

BETWEEN TENSIONS, STEREOTYPES, AND SCISIONS: THE JAPANESE IDENTITY IN BRAZIL AND ITS REPRESENTATION IN MUSIC

DOI
10.11606/issn.2525-3123.
gis.2023.200162

ORCID
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4555-9011>

FLÁVIO RODRIGUES

Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Campinas, SP, Brazil,
13083-854 – ppgmus@iar.unicamp.br

ABSTRACT

The trajectory of Japanese immigrants in Brazil is marked by a series of tensions, stereotypes, and divisions within the community about its identity. However, the discussions about Japaneseness and Brazilianness among descendants gain new contours and reach new arenas with the use of the arts. In this study, we will approach aspects of the Japanese trajectory in Brazil, the formation of different conceptions and ethnic relations, and we will discuss examples of how each of these groups uses music as a tool for affirming nationality and as a platform for dialogue. We will also emphasize the political division intrinsic to these movements and how social networks have allowed the emergence of new voices in the debate, interviewing militant artists active in the construction of these spaces.

KEYWORDS

Japanese immigration;
Ethnic-racial identities;
Asian representation;
Music

INTRODUCTION

She said I kept spreading diseases to everyone and called me disgusting. There was a moment when I was already going to the escalator and she was following me through the subway

window and giving me the middle finger, apparently screaming various things. She was in a total state of fury and out of control just with my presence. (Moreira 2020, 1)¹ [Report by student Marie Okabayashi de Castro Lemos (23), of Japanese descent, in an episode that occurred in the Rio de Janeiro subway in February 2020].

The COVID-19 pandemic, which reached the world and left a series of health, social, and economic challenges as a legacy, also brought to light an old and silent conflict, often muffled and disguised as “humor,” which reflects the way in which several individuals see the presence of Asian descendants in Brazil. The above report, a clear expression of prejudice and xenophobia, joins many others shared in reports and on social networks during this period and show how Brazilians with an Asian phenotype can be seen as “the other to be fought” in their own country, in line with the interests of a whiteness built as a standard and free of problems (Urbano and Melo 2018).

These tensions and the notion of Brazilians of Asian descent as “non-Brazilians,” likewise, also resonate in their representation in media vehicles, which shows little or no visibility in telenovelas, films, commercials, series, among other productions and, when they get an opportunity, their appearance is usually marked by recurring stereotypes:

In national teledramaturgy, for example, actors of oriental origin only get caricatured roles that refer to the Japanese/Asian stereotype, such as street vendors and confectioners or technology aficionados, martial arts practitioners and sushi sellers, geisha and samurai. In tests for a role on television, there are reports of actors who are forced to force a “Japanese accent,” even though the Japanese community is in the fifth generation in Brazil. An oriental actor hardly gets a role that is not related to his ethnic origin, which is enhanced in these representations. (Urbano and Melo 2018, 3)² However, despite their timid presence in these productions, Brazilians of Japanese descent, specifically, enjoy a certain

1. “Ela falou que eu ficava espalhando doenças para todos e me chamou de nojenta. Teve um momento em que eu já estava indo para a escada rolante e ela ficou me acompanhando pela janela do metrô e me mostrando o dedo do meio, aparentemente berrando várias coisas. Ela estava em total estado de fúria e descontrole apenas com a minha presença.”

2. “Na teledramaturgia nacional, por exemplo, atores de origem oriental apenas conseguem papéis caricatos e que remetem ao estereótipo do japonês/asiático, como de feirantes e pasteleiros ou de aficionados por tecnologia, praticantes de artes marciais e vendedores de sushi, gueixas e samurais. Em testes para um papel na televisão, há relatos de atores que são obrigados a forçar um “sotaque japonês”, mesmo estando a comunidade nipônica na quinta geração no Brasil. Dificilmente um ator oriental consegue um papel que não tenha relação com a sua origem étnica, que é potencializada nessas representações.”

social prestige different from other Asians and minorities such as Blacks and Indians in the country. An example is the report by the online portal *Gazeta do Povo*, a platform for publishing news and columns from the newspaper of the same name in Paraná, which published, in 2018, an article with the following title: “Japanese descendants are more intelligent; cultural heritage explains” (Azevedo 2018).³ The text, signed by the journalist Rodrigo Azevedo, makes such a statement based on a study that evaluated the performance of Brazilian students in mathematics based on the origin of their surnames. According to the research, “the study concluded that descendants of Japanese grandparents and great-grandparents residing in Brazil are one year ahead of those of Iberian ancestry in mathematics.” Ignoring socio-economic factors and using only surnames as a selection, the survey mentioned in the article seems limited to generate such conclusive statements, but it helps to exemplify how expectations are generated about Japanese descendants and their places of occupation in Brazilian society, where they are exalted when they fulfill these expectations and disowned in other spaces. Anthropologist Alexandre Kishimoto (*apud* Ito 2020), member of the Asian-Brazilian Studies group, in an interview with Trip, exemplifies:[...] two years ago, the current president [Jair Bolsonaro] was praising the Japanese during an event, making comparisons with refugees who were arriving in Brazil [at the time, he said: “Has anyone seen any Japanese begging? It is a race that has its act together!”]. Two years later, he completely changes his tone with Thais Oyama, because she dared to criticize his government. When the Asian breaks the expectation of “docile” and “orderly” that is made of him, racism comes to the fore. (Kishimoto *apud* Ito 2020, 8)⁴

Thus, Japanese descendants born in Brazil often have to deal with such contradictions in their daily lives, in a scenario that ends up creating different postures regarding ideas of identity and belonging. Therefore, some remain closely linked to organized communities, exercising associative work and activities linked to the Japanese tradition in different spheres, basing much of their social life in these spaces. At the same time,

3. “Descendentes de japoneses são mais inteligentes; herança cultural explica.”

