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A Transnational Perspective on Japanese-Brazilian Community Organizations

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Abstract

The application of a transnational lens to analyze the role of diaspora organizations highlights two important aspects: firstly, organizations built by migrant-origin communities enable the formation of hybrid cultures and help generate socio-cultural capital that is a valuable shared resource. Secondly, such organizations help in developing transnational networks linking communities that are spatially fragmented.

The largest Japanese diaspora in the world - the nipo-brasileiros in Brazil - are a highly organized migrant-origin community. Since the onset of the Japan-Brazil migration in 1908, they have achieved high socio-political mobility in Brazil over the generations, and display a hyphenated identity. Several notable community organizations and associations exist, which despite promoting Japanese culture, advocate loyalty to Brazil. Following the 1980s, a large percentage of nipo-brasileiros migrated to Japan in pursuit of better pay by taking up unskilled jobs in their ancestral homeland. This was mainly considered a temporary labor migration or the 'dekasegi' phenomenon.

Other than a favorable visa policy instituted by the Japanese government, nipo-brasileiro transnational networks were critical to the sustenance of this migratory flow, particularly post the 2008 global financial crisis, which reduced the demand for labor in Japan. Nipo-brasileiro organizations played a vital role in strengthening these networks by collaborating with Japan-based entities, state or otherwise. They were instrumental not only in preserving the cultural ties with Japan, but also facilitated transnational movement by providing information, guidance and resources. Despite shared ethnicity, the Brazilian dekasegi immigrants faced discrimination from the local population in Japan. A deterritorialized Brazilian nationalism was thus manifest in the nipo-brasileiro clusters in Japan. They remained as highly organized enclaves where transnational ties with Brazil were maintained and celebrated. Community organizations played an important role in nipo-brasileiro immigrants achieving a segmented assimilation and dual embeddedness in both Japan and Brazil - and thus a 'transnational' status.'

Keywords: Transnationalism, Diaspora, Japanese-Brazilians, Networks, Organizations

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A Transnational Perspective on Japanese-Brazilian Community Organizations

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The genesis of the *nipo-brasileiros* or Japanese-Brazilians can be traced back to 1908, when the *Kasato Maru* delivered the first batch of less than a thousand Japanese migrants to the port of Santos to work as contract labor on the large monoculture plantations of São Paulo, Brazil. Under a government-sponsored emigration policy, the Japanese continued to migrate to Brazil, with an intermittent pause around the period of the Second World War. After the war, Brazil was the first Allied country to allow immigration from Japan in 1951. Though the flow of Japanese immigrants diminished in the following decades, the Japanese-origin community in Brazil currently represents the largest Japanese diaspora in the world. As per estimates by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), over two million people of Japanese descent are Brazilian nationals.

Since the establishment of their first *colonias*, the Japanese immigrants in Brazil were highly organized. Intending to eventually return home, they retained their Japanese identity and established various community organizations to maintain the structures of a Japanese-style society (Tsuda 2001; Carvalho 2003; Tigner 1982). The Japanese government through its consulate in Brazil catered to this diaspora, the *nikkeijin*.

Japan sought to preserve ties with the *nikkei* community worldwide. The Pan American Nikkei Association (PANA) was founded to connect the Japanese diaspora in the Americas. Such efforts not only enabled transnational exchange, but helped build solidarity and a consciousness of belonging to Japan. However, a history of migration, integration and intermarriage led to the development of a

hyphenated identity among the *nipo-brasileiros* in Brazil.

Since the 1980s, a large percentage of them havemigrated to Japan in pursuit of better pay by taking up unskilled jobs in the “ancestral homeland” (Tsuda 2001). This has been mainly considered a temporary labor migration, or the ‘*dekasegi*’ phenomenon. Japanese influences are dispersed by the *dekasegi* who return from Japan to the community in Brazil. Due to the temporary nature of migration, the number of *nipo-brasileiros* with lived experience in Japan may far exceed the number of *dekasegi* working in Japan at any given time. Most *nipo-brasileiros* in Brazil have at least one family member who has worked in Japan. (Nishida, Goto 2007).

