brazil's peacefulness, he said (*Official General Document* n. 58, 1935, pp. 3-15).

The consulate circulated among Japanese organizations warning dated 20th of March, 1935, which encouraged them to attempt to respond cautiously to anti-Japanese sentiment including the viewing of Japanese nationalistic oriented movies.

In September 1936, the director of the Department of Education of São Paulo State criticized Japanese children's education during his on-site inspection of Marília, Bastos, Lins, and Bauru, and it had provoked an immediate public response. Some

newspapers criticized Japanese immigrants' lack of assimilation. *Folha da Manhã* reproached the schools fiercely in its September 30 article «Japanese in Brazil and Their Primary Education Problems». First, it was critical that neither children nor teachers could speak Portuguese. They accused Japanese immigrants of pretending to teach Japanese children in a Brazilian way in spite of their actual practices, and that the books in libraries were all Japanese (Official General Document n. 58, 1935, pp. 43-55). And two other newspaper articles wrote about this subject on the 1st of October: an editorial titled «Assimilation» of *Folha da Manhã* and another editorial titled *Assimilation of Japanese People* of *A Gazeta*. Both articles blamed Japanese immigrants' collective living style in colonias for their lack of assimilation. Also, those editors insisted that children of Japanese immigrants must learn Portuguese from the age of three or four (Public General Document n. 58, 1935, pp. 56-63).

At the end of 1936, «the education of Japanese immigrants had become a very delicate problem in the relations between Japan and Brazil...» (Telegram n. 218, from Rio de Janeiro, Dec. 12, 1936). In the following year, state authorities repeatedly worked on the colonias to obey the Brazilian educational law. As is shown above, schools made as much effort as possible to comply with state's laws. But this problem became so sensitive that even some remarks by Japanese politicians provoked Brazilians wariness. Such an example was a remark of Kouki Hirota in March of 1938. Hirota, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, encouraged Japanese education for all the Japanese overseas, giving the example of Japanese schools in the United States, he insisted that regardless of the place of birth, children of Japanese blood should be considered as Japanese and educated as such. *Folha da Manhã* immediately reported it on the 9th of March, prompting the Japanese ambassador in Brazil to notify quickly the Japanese government (Telegram n. 68, from Rio de Janeiro, March 10, 1938).

### 5.3. *Closure of Japanese Schools and its Impact*

In the meantime, Japan became a member of the Axis power in 1936. Brazil established the «Estado Novo» in the next year and the Brazilian nationalization policy became more oppressive.

In May of 1938, the 93rd article of Immigration Law was legislated and its enforcement details were decided in August. By that decision, schools out of the boundary of São Paulo City and Santos City were called «rural schools». And those «rural schools» were ordered to follow the specific orders. First, all the subjects had to be taught in Portuguese. Second, only native-born Brazilians could be teachers. Third, foreign language must not be taught to children up to the age of 14. Fourth, all the textbooks must be written in Portuguese. Fifth, Brazilian history and geography had to be obligatory subjects in primary and secondary education. And in the separate law designed for accelerating the assimilation of foreigners, it was stipulated that foreigners could not be principals, teachers, nor owners of any kind of school (History of Development of the Japanese in Brazil, 2nd vol., p. 200).

That prohibition of foreign language education up to the age of 14 was a terrible shock for Japanese immigrants. By testimony it was «the biggest blow in colonias before the Pacific War». They believed that there was no value of school education

unless it was Japanese language education (Editing Committee of the History of Colonia Aliança, 1952, p. 71). For those who made every effort to bring their children up just like Japanese in Japan, Japanese schools were sources of their moral backbone. As children of the age of 14 could work like grown-ups, if such young children were not be taught Japanese up to such an age, they could not have the foundation to be considered as a Japanese. It must be education that promotes Japanese national identity with the same cultural and moral background as in Japan. As the majority of Japanese immigrants were living in «rural» areas, the impact was enormous because that stipulation would apply to almost all of their children. The impact was so serious that the Consulate General circulated the announcement not to act thoughtlessly. This episode shows the level of shock that Japanese society experienced that moment (Problems of Education for Second Children, 1938, p. 149).