4. “[...] há dois anos, o atual presidente [Jair Bolsonaro] ficou enaltecendo os japoneses durante um evento, fazendo comparações com refugiados que estavam chegando no Brasil [na ocasião, ele disse: “Alguém já viu algum japonês pedindo esmola? É uma raça que tem vergonha na cara!”]. Dois anos depois, ele muda completamente o tom com a Thaís Oyama, porque ela ousou criticar seu governo. Quando o asiático quebra a expectativa de “dócil” e “ordeiro” que se faz dele, o racismo vem à tona.”

others will feel more comfortable in assuming a “hybrid” stance regarding their ethnicity, sporadically participating in community activities and/or maintaining only some aspects of Japanese culture in their daily lives, such as certain foods or religious rituals, while also reaffirming aspects of their Brazilian origin and frequenting various social spaces. Finally, a younger group seems to emerge with a more emphatic discourse in affirming their Brazilian identity. They have no connection with the associations and/or reject their speeches, grew up in homes without Japanese traditions and/or do not feel represented by them and better identify with aspects related to Brazilian identity than Asian. They will all generally be called “Japanese” by Brazilian society but will deal with these dilemmas in a different way, reaping the burdens and bonuses of these preconceived views in their areas of professional activity and in their social relationships.

This work, therefore, proposes to discuss these different Japanesenesses, or ways of “being Japanese” in Brazil, seen here as multiple and complex, with contradictions, inconsistencies, and dissonances of imprecise contours. According to researcher Igor José de Renó Machado (2011):


The Japaneseness seen as multiple allows us not to analyze the conditions of these subjects as “less or more” Japanese, but as Japanese in their own way. This does not mean that there are no hegemonic processes (there are) and that the Japanese themselves do not refer to their “co-ethnics” as more or less Japanese. They do it very often, and they do it from perspectives referring to their ways of being Japanese. [...] they do so based on different criteria, related to their specific ontologies. (Machado 2011, 15)⁵

In view of these multiple possible worldviews, which build their own signs, practices, and stereotypes, I will use three different ways of referring to Japanese descendants born in Brazil: they are the terms “*Nikkei*”,⁶ “Nippo-Brazilian,” and “Brazilian yellow” or “yellow”.⁷ The first two, widely used in the communities themselves and in the consecrated bibliography on the subject, are often used as synonyms. However, here, we will emphasize the ideological distinction behind each of these nomenclatures,

5. “A japonesidade vista como múltipla permite que não analisemos as condições desses sujeitos como “menos ou mais” japonesas, mas como japonesas à sua maneira. Isso não quer dizer que não haja processos hegemônicos (os há) e que os próprios japoneses não se refiram a seus “co-étnicos” como mais ou menos japoneses. Eles o fazem muito frequentemente, e o fazem a partir de perspectivas referentes aos seus modos de ser japônês. [...] o fazem a partir de critérios distintos, relativos às suas ontologias específicas.”

6. Also called *Nikkeijin*. Also spelled *Nikkey*.

7. In Brazil, in general, the term “yellow” does not have the same racist connotation as in other parts of the world, such as in the United States of America. Here, the use of the term resembles that of the term “black” for people of African descent.



highlighting the difference in the use of a Japanese term and an hyphenated one. In the case of the term “yellow Brazilian” or “yellow,” used by descendants who claim their Brazilianness, we will respect this denomination when dealing specifically with this group.

TRAJECTORIES BETWEEN STEREOTYPES AND TENSIONS

According to data from the Consulate General of Japan in São Paulo, approximately 1.5 million Japanese and descendants reside in Brazil, the largest population outside Japan (Hatugai 2018), people from different origins, histories, races, and trajectories. Therefore, when we convey assertions that “the Japanese are intelligent” or “the Japanese are hardworking,” although masked by an idea of exaltation and praise, we need to ask ourselves: which Japanese are we talking about? Or even: which Brazilians are we talking about?

To answer this question, we need to go back to some important facts about immigration in Brazil. In 1908, the *Kasato Maru*, which brought the first wave of Japanese immigrants to work in Brazilian lands, docked in the Port of Santos. The immigration was seen as beneficial for both nations: on the one hand, Japan, which was experiencing serious economic and demographic problems, offered an alternative for its population, with promises of wealth and great opportunities; on the other hand, Brazil, which needed to overcome labor shortage, mainly in its coffee plantations, previously attended by slaves, saw in Asian workers a more “docile” workforce than Europeans. Thus, between 1908 and 1970, 250,000 Japanese immigrated to Brazil, settling mainly in the southeastern region of the country. A striking feature of this process, which differentiates it from others, is that entire families were sent to the country, not just young males. The requirement was that the Japanese family applying for immigration be composed of at least three people able to work, without banning other members that did not meet the required conditions from accompanying them. Thus, the Japanese community in Brazil had a demographic balance, with children, adults, and older people of both sexes, from all regions of Japan, arriving in the country (Sakurai 2007).

From the beginning, Japanese immigrants had a series of conflicts with the Brazilian society. Cultural differences and geographic isolation are pointed out as key factors for the non-incorporation of the Japanese into the ideal of nation widespread in Brazil. On the other hand, immigrants were willing to maintain their Japanese *ethos* and transmit these values and customs to their children, so that they could return to Japan and not be seen as foreigners (*gaijin*). Therefore, they needed to learn the traditions and to read and speak the Japanese language (Rossini 2005, Hatugai 2021).

It is no coincidence that the first associations of Japanese people in Brazil soon appeared. The associative model was a survival tool and defense of immigrants' interests. In addition to the need for Japanese language schools for young people and socialization and leisure for all, the associations allowed many Japanese to have better credit conditions and sell their production better, thus having some social ascension (Sakurai 2007).

With the birth of the children of Japanese immigrants in foreign lands, a name for them was also born, which spread throughout America: *Nikkei*. The creation of a specific term, in Japanese, to name the child of an immigrant in another country, shows the desire to keep alive these families' ties with the Japanese ethnic group. "Such category allows us to think of theoretical models of the 'return to the motherland' diaspora, since, by legal provisions, they would all be children of the great Japanese nation" (Kebbe 2014, 74).⁸ The Japanese State, therefore, is seen as the great "House", and the *Nikkei* is a demonstration of this ideological device. However, over the years and with the plan of many Japanese families to return to Japan being frustrated, immigrants and their descendants and sectors of Brazilian society began to claim for greater integration, without losing the ties with Japanese culture. Thus the idea of a family of transmigrants was born:

[...] transmigrants are migrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections that cross international borders and whose public identities are configured in a relationship with more than one nation-state, that is, they create cultural, social, political, and even economic links both with the receiving nation and the originating nation. (Machado, Kebbe and Silva 2008, 85 to 86)⁹

Thus, the idea of a hyphenated ethnicity gains strength: the Nippo-Brazilian. The exaltation of this integration between Brazil and Japan began to be spread even by members of the Brazilian government. In an interview in 1935, Minister Pedro Aurélio de Góis Monteiro, an important figure in the Vargas administration, declared that "[i]n order to form an excellent Brazilian type, I consider it necessary to adopt the excellent Japanese element" (Lesser 1999, 127). Following this thought, in 1939, the Nippo-Brazilians Students League founded the magazine *Transição* (Transition), which brings in its editorial of June of the same year:

8. "Tal categoria nos permite pensar em modelos teóricos de diáspora do 'retorno à pátria-mãe', uma vez que, pelos dispositivos legais, todos seriam filhos da grande nação japonesa."