Following the *dekasegi* migration, the community’s cultural articulations were observed to be quite different in Brazil and Japan. While the community congregated around Japanese cultural practices and events in Brazil, a loud display of Brazilian culture dominated their ethnic enclaves in Japan (Tsuda 2001; Carvalho 2003). The transnational networks binding the *nipo-brasileiros* across the two countries have a role to play in this phenomenon.

A History of Nipo-Brasileiro Community Organization in Brazil

The structures of the Japanese *colonias* were held together through numerous small organizations and clubs that not only strengthened the bonds within the community, but also connected them to the ‘homeland’ - Japan (Tsuda 2001; Carvalho 2003; Goto 2007). The Japanese immigrants placed great emphasis on the education of their children. In the pre-War years, the Japanese language and system of

education was preferred. Japanese medium schools were set up, the earliest being the Taisho School founded in São Paulo in 1915. The number of community-sponsored schools in São Paulo state rose to 200 by 1932, enrolling over 10,000 students. The community also started various Japanese language publications including newspapers.

Around the period of the Second World War, the narrative of 'yellow peril' was used against the Japanese immigrants and *colonias* in Brazil. Japanese language, schools, publications, and other communal activities were banned by the state. Brazil also cut diplomatic ties with Japan, thereby depriving the migrant community of the support of the Japanese consulate mission, which they had hitherto relied on.

Thus cut-off, the community split into two factions following Japan's defeats - the *make gumi*, who accepted Japan's loss in the war, and the *kachigumi*, which denied it. The latter consisted of militant organizations like the *Shindo Renmei*, responsible for perpetrating terror attacks against members of the other group in the aftermath of war.

The first generation migrants, or *issei*, had largely held on to their notions of superiority and loyalty to Japan. However, second and third generation *nisei* and *sansei*, born and brought up in Brazil with citizenship rights, were more assimilated in Brazilian society. Most of them had never seen Japan and had been educated in Brazil, often moving to urban centers to pursue professional careers. Substantially Brazilianized, they began referring to themselves as *nipo-brasileiros* and no longer essentialized their Japanese identity. Yet, they were a visible minority and preserved their community organizations. Within the larger community, those with Okinawan origin claimed a separate ethnicity from the Japanese and established their own cultural organizations (Tsuda 2001; Lesser 1997; Nishida).

A number of *nipo-brasileiro* artists, authors, government officials, and community leaders gained mainstream prominence, making Japanese culture appear exotic, or at the least, benign (Tsuda 2001). As they became highly skilled and urbanized, the socio-economic status of the community rose (Tsuda 2001; Adachi 2006). The rate of inter-ethnic

marriages outside the community also increased in the urban areas, leading to the categorization of *jun-nisei* or 'quasi-*nisei*', who were the children of mixed marriages.

With ascending socio-political mobility in Brazil, many aspects of Japanese culture were lost among the *sansei* and fourth generation *yonsei*, who had grown up in the cities. The loss of Japanese language skills was also acute, virtually absent in successive generations. Only 2.6 percent *yonsei* and 35.2 percent *sansei* spoke Japanese, compared to 88.8 percent *issei* and 61.8 percent *nisei*, showing progressive decline. Fewer than 20 percent of the *sansei* could read Japanese, and among the *yonsei*, the figure was miniscule (World Bank 2008).

However, the community facilitated the spread of Japanese culture, martial arts, gastronomy, and Buddhism in Brazil through specialized organizations and groups. Judo and Aikido became popular, Japanese foods and recipes were adapted to tropical Brazil, and new agricultural techniques were developed. A segmented assimilation was thus achieved, wherein cultural ties to Japan were preserved through community organizations, along with direct participation in Brazilian society.

Since the 1980s, a growing Japanese subculture has emerged, particularly in the urban areas of São Paulo (Tsuda 2001; Adachi 2006; Calvo 2009). This was popularized through the efforts of a new set of people, who may or may not possess Japanese ethnicity, but were followers of Japanese cultural practices like manga, J-pop, Japanese martial arts, and other cultural traditions. Japanese culture saw resurgence amongst *nipo-brasileiro* youth, who began asserting the positive aspects of their Japanese identity. There was a rising interest in Japanese language, art forms and philosophies within the community in Brazil, at a pace concomitant with the *dekasegi* migration to Japan.