And finally, on the 15th of December of 1938, foreign schools (including Japanese schools among others) all over Brazil were ordered to close with immediate effect (70 Years History of Japanese Immigrants in Brazil, 1981, p. 75). This closure of schools caused mental damage to the community, because it was schools that could teach identity and morality and therefore could educate further generations. And nine months after that, the State of São Paulo issued another decree to impose an ideological policy of «Brazilianization» for all the private schools for Brazilian students in general and for foreign children. It stipulated the following: First, to prohibit symbols or things, which might inspire anti-nationalistic sentiment. Second, each primary school and each supplementary section should have classes on the national anthem, national flag, and other patriotic songs. Third, the number of foreign language classes should not exceed two hours a day. Fourth, private school events must not include foreign language or symbols to raise a foreign country's ideology. Fifth, textbooks for foreign language learning must be approved by Brazilian authorities (History of Development of the Japanese in Brazil, 2nd vol., p. 201).

Before these changes in the school system, the total number of Japanese schools was numbered at 476 in Brazil (70 Years History of Japanese Immigrants in Brazil, 1981, p. 75). Following these developments in the school system, 219 Japanese schools, seven German Schools, five Italian schools, and four Portuguese schools were closed in a short time (History of Development of the Japanese in Brazil, 2nd vol., p. 201).

There were some Japanese schools that survived after the decree, offering Portuguese, home schooling, rotation of teachers, or teaching secondary level education (Negawa, 2016, pp.133-144). Then, in December of 1941, with the outbreak of the «Pacific War», Brazil broke off diplomatic relations with Japan and all the Japanese diplomats left Brazil. The remaining Japanese became «foreigners in a hostile country». The Association for Cultural and Education Divulcation was dispersed. The distribution of Japanese newspapers was banned. Japanese immigrants were deprived of the means to know the news of Japan, Brazil and the world. They were prohibited to speak Japanese in public, to have meetings with each other. The only thing they could do in public places was to look at each other and exchange long glances. There were arrests or seizure of properties without warrants. This situation continued until the end of the World War II. It was the Dark

Age for them. And the shutdown of Japanese schools was undoubtedly one of the most serious moral defeats that made them both pessimistic and angry.

Brazilian nationalism seemed being successful in closing almost all the Japanese schools and in Brazilianizing the rest of the schools. But this pressure and imposition of policy did not succeed in taking their home country away from their mentality. The Japanese spirit became an emotional pillar for immigrants and the ordeals brought upon them only enhanced their nationalistic sentiment to extreme degree. They were confined to an environment in which outside information was cut off or taken away. As the majority of them had become radical nationalists, it was only natural for them to believe in the victory of Japan. Their sentiment had grown to an even more grievous and pathetic level. Such sentiment yielded some fanatic nationalists who firmly believed in the victory of Japan even after its defeat.

Right after WWII, those believers «inflicted divine punishment» on those who spread the news of the defeat of Japan. Hearing the news of the end of the war, those believers of the victory of their homeland, waited for the coming of the ships from Japan and some of them even saw illusions of those ships. Their desperate psychological condition was a foreshadowing of the tragic incident of «Victory Company vs. Defeat Company», as the two groups in the Japanese communities were labeled, which resulted in cases of murder. This incident shook Japanese community to its core and left a traumatic impact.

Such mentality might be hard to understand. But sense of ethnicity (or national identity in this case) can be hardened when there are negative external factors around them (Smith, p. 61). With extremely strong pressure from the local environment, their sacred homeland attracted and inspired them even more. Pressure, isolation, betrayed firm beliefs, bloody scandal; these experiences were traumatizing and resulted in a change of cultural values and national identity for the Japanese-Brazilians. The shutdown of schools was undoubtedly a major factor as well, for it was regarded as one of the most shocking misfortunes for them.

Ethnic (national) identity is based on the sense of continuity of generations, common memory of group history, and common belief of shared destiny as a group. These cultural patterns can be spread by the deep psychological trauma resulting in cultural identity changes. Smith cites as causes of cultural identity change: war and conquest, banishment and enslavement, immigration and conversion (Smith, 1991, p. 60). This theory can be applied to the experience of Japanese immigrants in Brazil. Oppression and isolation implemented by extreme nationalistic policies and practices during the war and following the defeat of Japan hurt their morale deeply. Such psychology could well be the cause of the subsequent tragedies. Maeyama's interpretation of their movement as millenarianism represents another side of this discussion.

Through these experiences, Japanese Immigrants' society eventually and gradually changed its identity. And the change at the end was fundamental.

## **6. Conclusion: Japanese Language Education as Subsidiary Courses**

Japanese newspapers restarted one year after the end of war, but Japanese schools were not resumed. Following, the promulgation of a new decree on education in November 1947, it became possible to open Japanese language schools. The

establishment of the United Associations of Authorized Japanese Language Schools in São Paulo State in 1955 was the sign of re-establishment of the base of Japanese language education after the war.