9. "[...] transmigrantes são migrantes cujas vidas cotidianas dependem de múltiplas e constantes interconexões que cruzam fronteiras internacionais e cujas identidades públicas são configuradas em relacionamento com mais de um Estado-nação, ou seja, criam vínculos culturais, sociais, políticos e até mesmo econômicos tanto com a nação receptora quanto com a nação de origem."

We, Brazilian children of Japanese, are in transition. A transition between what was and what will be. A transition between the East and the West [...] It is the understanding of our parents, the Japanese, by our brothers, the Brazilians, by a common language, Brazilian. The harmonization of two civilizations, apparently antagonistic. The fusion, in an ideal, of mutual comprehension, of the inherent qualities in each. In the end, we are Brazilians conscious and proud of our land and that of our parents. (Lesser 1999, 130 to 131)

However, the defense of this apparent “fusion” between Japanese and Brazilians is largely due to the growing need to alleviate conflicts between Brazilians and Japanese immigrants and their descendants. The nationalist project of the Vargas government saw in the resistance of the Japanese communities in adhering to the imposed models of Brazilianness a threat to national security. There was fear of the so-called “Yellow Peril,” spread mainly in the United States, which preached distrust of immigrants who could be, secretly, at the service of Japanese imperialism. The refusal of many immigrants and descendants to form families outside the colony and a certain “racial pride” and feeling of superiority contributed to perpetuate this division. The hostility between Japanese and Brazilians reached its apex with the beginning of World War II, when the Brazilian government decreed a series of restrictions on citizens from Axis nations,¹⁰ including the Japanese (Sakurai 2007), and extended to after it, with conflicts caused by organized groups that did not accept the emperor’s defeat and began to act violently in the country. The best known in Brazil was the Shindo Renmei, a secret society that became public in 1945, which had former Japanese soldiers among its members and claimed a permanent space for the Japanese in Brazil, where they would preserve their language, culture, and religion. To cool down such conflicts that made the life of immigrants and descendants even more difficult on Brazilian soil, art, already in this period, was used as a way of trying to propagate an idea of reconciliation. One example was the release of the 1956 film *Peace returns in the Time of Shindo Renmei*.¹¹ The production sought to restore friendships with Brazilian society, proposing that the Japanese help the Brazilian economy to prosper. The film even entered the commercial circuit in the interior of the state of São Paulo (Lesser 1999). After the war, Japanese descendants in Brazil had their freedom of worship and language again respected. They then went through a process of greater integration, with many coming to live in cities, becoming self-employed, and occupying university chairs. From the mid-1970s, greater participation in Brazilian society gained strength with the dissemination of the idea of the “model

10. Military alliance signed between Germany, Italy, and Japan during the conflicts of World War II.

11. “E a paz volta a reinar na época do Shindo Renmei,” in the original.



minority,” which originated in the United States with the publication of an article in *The New York Times*, in January 1966. Signed by professor of sociology at the University of California, William Pettersen (1966), the article extolled the resilience of Japanese immigrants and descendants who, even suffering from their “non-white” status, overcame difficulties by dedicating themselves to education and accepting American values. In several moments of the article, they are directly compared with other minorities such as blacks and Latinos, such as when it brings data on criminality: “By any criterion of good citizenship that we choose, the Japanese Americans are better than any other group in our society, including native-born whites” (Pettersen 1966). The publication of the article in the newspaper of great circulation soon gained prominence and was followed by others in the subsequent years. The creation of the “model minority” conception and the descendants of Japanese immigrants adhering to the so-called *American Way of Life*, was a direct reflection of the narrative created around the country’s surrender in World War II, which sought both to weaken tensions with the Asian country after years of conflict and imperialist threats and to prevent Japanese descendants, benefited by the positive stereotype, from taking sides in the disputes waged by the civil rights movement of black Americans (Igarashi 2000).

The Brazilian dictatorial government and the São Paulo elite appropriated this “model minority” narrative and Japan’s rapid economic rise and transformed the image of immigrants and descendants in the country. The association with industrial power and Japanese social models sought to reaffirm the state of São Paulo as better than other Brazilian states. This caused Nippo-Brazilians to change their racial status: instead of being considered yellow, they were seen as whiter than the Portuguese. However, unlike European immigrants and descendants who could more easily adhere to an ideal of Brazilian identity, the Japanese and their phenotype were always seen as “others,” with their desirable characteristics and undesirable stereotypes (Lesser 2007).

THE SEARCH FOR TRADITION IN COMMUNITIES AND COMMERCIAL MUSIC IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NIPPO-BRAZILIAN NARRATIVES

Performing activities can be important tools for creating locality, identity, and cohesion within communities. In these contexts, music, as a sign, has the power to express different social alignments, group ideas, or positions in the world, and can generate pleasurable engagement among its musicians, making the practice determinant in the conception of a sense of belonging (Turino 2008). This is largely due to the ability of these performance activities to mobilize expectations of representation and manipulate self-images (Hikiji 2005). No wonder, musical practices

are part of everyday life in many organized communities of Japanese descent. Activities such as *taiko*,¹² *karaoke*, *bon odori*,¹³ *koto*,¹⁴ among others, are widely disseminated and encouraged and evoke an idea of Japaneseness among its practitioners, even those who have never visited the Asian archipelago. Therefore, a notion of cultural identity is created by the conception that it is linked to a collective “true self,” hidden within each of us and which we passionately seek, according to Frantz Fanon (1963), in the “hope of discovering beyond the misery of today” (210). The promotion of Japanese cultural elements seems to reinforce a differentiation from aspects of what is understood as a Brazilian identity. The cultural production in these communities, therefore, rests on the idea of maintaining the Japanese *ethos*, reinforcing the *Nikkei*’s connection to a historical/ethnic past maintained by traditions and the repetition of ancient customs. Legitimacy is often based on learning about these manifestations from direct contact with Japanese *sensei*,¹⁵ who visit Brazilian communities and teach the “Japanese way” of materializing that art. Thus, we find the constant use of Japanese symbols (colored kimonos [*happi*], bandanas [*hachimaki*], writing in *kanji*, use of the “rising sun,” oriental scales, among others) and a circulation circuit of its own, restricted to the very associations, local, or regional festivals (often called “*matsuri*”). The practice of *taiko*, widespread in Brazil mainly from the year 2002, when the country received *sensei* Yukihiisa Oda due to an agreement signed with the Japan International Corporation Agency (JICA), is one of the examples that most gained prominence among the communities. Having spread across several associations and different Brazilian regions where Japanese immigration was established, percussive groups appropriated the construction of an image of Japanese strength and pride, based on the power of their instruments and martial movements, to create a manifestation of great appeal, especially among young people (Rodrigues 2020). According to researcher Rafael Garcia (2020):