Social remittances transferred by the *dekasegis* may be partly responsible for this trend since the 1980s. With almost one-eighth of all *nipo-brasileiro* living in Japan by 2007, the community strength significantly reduced in Brazil. At the peak of the *dekasegi* phenomenon, almost 20 percent of

the *nipo-brasileiros* were in Japan (Goto 2007).

The *decasse' gui* (in Portuguese) migration to Japan geographically fragmented the community, but led to the construction of transnational networks across geopolitical borders. As these networks strengthened, primarily to facilitate the labor migration to Japan, they affected the culture and identity of the *nipo-brasileiro* community in Brazil and led to the dissemination of Japanese culture in Brazilian society.

Dekasegi Migration to Japan

Around ten percent of all *nipo-brasileiros* are estimated to be in Japan, where these immigrants come under the category of '*dekasegi*' or *nikkei* temporary workers (Goto 2007; Takenoshita 2014). They are the second largest Brazilian diaspora in the world but constitute a very small minority in Japan. The *nipo-brasileiro* population in Japan peaked at 312,582 in 2006 (Goto 2007; Nishida 2014). Their numbers came down after the 2008 global recession and the tsunami and nuclear disaster in Japan. Despite the precarious nature of the labor migration, transnational networks have ensured the stabilization of the community's numbers in Japan at close to 200,000 since 2014 (Japanese Ministry of Justice).

A pattern of circular migration has been observed, along with the development of *nipo-brasileiro* clusters in Japan (Goto 2007). Within these enclaves, community-oriented establishments and services continued to survive despite the flux in the number of migrants. Some of the *dekasegi* also turned into long-term settlers or permanent residents in Japan, bringing along their families and children.

Families settling for longer durations produced new social patterns and the community became more cohesive. With increasing social capital, *nipo-brasileiro* enclaves with vibrant Brazilian culture began to emerge in Japan. Concentration clusters came up in cities like Hamamatsu, Toyota, Toyohashi and Oizumi, where a large number of *dekasegi* were employed in the manufacturing industry. In areas where the *nipo-brasileiro* population was significant, Brazilian cultural impact was noticeable, as was the

discrimination by the native Japanese (Goto 2007; Tsuda 2001).

The *nipo-brasileiros* in Japan were so clustered because many housing societies did not accept them as tenants due to cultural prejudices of the Japanese owners. Brazilian cultural traits like organizing samba and music late into the night could create problems with Japanese neighbors. The differences in socio-cultural practices were so significant that the *nipo-brasileiros'* notions of Japanese ethnicity were fundamentally challenged in Japan. Here, they were viewed as '*gaijin*' or foreigners from a third world country, who were forced to return to the land of their ancestors after failing to prosper in Brazil. They were thus not held in high esteem and were viewed as inferior by the native Japanese (Tsuda 2001; Adachi 2006; Goto 2007).

The *nipo-brasileiros* were also relegated to the secondary job market in Japan, despite many of them possessing professional skills with experience of white-collar jobs in Brazil. This not only affected their class status, but also led to discrimination, strained relationships, and social tensions in extreme cases. This resulted in the alienation of the *nipo-brasileiro* community in Japan, giving rise to a "deterritorialized Brazilian nationalism" (Tsuda 2001). By embracing Brazilian culture in Japan, the *nipo-brasileiros* emphasized their cultural distinctiveness from the Japanese. As per Adachi (2006), "Nikkei discover their non-Japaneseness – their differences rather than their similarities – in Japan."

Brazilian foods, national events, samba and carnival became popular in the community clusters. In cities like Tokyo and Ôizumi, where the Brazilian carnival was organized since 1991, there was large participation of *nipo-brasileiro* samba troupes and local Japanese. These were manifestations of a Brazilian identity, which may not have been displayed by the community in Brazil (Tsuda 2001).