However, the restarted Japanese language schools were different from those before the war. They were no more formal primary schools (Nihonjin Gakko or Nihonjin Shogakko) to raise Japanese-Brazilian nationals but private cram schools to supplement Brazilian education with Japanese language and culture (Nihongo Gakko or Nichigo Gakko). For those immigrants who knew of the devastation of Japan in the war, it became a natural option to settle in Brazil permanently. They now began to look for Brazilian formal schools to educate their children to prosper there.

Their self-identity changed as well. Initially they had called themselves «fellow countrymen in Brazil» and their society «the Japanese resident society in Brazil». After the war, they came to use «Japanese-Brazilians» and «Nikkei (Japanese) colonia». Before the war, there was a discussion on the attitude of immigrants, «Japan primary, Brazil secondary», or «Brazil first, Japan second». Eventually such issues disappeared. It became clear that Brazilian schools came first for them. Even some people who were against Japanese language schools worried that this would hinder Brazilian education.

Zenpachi Ando expressed an important view about Japanese language education. He said it must not be mother language education but should be «foreign» language education. He also emphasized that Japanese colonias should be built on cooperation between the first and second generation. To convey the very best of the culture of their homeland, the language must be Japanese (Association of Japanese Language Schools in Brazil, 1966, p. 58). He insisted on the importance of the inheritance of Japanese language between generations, but as a second language. The basic philosophy of Japanese language education summarized in this view is still held to this day. Japanese cannot be a mother or national language to them. But it should be taught continuously to the following generations. Japanese language schools can play a vital role to inherit the language and culture of their parents. They are not formal primary schools any longer but are no formal schools for teaching Japanese language and culture. This transformation reflects the fundamental change of national identity of Japanese immigrants in Brazil.

Getting through all the events and experiences, immigrants changed their goals for living and national identity. In this process, education played an important role and finally changed its own role within the Brazilian national education system. Schools run by immigrants have lost their status of formal schools but have become private, non formal institutions to inherit the language and culture of their former generations. Smith says that the national identity of today is formed by a mass public education system. The Japanese immigrant community's education might have been an obstacle for Vargas's Brazil, which was trying to establish its national identity by its own education system. For that matter, the history of Japanese schools in Brazil can be seen as a clash of two nationalisms in its broader context.

Language is the core of national identity and schools are a symbol of community based on that national identity, because schools secure language inheritance by educating younger generations. Destruction of such symbols as well as extraordinary pressure can cause a serious damage to the community. Schools or education, as

intermediary between the past and the future, can be crucial to maintaining one's national identity. The history of Japanese schools in Brazil proves it in a dramatic fashion.

## 7. References

### 7.1. Books and Articles

Ando, Z. (1967). *A Social Historical Study of Immigrants* (Japanese). Study Report (II). São Paulo: Humanities Research Institute.

*The Course of Anti-Japanese Problems in the Brazilian New Constitutional Assembly* (Japanese) (1934). São Paulo: Association of Japanese Culture in Brazil.

Daigo, M. (1981). *The Japanese in the South Hemisphere: Adaptation of Japanese People in Brazil* (Japanese). Tokyo: Bungei Shunju.

Editing Committee of the History of Colonia Aliança (Ed.) (1952). *25th Anniversary of Establishment* (Japanese). Overseas Association of Shinano.

*Far Beyond the Mountains and Rivers: A History of Japanese Language Education in All Brazil* (Japanese) (1966). São Paulo: Association of Japanese Language Schools in Brazil.

*50 Years of Colonias* (Japanese) (1958). São Paulo: Paulista Newspaper Company.

Handa, T. (1954). *Problems of Immigrants in Brazil* (Japanese). São Paulo: Humanities Research Institute.

Handa, T. (1981). *A History of Immigrants' Life* (Japanese). São Paulo: Humanities Research Institute.

*History of Development of the Japanese in Brazil* (Japanese) (1953). 2 Vols. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Europe and America Department Emigration Section.

*Immigration: Japanese*, Library of Congress website (2017). <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/japanese.html> (2017/11/26)

Irie, T. (1938). *A History of Overseas Japanese Expansion*. Vol. II (Japanese). São Paulo: Study Group of Immigration Problems.

Ishihara, T. (1978). *50 Years of the Primary School of Cotia 1916-1966: The Facts of Japanese Brazilian Children* (Japanese). Cotia: No publisher's name.