Taiko, around here, has become, in recent decades, an important symbol of strength and ethnic reaffirmation among its Brazilian players, or as many call it the “Japanese spirit.” However, I believe that many groups are still discovering their real capacity for transformation and impact on the social fabric in which they are inserted, even if many are already doing it without realizing it. (Garcia 2020, 142)¹⁶

12. Percussive groups of Japanese drums.

13. Traditional round dance of the *obon* festivals.

14. Kind of traditional zither from Japan.

15. Commonly translated as “teacher.”

16. “O *taiko*, por aqui, tornou-se, nas últimas décadas, um importante símbolo de força e de reafirmação étnica entre seus tocadores brasileiros, ou como muitos chamam de ‘espírito japonês’. Contudo, acredito que muitos grupos estejam ainda descobrindo a sua real capacidade de transformação e impacto no tecido social na qual eles estão inseridos, mesmo que boa parte já o faz sem perceber.”

And he concludes: “Here then is the beauty of a [taiko] player: he is always telling a story or a tale of an imagined Japan, as if he were constantly looking through the window of the past in an attempt to rescue something in the present” (Garcia 2020, 143).¹⁷ Thus, we can see how musical performance acts as a construction tool for this *Nikkei* narrative, this ideal of Japanese identity and the connection with a past to be revived through music. There are examples, however, of artists who sought to create greater integration between the idea of Brazilianness and Japaneeseness through music and avoided acting exclusively in ethnic spaces, achieving some media projection. One of these groups is Zhen Brasil, “Os Japinhas do Pagode,” as they were called. Formed in 1998, the group uses a humorous approach to dealing with stereotypes associated with Japanese descendants, using samba and *pagode* as a language, rhythms typically associated with the Brazilian *ginga*, also mixing lyrics with texts in Japanese, Portuguese, and even Tupi, also using make-up and traditional clothing from the Japanese imagination (Lorenz 2007). The group came to perform in several popular television programs while it was active, until 2003, interpreting the song “Tem Purê no Tempurá”^{18, 19} where they emphasize, with good humor, a harmonious relationship between a Japanese man and a Brazilian woman, showing how cultures can merge without conflict in a family environment:

He took off his shoe as tradition dictates.
And she was already dancing around the house with her
feet bare
He made her *sake*, *miso*, and *sashimi*
And she put palm oil on the pot meat

They mixed bed, table, bath, and frying pan
He is Japanese
She is Brazilian
He is Japanese
She is Brazilian

And at the time of love he says: “my *sushi*, do you want to
play *sumo*?”
And she says: “*aikido*, *aikido*, *aikido*, ‘oh’ I do it, ‘oh’ I do it”
And at the time of love he says: “my *sushi*, do you want to
play *sumo*?”

17. “Eis então a beleza de um tocador [de taiko]: ele sempre está contando uma história ou um caso de um Japão imaginado, como se estivesse olhando constantemente através da janela do passado na tentativa de resgatar algo no presente”.

18. “Tem Purê no Tempurá” means “There is Mashed Potatoes on the Tempura.”

19. Available in: <https://bit.ly/3liluvn>.

And she says: “*aikido, aikido, aikido*, ‘oh’ I do it ‘oh’ I do it.”^{20, 21, 22}

Another artist who gained prominence on radio and television networks was singer Joe Hirata. Known for being the first foreign singer to win the biggest amateur Japanese song contest, the NHK Nodojiman, in 1994, Hirata sought to establish a career as a singer in Brazil. Gaining some projection mainly in 2008, the centenary of Japanese Immigration in Brazil, Joe also participated in several open TV programs. Characterized with his cowboy hat, the artist tried to bring elements of Japanese culture with Brazilian country music, as in the song “*Raça e Ginga Misturou*”,^{23, 24} which belongs to the 2007 album *Mistura de Raças*, and features the group of *taiko* Ishindaiko, from Maringá (Hirata 2020):

In the beat of the drum, something you’ve never seen
In the musical mix, from Japan to Brazil
Come on guys with the beat, from the drum with the *taiko*
Clapping hands [...] Race and *ginga* mixed

They are different cultures, but of many traditions
Of evident virtues: work, courage, determination, and emotions
It’s a hundred years of history about the sweat of your hands
From east to west, two peoples united in one heart.^{25, 26}

20. “Ele foi tirando o sapato como manda a tradição
E ela já sambava pela casa com os pés no chão
Ele preparou saquê, missô e sashimi pra ela
E ela pôs azeite de dendê na carne de panela
Eles misturaram cama, mesa, banho e frigideira
Ele é japonês
Ela é brasileira
Ele é japonês
Ela é brasileira
E na hora do amor ele diz: ‘meu sushi, quer brincar de sumô?’
E ela diz: ‘aikido, aikido, aikido, ‘ói’ que eu dou, ‘ói’ que eu dou’
E na hora do amor ele diz: ‘meu sushi, quer brincar de sumô?’
E ela diz: ‘aikido, aikido, aikido, ‘ói’ que eu dou, ‘ói’ que eu dou.’”

21. Translation based on the author’s transcription.

22. In Portuguese, the term *aikido* suggests a pun of sexual connotation that cannot be translated.

23. “*Raça e Ginga Misturou*” means “Race and Ginga mixed.”