The *nipo-brasileiros* thus formed tightly knit communities in Japan and maintained their cultural distinctiveness. For the adults in secondary sector jobs, contact with native Japanese - at the workplace, housing sites, or public spaces - was

markedly low (Tsuda 2001; Carvalho 2003). However, an increasing number of *nipo-brasileiro* children were studying in Japanese schools, where many performed poorly with a high level of absenteeism due to linguistic difficulties and discrimination based on their class background and third world country status. Compared to 99.9 percent school enrollment among native Japanese children, almost 25% of *nikkei* children (including from Peru and Bolivia) were out of school in Japan (Goto 2007). There were reports of bullying, dropouts, and juvenile delinquency covered in Japanese media. Some *nipo-brasileiro* teenagers joined factory work or were sent back to Brazil (Tsuda 2001; Goto 2007; Revista).

The Brazilian *dekasegi* largely found themselves isolated in Japanese society. Despite some familiarity, they were not well versed with contemporary Japanese culture and language. They thus displayed a deterritorialized Brazilian nationalism and expressed a sense of '*saudades*' or longing for Brazil.

While those in Japan demonstrated a renewed Brazilian identity, the community in Brazil rediscovered its Japaneseness. The enhanced transnational mobility of not just labor, but also ideas and culture, was channeled through organizations involved with the *nipo-brasileiros* in both countries. The migration thus reinforced a hyphenated cultural identity among the spatially fragmented *nipo-brasileiro* community.

Community Organizations and Cultural Exchange

The two-way flow of social remittances affects *nipo-brasileiro* culture and identity in Brazil and Japan. In Brazil, *nipo-brasileiros* may be called '*Japonês*' or 'Japanese'. This is, however, not always considered derogatory (Lesser 1999). In fact, with the *dekasegi* migration, a renewed interest in Japanese culture has been noticed among the *nipo-brasileiro* youth in Brazil. Several influential community organizations continue to carry forward Japanese cultural traditions, folk practices, Buddhist rituals, and celebrations dedicated to the Imperial family. These organizations are also vital for the maintenance of cross-border networks through transnational affiliations and

collaborations with Japan-based organizations.

Transnational networks, which help in the diffusion of cultures, are also mutually dependent on the organizations involved with the *nipo-brasileiros*. These include the *nipo-brasileiro* community organizations as well as certain Japanese state and non-state entities.

The *nipo-brasileiros* always maintained strong diasporic ties with Japan. Community organizations, often in coordination with Japanese entities, maintained traditional customs and cultural practices. The Japanese Diet started the *nikkei* friendship convention and an annual games competition in 1957. While catering to the diaspora worldwide, representation from Brazil was significant and increased with the *dekasegi* phenomenon. June 18th - the date of *Kasato Maru's* landing in Brazil - was declared the 'International Migration Day' in 1966. It is marked as the 'Day of Japanese Emigration' by *nipo-brasileiro* organizations, in collaboration with the Japanese consulate and other Japanese organizations. The 'International *Nikkei* Day' is organized on June 20. These 'official' days are celebrated by the community organizations as a means to preserve the bond with Japan.

Both civil society and state-sponsored entities have thus facilitated cultural exchanges between Japan and Brazil. Such organizations are community-oriented and active in the fields of education, research, philanthropy, art and culture.

BUNKYO

Among the main *nipo-brasileiro* organizations in Brazil is the mutual assistance society *Bunkyo* (Brazilian Society of Japanese Culture and Social Assistance), established in 1955 in São Paulo. While mainly a social arena for community members, it historically laid emphasis on a strong Japanese ethnic heritage. Its literary and cultural wing *Brasil Nikkei Bungaku* was founded in 1966. *Bunkyo* later emerged as an umbrella organization to various other associations and bodies engaged in different types of socio-cultural activities involving the *nipo-brasileiros*. *Bunkyo* has transnational linkages with Japan-based organizations as well, which are regularly represented at its community forums.

Ever since its founding, Bunkyo has been a compulsory stop for most of the high-level Japanese delegations that visit Brazil. Crown Prince Akihito attended the inauguration of the Japanese Immigration History Museum at Bunkyo in 1978. Along with the preservation of the history of the *nipo-brasileiro* community, this museum was also a step towards the promotion of the inter-state relationship between Japan and Brazil. Brazilian President Geisel also became a part of the ceremony, marking the importance of the Japanese community in Brazil.