Kinshichi, S., Takahashi, T., et. al. (2000). *Basic Study on Brazil: 500 years history of Unknown Great Country* (Japanese). Kyoto: Koyo Shobo.

Kojima, M. (1999). *A Study of Japanese Overseas Schools: Analysis by Intercultural Education History* (Japanese), Tokyo: Tamagawa University Press.

- Kojima, M. ed. (2003). *A Study of Education for Children Overseas* (Japanese). Tokyo: Tamagawa University Press.
- Kojima, S. (2003). Government Responses to Problems of Education for Japanese Immigrants Children in Brazil: Looking at the Data from 1920's to the Second World War. In Kojima, M. (Ed.), *A Study of Education for Children Overseas* (Japanese). Tokyo: Tamagawa University Press.
- Lone, S. (2001). *The Japanese Community in Brazil, 1908-1940: Between Samurai and Carnival*. Chippenham, Wiltshire: Great Britain.
- Maeyama, T. (1982). *A Return to Japan Movement of Immigrants* (Japanese). Tokyo: NHK Books.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs Consul Division (1971). *Overseas Development of Our People: The One Hundred Years' History of Emigration* (Volume of Data) (Japanese). Japan International Cooperation Agency.
- Negawa, Y. (2016). *Educational History of Japanese Immigrants in Brazil* (Japanese). Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo.
- 60 Years of Colonias by Pictures* (Japanese) (1968). São Paulo: Paulista Newspaper Company.
- 70 Years History of Japanese Immigrants in Brazil* (Japanese) (1981). São Paulo: Association of Japanese Culture in Brazil.
- Smith, A.D. (1991). *National Identity*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Suzuki Jr., M. (2008). História da discriminação brasileira contra os japoneses sai do limbo: Tema esquecido pela historiografia brasileira, discriminação social e institucional contra japoneses foi defendida por grandes nomes do pensamento nacional, como o sociólogo Oliveira Vianna. In Folha de S. Paulo, 20 de abril de 2008. Retrieved from: [http://www.usp.br/proin/download/imprensa/imprensa\\_integras\\_20\\_04\\_2009.pdf](http://www.usp.br/proin/download/imprensa/imprensa_integras_20_04_2009.pdf) (2018/03/05)
- Trail of a Quarter of a Century after the War* (Japanese) (1958). São Paulo: São Paulo Newspaper Company.
- 7.2. *Official Document Stored in the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Tokyo, Japan. (They are papers in files and not numbered).*
- Miscellaneous Subjects on Anti-Japanese Movement Brazil Section Problems of Education for Second Generation (Japanese). Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Tokyo, Japan. (In the main text and the

reference this set of documents is mentioned as Problems of Education for Second Generation.)

Miscellaneous Subjects Related to Japanese Schools Overseas, Division of America, National Elementary School of São Paulo (Japanese). Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Tokyo, Japan. (In the main text and the reference this set of documents is mentioned as Miscellaneous Subjects.)

Official General Document No. 58 from the Ambassador to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (1935). In Problems of Education for Second Generation (Japanese).

A Report on Education for Japanese Children Overseas (Japanese) (1928). In *Miscellaneous Subjects*.

1. Telegram n. 100 from São Paulo to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Japanese) (1928). Sent on November 30 from São Paulo and received on December 1 of 1928.
2. Telegram n. 3 from São Paulo to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Japanese) (1934) sent on January 12 and received on January 3, 1934.
3. Telegram n. 19 from São Paulo to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Japanese) (1934) sent on February 1 and received on February 3, 1934.
4. Telegram n. 174 from São Paulo to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Japanese) (1934) sent on July 31 and received on August 1, 1935.
5. Telegram n. 67-1 from São Paulo to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Japanese) (1934). Sent June 8 and received June 9, 1936.
6. Telegram n. 150 from São Paulo to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Japanese) (1936). Sent on October 9 and received on October 10, 1936.

(Telegrams from n. 1 to 6 are included in Miscellaneous Subject).

7. Telegram n. 218, from the Ambassador in Rio de Janeiro to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Japanese) (1936). Sent on December 12 and received on December 13, 1936.
8. Telegram n. 68, from the Ambassador in Rio de Janeiro to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Japanese) (1938). Sent on March 10 and received on March 11, 1938.

(Telegrams from n. 7 to 8 are included in Problems of Education for Second Generation).

*página intencionadamente en blanco / page intentionally blank*