24. Available in: <https://youtu.be/GOTbqzrCv3s>.

25. “Na batida do tambor, algo que nunca se viu
Na mistura musical, do Japão com o Brasil
Vem galera no compasso, do tambor com o taiko
Batendo na palma da mão [...] Raça e ginga misturou
São culturas diferentes, mas de muitas tradições
De virtudes evidentes: trabalho, coragem, garra e emoções
São cem anos de história do suor de suas mãos
Do oriente ao ocidente, dois povos unidos num só coração”

26. Translation based on the author’s transcription.

In Hirata's song, two things call attention, in addition to the already noted presence of an idea of "fusion" of cultures: the references to the "model minority", as in the excerpt "Of evident virtues: work, courage, determination, and emotions" and the idea that the Japanese and their descendants played a key role in the country's economic rise, as in "A hundred years of history about the sweat of your hands."

But, without a doubt, the musician of Asian descent who had the most media attention and commercial success is Fernanda Takai, singer, songwriter, and leader of the band Pato Fu. Granddaughter of Japanese, Fernanda won, in her long career as an artist, four gold discs, in addition to several awards such as the APCA, Latin Grammy, MTV Brasil, Multishow, Revista Bravo!, Prêmio da Música Brasileira, among others (Takai 2020). Still in 1999, in the album *Isopor*, the singer already made reference to Japanese culture in the song "Made in Japan",²⁷ composed by John Ulhoa and Robinson Mioshi, which featured lyrics mostly in Japanese and a video clip with several Japanese references, which helped the song to achieve great repercussion and penetration in the Brazilian public, winning the category of Best Art Direction of the VMB in 2000. The song makes references to the atomic bomb and to the Japanese technological domain:

Until recently, everyone here on Earth had a great fear
That after having experienced the heat of the H-Bomb alone,
Japan would take revenge
With silent technology
better and cheaper
smaller and prettier

My tube amp, legit American
One day I went to open it to see what it was like inside
I was appalled when I realized
That half of the pieces were Japanese!
"It's the beginning of the end!"

Made In Japan!²⁸

Recalling the tensions experienced in the post-war period, relating the fear and the possible Japanese revenge for the atomic bombs, the song by Ulhoa and Mioshi, at the same time, emphasizes the country's economic rebirth by technology that is "[b]etter and cheaper/ Smaller and prettier," reaffirming the vision of a prosperous, modern, and, therefore, attractive Japan to Brazilian eyes.

27. Available in: <https://bit.ly/40KVnNK>. Access in: May 2, 2022.

28. Translation based on a Portuguese version provided by the user Nicolay on the website letras.mus.br. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3x8zA59>. Access in: May 2, 2022.

The only racialized singer who had similar national projection, although less lasting than Takai, was the singer Li Martins, who was part of Rouge, a band that took over Brazilian radio stations from 2002 to 2006, with a return between the years 2017 to 2019. The group was marked as the Brazilian female band with the highest record sales in history, with two million copies sold (Seelig 2020). Despite never positioning herself on the role of Asian descendants in society with the band's songs or made direct references, in addition to not using her Japanese surname in her stage name (Kashiwaba), on TV, Li even made some presentations singing *enka songs*²⁹ that she performed in her childhood and adolescence in karaoke competitions that she participated in within the communities.

If we expand the scope to include instrumentalists of Japanese descent who were part of highly successful bands and had commercial exposure, we have two other important names: drummer Ricardo “Japinha”, who was part of the rock group CPM22 from 1995 to 2020 (CPM anuncia saída de Japinha 2020), as well as other smaller bands, and guitarist Bento Hinoto, who was part of the band Mamonas Assassinas from 1989 to 1996, the date of his tragic death alongside his group fellow members (Nascimento 2021). “Japinha”³⁰ adopted the Asian reference as his stage name and, in some interviews, such as the one given to the SítioVeg portal (2020), the musician made a point of emphasizing the “purity” of his Japanese blood even though he was a *Yonsei*,³¹ citing the lack of family miscegenation and some characteristics attributed to the myth of the “model minority” as his own attributes: “[...] the Japanese people have some characteristics such as discipline, respect, determination, perseverance, which I, in a way, ended up inheriting and placing in my professional day-to-day” (Japinha (CPM22) 2020, 2).³² In the case of Bento Hinoto, the lead singer of the band Mamonas Assassinas, Dinho, made a point of mentioning his colleague's mixed race in a joking tone and presented him, before one of his solos, as “The legitimate Italian Japanese from Tasmania. The father came from Africa and the mother came from Germany!”,³³ ³⁴ going back a little on the colleague's origin.

The examples cited about the presence of musicians of Japanese descent in the country's media show that the projection of these artists in mass media is still sporadic. Also, the predominant discourse in the lyrics and in the positioning of these interpreters, when there is any mention

29. Japanese music style that features traditional Japanese sounds and western melodies.

30. In Portuguese, “Japinha” means “little Japanese”.

31. Japanese denomination for fourth-generation Japanese descendants.

32. “[...] o povo japonês tem algumas características como disciplina, respeito, determinação, perseverança, que eu, de certa forma, acabei herdando e colocando no meu dia-a-dia profissional.”

33. “O legítimo japonês italiano vindo da Tasmânia. O pai veio da África e a mãe veio da Alemanha!”

34. Available in: <https://bit.ly/3DTUx7R>. Access in: May 2, 2022.

of the Japanese ethnicity, is to seek an integration or friendly and even humorous approximation with the idea of Brazilianness, without direct conflicts or claims. These discourses seem to reproduce the widespread attempts at “fusion” in the 1930s, when Brazilian nationalism was gaining strength, and in the post-war period, when modifying the image of the Japanese as enemies of war was necessary, with a focus on relieving tensions and suspicions, and reaffirm the bonds of friendship between nations. However, we can speculate that the presence of these artists on major media platforms, even when they do not directly address issues that racialized people suffer in Brazil, helps to create new expectations about places of occupation by artists of Asian origin and the dissemination of new images.

THE NEW YELLOW BRAZILIAN VOICES

The apparent separation between a *Nikkei* identity, strongly linked to communities and associations created in Brazil and based on manifestations that evoke an idea of “legitimate” Japaneseness, and Nippo-Brazilians, who claim a fusion between Brazilian and Japanese identity, highlighting ties of friendship and the economic role of descendants, have gained new contours and a new name: the yellow Brazilians. This new split within the community has the characteristic of being formed by descendants of more distant generations of Japanese immigrants, usually those of mixed ancestry. These descendants have grown up with greater integration with Brazilian society, generally without contact with organized Japanese communities (and even with a refusal to the discourse disseminated by them) and, despite carrying characteristics of transmigrant families, they identify more with Brazilian culture and manifest themselves more strongly, mainly on social networks, demanding recognition as Brazilians, without hyphenations. The use of the term “Brazilian yellow” or “yellow,” which we will adopt in this part of the text, therefore, is a way of affirming this national identity, emphasizing the “Brazilian”, and using the term “yellow” as a differentiation within a native category, without reference to another country (“Nippo”) or using a foreign language term (“*Nikkei*”). To exemplify this posture with music, we will meet a representative of this approach.