Several among the Japanese royalty have since visited Bunkyo, including Crown Prince Naruhito (then Prince Hiroyomiya) in 1982 and 2002 (on the occasion of the centenary of the migration to Brazil), Princess Sayako in 1995 (to mark 100 years of the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation), and the historic visit of Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko in 1997. More recently, in 2015, Prince Akishino and Princess Kiko came to commemorate 120 years of the Brazil-Japan exchange. Princess Mako visited in 2018 for the 110th year of Japanese immigration to Brazil. From the government, Japanese prime ministers - Ryutaro Hashimoto (1996), Junichiro Koizumi (2000) and Shinzo Abe (2014) have all visited the cultural center, besides many other ministers and leaders. The Japanese Consulate has a close relationship with Bunkyo, with high-level representatives in attendance for many of the socio-cultural events.

In 1996, Bunkyo started a course on the Japanese language along with ASEBEX (Brazilian Association of Former Scholars), which is now run by the Aliança Cultural Brasil-Japão (since 2004). The following year, the first *Sakura Matsuri* or the famous cherry blossom festival of Japan was replicated by Bunkyo.

The Bunkyo's relationship with the larger *nipo-brasileiro* community and its future were taken up at a symposium in 2005. Bunkyo seeks to integrate the various *nipo-brasileiro* organizations in other regions of Brazil and in Japan under its overarching arms. Its Institutional Relations Committee coordinates between numerous *nipo-brasileiro* associations, leagues and federations spread out over Brazil and provides

them assistance. Another stated task of the committee is to facilitate and promote exchanges with Japan's political, government and business sectors.

Interest in the *dekasegi* phenomenon is also demonstrated through events held through the society. A symposium on the future of the community with respect to the Brazil-Japan migration was held as early as in 1995. Bunkyo has also increased its engagement with Japanese entities like the *Kaigai Nikkeijin Kyokaito* assist the *dekasegi* in Japan.

Coinciding with the *dekasegi* migration, a renewed interest in Japanese culture has been witnessed among the younger generation of *nipo-brasileiros*. However, it is important to note that Japanese ancestry and *nikkei* status is not a definitive criteria for membership of Bunkyo, but an interest in knowledge of Japanese history, culture and society.

Bunkyo highlights Japanese culture in Brazil as well as the historical and cultural contributions of the *nipo-brasileiro* community. Preservation of *nipo-brasileiro* history and the linkages with Japan feature heavily in its operational activities. It thus promotes exchanges between the two countries and the strengthening of transnational networks.

CIATE

Among Bunkyo's affiliates is the São Paulo-based Center for Information and Support for Workers Abroad (CIATE), dedicated to providing assistance to *nipo-brasileiros* towards facilitating their movement between Japan and Brazil. In existence since 1992, it is a non-profit civil society organization that offers information and logistical support to potential *dekasegi*. However, some of its main activities revolve around socio-cultural education, often the re-education of Japanese culture to Japan-bound *dekasegi*.

For its functioning, CIATE is supported by the Association of Japanese and Nikkei Residents Abroad or the *Kaigai Nikkeijin Kyokai* - an important Japan-based organization catering to the *nikkeijin*. It has official patronage and is recognized by both the governments of Brazil and Japan.

CIATE helps to facilitate the transnational migration between Japan and Brazil. The organization not only offers

assistance to potential migrants who intend to travel to Japan for employment, it also guides the *dekasegi* in Japan, in coordination with the *Kaigai Nikkeijin Kyokai*.

It acts as a forum for the dissemination of useful and practical knowledge on issues like the avoidance of double taxation, income tax and social security mechanisms in the two countries, as well as employment and recruitment processes. Other benefits and strategies available to migrant labor in Japan, including for periods of unemployment, insurance in case of health/accidental emergencies, and potential for retirement refund, are also discussed through the platform.