After an unpleasant experience at a casting, singer, actress, and composer Lina Tag (25) wrote the song “Amarela”,^{35, 36} bringing reflections and provocations on some yellow identity issues in the capitalist context

35. “Amarela” means “Yellow.”

36. Available in: <https://bit.ly/2ITkA2G>. Access in: May 2, 2022.

and denouncing the logic of the audiovisual market to make Brazilians invisible and exclude yellows from their productions:

It takes a lifetime to find
Your singing
Angry wind and circumstance that drives your sail

A strange animal can't stand at high tide
It has no place
The mascot's chain holds on only until it chokes

Let me in through the door
I'm similar to you
When common sense
Whispers in your ears

Don't listen, no
Your words are poison
In my heart
A prejudice looms
From listening to listening
Let the fight begin

I'm sorry to disturb
The bleaching of this place
The yellow peril
It still filters your gaze

I have a name
I have a sea
Today I'm on this side

Let me in through the door
I'm similar to you
When common sense
Whispers in your ears

Don't listen, no
Your words are poison
In my heart
A prejudice looms
From listening to listening
Let the fight begin

And the land that tore my eyes
Stayed, stayed
I keep memories in the arteries
However, it does not fully define my content

This flag has my color
This flag has my color
Your flag has my color
Our flag has my pain.^{37, 38}

Born in the city of São Paulo, Lina is part of the fourth generation of Japanese descendants. Daughter of a *Sansei*³⁹ father and a mother of white origin, Japanese culture has a place of affection in her personal trajectory: “I really feel its presence [of Japanese culture] in a very cozy way. I have a lot of memories of eating *bento* on the sidewalk with my grandfather.

37. “Demora a vida pra encontrar
Seu cantar
Vento bravo e circunstância que conduz seu velejar
Bicho estranho em maré alta não dá pé
Não tem lugar
A corrente da mascote prende só até enforcar
Me deixa entrar pela porta
Tua sou semelhante
Quando o senso comum
Cochicha em teus ouvidos
Não escute, não
Veneno tuas palavras
No meu coração
Um preconceito avulta
De escuta em escuta
Que comece a luta
Me desculpe atrapalhar
O branqueamento desse lugar
O tal perigo amarelo
Ainda penetra o seu olhar
Tenho nome
Tenho mar
Hoje sou do lado de cá
Me deixa entrar pela porta
Tua sou semelhante
Quando o senso comum
Cochicha em teus ouvidos
Não escute, não
Veneno tuas palavras
No meu coração
Um preconceito avulta
De escuta em escuta
Que comece a luta
E a terra que os meus olhos rasgou
Ficou, ficou
Guardo lembranças nas artérias
Entretanto não define por completo meu teor
Essa bandeira tem a minha cor
Essa bandeira tem a minha cor
Sua bandeira tem a minha cor
Nossa bandeira tem a minha dor.”

38. Translation based on the lyrics provided by the composer on her YouTube channel.

39. Japanese denomination for grandchildren of Japanese descendants.

It was very normal and part of my week” (Lina Tag, interview).⁴⁰ *Enka* music, Buddhism, and spirituality are other factors that Lina brings back fondly from her childhood memories. However, the strangeness of external views in the face of these customs made her, many times, try to distance herself from these practices and question their role in her daily life: “I did feel like a foreigner in many moments. People looked at me as a foreigner” (Lina Tag, interview).⁴¹ The strong smell of canned foods and the egg-based Japanese cuisine that she brought in her *bento*,⁴² she replaced these foods by others more common to Western eyes. The feeling of inadequacy, however, was not limited to the non-Japanese people with whom she lived. The communities themselves and even part of the family saw, in their mixed origin, a problem and a factor of differentiation and prejudice:

There was a lot of this already in my childhood, I felt a separation from my own family. Of people who weren’t of mixed race acting, like: “you have no right to this culture, it’s more mine than yours” and a question of dirt really, as if it were dirty, dirty blood, mixed blood, it’s not pure. My grandma didn’t talk to us when we were younger. There was this question too, so it was always confusing. Many sensations and many perceptions for a child, because it comforts me, but at the same time, when it comforts me, then other people look at it strangely and the family itself says “you are strange”. (Lina Tag, interview)⁴³

“Amarela”, a song she composed, and which is part of the *Taperá EP*, released in 2020 by the *Instante* label, in addition to discussing about raciality, also seeks to bring up the discontent with the hegemonic logic of the market and capitalism: “It raises many questions, many provocations. It brings a first perception of this issue of raciality, of perceiving

40. “Eu sinto muito a presença dela [da cultura japonesa] de uma maneira muito aconchegante. Eu tenho muito a memória de comer *bentô* na rua na calçada com meu avô. Era muito normal e fazia parte da minha semana.”

41. “Eu me senti estrangeira sim em muitos momentos. As pessoas me olhavam como estrangeira.”

42. Type of packed lunch.

43. “Tinha muito isso já na minha infância, eu sentia um afastamento da minha própria família. Das pessoas que não eram miscigenadas agirem, tipo: “você não tem direito a essa cultura, ela é mais minha do que sua” e uma questão de sujeira mesmo, como se fosse sujo, sangue sujo, sangue misturado, não é puro. Minha vó não falava com a gente quando a gente era menor. Tinha essa questão também, então sempre foi confuso. Muitas sensações e muitas percepções pra uma criança, porque me conforta, mas, ao mesmo tempo, quando me conforta, aí as outras pessoas olham estranho e a própria família fala ‘você é estranha.’”

myself as a yellow person, this moment of realizing that I am a racialized person” (Lina Tag, interview).⁴⁴

In addition to denouncing prejudice, the “yellow peril,” and the whitening of spaces in her lyrics, Lina also created a music video for the track, made only with yellow Brazilian artists. The production, made by the artist herself, brings several messages and provocations with the stereotypes heard by people of Japanese descent, in a collective construction. Giving space for yellow artists to denounce the prejudices to which they are subject brought many comments from people who identified with such issues and who went through the same type of thing.

Lina’s situation and her account of the lack of opportunities join the chorus of other voices who report the same type of situation. One of them is actress Bruna Aiiso (35). Also from São Paulo and with extensive television experience, with Rede Globo⁴⁵ soap operas under her belt, the actress decided to use her reach to create the live broadcasting “Brasileiros” on her social network, to interview yellow artists and hear their stories and difficulties of being recognized in their own country. Also the daughter of a *Sansei* father and a mother of northeastern origin, Bruna says she has never identified herself as Japanese. “I am 110% Brazilian” (Bruna Aiiso, interview).⁴⁶ In her first castings, the actress reports that she had difficulty seeing herself as a racialized person and filled out the forms as “white.” However, over time, she realized that she did not have the same privileges as white people but, at the same time, she did not suffer the same prejudice as Black people. Bruna also reports the discomfort she felt for not seeing people of Asian descent in magazines, on television, and that she came to think, like many people of Japanese origin, about aesthetic interventions for the westernization of the eyes. This all demonstrates an attempt to move away from the idea of Japaneseness: “I have ancestry but I am not Japanese. Everything that you have in your imagination of the Japanese culture does not fit me” (Bruna Aiiso, interview).⁴⁷ The denial of Japaneseness also occurs in the face of the frustration with the job opportunities offered to Asian descendants. “I want to live Brazilians, which is what I am. I want a Brazilian character. I want a nurse, a housewife, a supermarket cashier, a cleaning lady, anything” (Bruna Aiiso, interview).⁴⁸

44. “Traz muitas perguntas, muitas provocações. Traz uma primeira percepção dessa questão da racialidade, de eu me perceber enquanto uma pessoa amarela, esse momento de perceber que eu sou uma pessoa racializada.”

45. Largest television network in Brazil.

46. “Sou 110% brasileira.”

47. “Eu tenho ascendência, mas não sou japonesa. Tudo isso que você traz no seu imaginário da cultura japonesa não se encaixa na minha pessoa.”

48. “Eu quero viver brasileiras, que é o que eu sou. Eu quero uma personagem brasileira. Eu quero uma enfermeira, uma dona de casa, uma caixa de supermercado, uma faxineira, qualquer coisa.”

The scarcity of opportunities for yellow actresses in Brazil, since racialized people are only chosen for roles if there is some explicit indication in the selection process, also motivated the creation of the Youtube channel *Yo Ban Boo*. With more than sixty thousand subscribers, the channel was born out of the need to include and discuss the presence of yellow artists in the Brazilian media, a reality that Beatriz Diaféria (35), founder of the channel alongside Kiko Morente and Léo Hwan, lived firsthand.

Beatriz is another *Yonsei* native of São Paulo. Her great-grandfather on her mother's side was one of the first immigrants to arrive in Brazil in 1908, aboard the famous *Kasato Maru*. Her family on her father's side is of Spanish origin, a culture that she experienced in a much more present way in her childhood, when she attended a Spanish school. With that, as reported by Bruna, Beatriz reported experiencing what she called the "Banana Complex":

There were things that only happened to me and I didn't know why, because I identified as white. I started to feel more that I was yellow too when I left school, went to college, and trained as an actress. When I was called to audition, I didn't fit right into the characters. Then I started to understand who I am. (Beatriz Diaféria, interview)⁴⁹

Even though the Japanese phenotypic traits were attenuated by her being interracial, Beatriz says that she suffered from stereotypes in her childhood: "People expected me to be a perfect person, because I was of Japanese descent. Being good at math, the smart one" (Beatriz Diaféria, interview),⁵⁰ in addition to reports of fetishization in adult life. For audiovisual works, the actress lived in a particular situation, as she found herself in a so-called "limbo": due to the Japanese surname she previously used in her stage name, she was only recommended for racialized roles. However, at the time of the test, because she did not meet the Japanese stereotype, she ended up not getting the jobs:

In the beginning, they called me only for "*japa*"⁵¹ roles. And then, I got there and I never got a job, I couldn't work. People expect me to have straight hair, to be skinny, and I'm not the way they want me to be for these characters they're sending me. But I used Beatriz Koyama Diaféria. Just because I

49. "Tinha coisas que acontecia só comigo e eu não sabia por que, porque eu me identificava como branca. Eu comecei a sentir mais que eu era amarela também quando eu saí da escola, fiz faculdade e fui me formar como atriz. Quando eu era chamada pra fazer algum teste, eu não me encaixava direito nos personagens. Aí eu comecei a entender quem sou eu."

50. "As pessoas esperavam que eu fosse uma pessoa perfeita, por eu ser descendente de japoneses. Ser boa em matemática, a inteligente" (Beatriz Diaféria, interview).

51. Short for Japanese.

changed my name, I started getting called to auditions for “normal people.” Woman my age. These roles have always existed, but they didn’t consider yellow people. (Beatriz Diaféria, interview)⁵²

The *Yo Ban Boo* channel was created to create a space where yellow actors could perform. At first, the videos featured skits about common everyday things with yellow actors on the scene. Over time, deepening many of the issues about yellow racism and creating a space for dialogue within the channel was necessary. Thus, *Yo Ban Boo* began to broadcast interviews, debates, and other emerging issues about the experiences of yellow Brazilians in the country. Thus, Beatriz tells us that she was able to have a greater sense of her own identity and a better understanding and approximation with Japanese culture, until then scarcely present in her daily life.

A POLITICAL DIVISION

The different visions of the role to be played by Japanese descendants in Brazilian society and the level of fusion of the two cultures are constant challenges, especially for those who seek a break with the stereotyped Japaneseness, as in the case of yellow Brazilians. Lina, Bruna, and Beatriz say that they did not feel welcome or considered getting closer to these associations. For all three, organized communities are complicit in the idea of a “model minority” by not discussing agendas on raciality, and accepting stereotypes due to the economic benefits they bring: “This fantasy pays a lot of money [...] It is not in the interest of the corporate *Nikkei* to keep bringing these agendas. I believe it is extremely inconvenient, actually” (Lina Tag, interview),⁵³ says Lina. The musician also talks about the difficulty of having her work projected in these places: “It was very difficult to achieve projection within communities, corporations. I don’t think they can even stand me, because it’s like: ‘Oh no, you’re too violent. [...] We don’t want to be associated with that, with those ideas’” (Lina Tag, interview).⁵⁴

52. “No começo me chamavam só pra papéis da ‘japa’. E aí, eu chegava lá e eu nunca pegava um trabalho, não conseguia trabalhar. As pessoas esperam que eu tenha cabelo liso, que seja magrinha, e eu não sou do jeito que eles querem pra esses personagens que eles estão me mandando. Mas eu usava o Beatriz Koyama Diaféria. Só de eu ter mudado meu nome, eu comecei a ser chamada para testes de ‘pessoas normais’. Mulher da minha idade. Esses papéis sempre existiram, mas não consideravam as pessoas amarelas.”