CIATE's lectures and other activities reflect the idea that the migration to Japan may be temporary in nature. Migrants often return back to Brazil or shuttle between the two countries, at times even moving beyond the two destinations (Rocha 2010). In this aspect, CIATE holds special courses led by professionals to advise on prospects for relocating back to the Brazilian labor market after a stint in Japan, and the shifting of goals and perspectives upon return.

While migration to Japan is considered temporary, the importance of retaining a *nikkei* identity remains. CIATE indulges in the propagation of Japanese cultural and social history, along with familiarizing its audience with contemporary facets of Japanese society. To this effect, many international symposia have been organized by CIATE, also giving voice to *nipo-brasileiros* and their experiences as *dekasegi*.

KENREN

Another crucial community organization is KENREN - a federation of the prefectural (Japanese provinces) associations of the *nipo-brasileiros* in Brazil that links them to the prefecture of their ancestors in Japan. It is one of the main representative organizations of the *nipo-brasileiros* and coordinates transnational engagement between the *nipo-brasileiro* community and public or private actors in Japan. The need for such an organization was felt due to the reduced role played by the Japanese state in organizing the lives of *nipo-brasileiros* following the withdrawal of the Japanese consulate from São Paulo and Japan's defeat to the Allied

powers in the Second World War.

KENREN has been responsible for several cultural projects of the *nipo-brasileiro* community, dedicated to keeping the history of the group alive. It has commissioned the construction of a memorial paying homage to the pioneer Japanese immigrants to Brazil and a monument symbolizing the arrival of the first Japanese in Brazil in 1908 at the port city of Santos. With a view to preserving the memory of the immigration, KENREN started organizing visits to important sites marking the growth of the *Nikkei* community in Brazil. This was commenced in 1988 during the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the Japanese migration to Brazil.

In the same year, KENREN organized a similar visit to Peru, revealing consciousness of a transnational network of *nikkei*. In another example of such transnational engagement, in 2001, KENREN participated in the inauguration of a monument dedicated to the Japanese migration to Brazil built in the port city of Kobe from where the first migrants had set sail in 1908. Such cross-border ventures and ties reflect the transnational perspective of the organization and its wide network linkages. KENREN has attempted to further intensify these ties and bonds of friendship with similar entities in Japan as well as various Japanese prefectural governments.

At the same time, it has also been active in community engagement in Brazil in order to popularize Japanese culture among *nipo-brasileiros* and others. Amongst its main events is the annual Festival do Japão (Festival of Japan), which showcases the regional gastronomical and cultural traditions of Japan. These traditions have been inherited by the descendants of the Japanese immigrants but have also fused with Brazilian elements.

The first Festival of Japan (Festival of Regional Delicacies and Regional Folklore of Japan) was organized by KENREN in São Paulo in 1998, marking the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the Japanese immigration. Over the years, the festival has contributed greatly to the buildup of social capital within the group, useful for facilitating a strong network as *nipo-brasileiros* meet and exchange information and contacts. It also contributed to the spread of Japanese

culture and the re-awakening of a partial Japanese identity, which may lead to a stronger awareness of transnational linkages. The festival itself produces a kind of transnational spaciousness where both Japan and Brazil exist.

Earlier the independent effort of the *nipo-brasileiro* community in Brazil led by KENREN, the Japanese state now places its official stamp on the event. Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was requested by a delegation of KENREN during his visit to Brazil in 2014 for direct support and participation of the Japanese government in the festival. A formal request was also later sent to the Department of Central America in the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was officially recognized by the State of São Paulo in 2002, and is now the largest community event of the *nipo-brasileiros* in Brazil.

The Japanese government officially collaborated with KENREN for the 18th Festival of Japan, organized on the theme of Brazil-Japan friendship in commemoration of the 120th anniversary of the signing of the Brazil-Japan Friendship Treaty. It was supported by the Ministry of Culture, São Paulo Expo, São Paulo City Hall, São Paulo Turismo, CET, Military Police, São Paulo State Department of Culture, São Paulo State Department of Tourism and PROAC. Influential community members and organizations were also involved. It has been considered the largest Japanese cultural event in the world with the participation of around 150,000 people between July 24-26 at the São Paulo Expo Exhibition & Convention Center.

KENREN has further diversified its activities and today remains the primary nation-wide association of the *nipo-brasileiros* in Brazil. Through its many activities, it attempts to bring *kenjinkai* from different Japanese prefectures together on special events and royal celebrations, disseminating Japanese culture and etiquette and building a transnational association. It especially promotes transnational exchange and cooperation in the field of culture, education and human resource building.

KENREN has also placed great emphasis on transnational association with Japan and its government authorities, which may have repercussions on several aspects of *nipo-brasileiro*

society. The organization expressly promotes an everlasting partnership with Japan.

Events organized by KENREN have brought together representatives from various Japanese entities like JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization), MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries), Japan Foundation, Consulate General of Japan in São Paulo, and the JNTO (Japan National Tourism Organization).

KENREN, in partnership with the Japanese-Brazilian Studies Center, conducted a field study on 'the current situation of Japanese communities in Brazil - a country of multicultural society'. The study based on 436 *nikkei* provincial associations was concluded in 2018. As per its findings, the concentration of *nipo-brasileiro* associations was the highest in the state of São Paulo (58%). In São Paulo city alone, there are 44 organizations (10%). The other states with a high number of *nipo-brasileiro* associations are Paraná with 77 (18%), Mato Grosso do Sul with 23 (5%), Rio de Janeiro (19), Minas Gerais (12), Bahia (10), Santa Catarina (9) and Pará (6).

Conclusion

These *nipo-brasileiro* associations contribute to the build up of shared social and cultural capital of the community in Brazil and Japan. Increased transnational cultural exchange and influence since the 1980s has impacted these organizations, leading to new roles, affiliations and linkages.

While the structure and funding of these organizations varies, most have overlapping interests towards which their activities are driven. They influence culture and identity through education, research, seminars, festivals, artistic productions, and other forms of community engagement, as well as by forming transnational linkages with Japan. The activities of these organizations also reflect the evolving needs of the *nipo-brasileiro* migrant workers.

Japan-based entities have also attempted to engage with the *nipo-brasileiro* community in Brazil, particularly in the fields of culture and education. The Japanese state

has sponsored much of this outreach due to the perceived importance of the *nipo-brasileiros* for the strengthening of the Japan-Brazil relationship. The community has thus acted as a bridge between cultures, facilitating mutual enrichment through transnational mobility and exchange.

Japan House in São Paulo is a community outreach effort of the Japanese state with the objective to promote Japanese culture in Brazil. It has increased the prestige associated with Japanese cultural identity and promoted the transnational engagement of the *nipo-brasileiro* community. As a cultural forum, it has enhanced the image of Japan by showcasing sophisticated Japanese culture.

Another important Japanese organization which engages the community is the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). It is active in the fields of transnational educational exchanges and development partnerships in the private sector. JICA is also involved in an array of projects with the Brazilian government and other state authorities. Such Japanese entities have the potential to affect the *nipo-brasileiros*' cultural sphere, leading to a transnational consciousness and dual identity.

Intersecting ties between *nipo-brasileiro* organizations and Japanese entities have contributed to the construction and sustenance of transnational networks through which cultural practices are diffused. Transnational collaborations with the Japanese state authorities at the regional, prefectural and local levels have also been noted.

Such transnational linkages have increased post the *dekasegi* migration, leading to accelerated cultural flows. While there is rising interest in Japanese culture and language in Brazil, the *dekasegi* re-assert their Brazilian identity in Japan. Hybrid cultural forms have emerged within the *nipo-brasileiro* ethnic enclaves in both countries, built on cross-border ties. Transnational networks have thus impacted the community organizations and expressions of cultural identity.

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The GRFDT works as an academic and policy think tank by engaging national and international experts from academics, practitioners and policy makers in a broad range of areas such as migration policies, transnational linkages of development, human rights, culture, gender to mention a few. In the changing global environment of academic research and policy making, the role of GRFDT will be of immense help to the various stakeholders. Many developing countries cannot afford to miss the opportunity to harness the knowledge revolution of the present era. The engagement of diaspora with various platform need to be reassessed in the present context to engage them in the best possible manner for the development human societies by providing policy in-put at the national and global context.