53. “Essa fantasia dá dinheiro pra caramba [...] Não é do interesse do corporativo *Nikkei* ficar trazendo essas pautas. Acredito que seja extremamente inconveniente, inclusive.”

54. “Foi muito difícil conseguir projeção dentro das comunidades, das corporações. Acho que eles nem me suportam, inclusive, porque é: ‘ah não, você é muito violenta. [...] A gente não quer se associar a isso, a essas ideias.’”

But how do these advantages appear in everyday life? How do they materialize in actions? When questioned about this, Beatriz Diaféria reveals a curious story about a colleague of Japanese descent. The girl, still around her sixteen years old, was looking for a job at a financial institution. According to the report, the young woman had no affinity with the area of exact sciences, having even graduated in Literature later. Even so, she got the job and reportedly heard the following sentence from her employer: “You are Japanese, you are good at math, you are smart” (Beatriz Diaféria, interview).⁵⁵ She adds: “We have many privileges. People don’t talk about it but being aware of it puts us in an uncomfortable position and maybe takes it away from us” (Beatriz Diaféria, interview).⁵⁶

But if the “model minority” brings advantages from the capitalist point of view, the maintenance and perpetuation of these stereotypes also gain a political dimension. The associations of Japanese immigrants and descendants have a history of conservatism in their trajectory, maintaining neutral positions during the Brazilian military regime, and many of their members who participate in political parties choose parties that are center or right wing. About this, Bruna says:

I think that’s why, up to this day, I haven’t approached the Japanese community in Brazil. I’m a leftist person. Japan has always been an extremely sexist country, I don’t identify with that. I feel 110% Brazilian. I was raised in Brazilian culture, eating Brazilian food [...] The community is still very reticent to touch on these subjects. It has a very strong Japanese conservatism, which I think is no longer relevant nowadays, and also many people associate our militancy, our cause with a political cause. I get messages from people linking to the use of the term “yellow” as a left-wing term. (Bruna Aiiso, interview)⁵⁷

Indeed, the political alignment of the people who conduct these types of discussions seems to match. Beatriz and Lina also consider themselves “leftist” people, and racial and identity agenda are historically linked to this progressive spectrum in Brazil and elsewhere in the world. In

55. “Você é japonesa, você é boa de matemática, você é inteligente.”

56. “A gente tem muitos privilégios. As pessoas não falam sobre isso, mas ter consciência sobre isso deixa a gente numa posição desconfortável e talvez tire isso da gente” (Beatriz Diaféria, interview).

57. “Eu acho que foi por isso que até hoje eu não me aproximei da comunidade japonesa no Brasil. Eu sou uma pessoa de esquerda. O Japão sempre foi um país extremamente machista, eu não me identifico com isso. Eu me sinto 110% brasileira. Eu fui criada na cultura brasileira, comendo a comida brasileira [...] A comunidade ainda é muito reticente pra tocar nesses assuntos. Tem um conservadorismo de japonês muito forte, que eu acho que não cabe mais nos dias de hoje, e também muitas pessoas associam a nossa militância, a nossa causa a uma causa política. Eu recebo mensagem de pessoas fazendo um link com o uso do termo “amarelo” como sendo um termo de esquerda.”

addition, regarding the sexism pointed out by the actress, Japan is one of the countries with the least gender equality in the world, according to the 2020 World Economic Forum. The country is in position 121 out of 153 countries listed, even behind Brazil, which is the ninety-second (Ito 2020).

This left-leaning political bias of recent yellow collectives has also been an important factor in linking the movement with other social identity struggles, such as black, indigenous, and LGBTQIA+ causes. The *Yo Ban Boo* channel, for example, has among its founders Kiko Morente, an Afro-descendant who also seeks to bring guidelines from this militancy to the channel's discussions. Beatriz even reveals that many viewers of the videos are of African descent. The three interviewees agree that a greater integration of discussions about raciality and identity with other minorities, although maintaining awareness of their different trajectories, is necessary. However, for Beatriz, the path of the yellow movement is still long and cannot yet be considered a militancy:

It is very difficult to talk about yellow militancy here in Brazil. Militancy has something to do with practice, with organization. We can talk more about social movements or activism, because a lot of things are only on the internet. There is no face-to-face meeting, discussing what you can actually do and what our intentions are with all this and how to help. It doesn't have that. There are several small groups of five people, one here and one there. A very small thing, but it's not organized for something bigger, which would be militancy, you know? So, I think that we are still way behind at it, and then it is not possible to have this conversation with the indigenous movement, with the black movement, because they are way ahead. There is no cohesion of a yellow militancy. (Beatriz Diaféria, interview)⁵⁸

Lina completes: "It is a matter of us having to better organize ourselves and understand how we are going to dialogue and understand our common objective" (Lina Tag, interview).⁵⁹ The still incipient yellow militancy

58. "É muito difícil falar de militância amarela ainda aqui no Brasil. Militância tem uma coisa de prática, de organização. A gente pode falar mais de movimento social ou ativismo, porque muita coisa fica só na internet. Não tem uma coisa de encontro presencial, de discussão do que pode fazer de fato e quais são as nossas intenções com tudo isso e como ajudar. Não tem isso. São vários grupinhos de cinco pessoas, uma aqui e outra ali. Uma coisa muito pequena mas que não tá organizado pra uma coisa maior que seria a militância, sabe? Então, eu acho que isso a gente ainda tá muito atrás, e aí não dá pra ter essa conversa com o movimento indígena, com o movimento negro, porque eles estão muito a frente. Não tem uma coesão de uma militância amarela."

59. "É uma questão de que a gente tem que se organizar melhor e entender como a gente vai dialogar e entender o nosso objetivo comum."

seems to have a younger, female profile and with a large participation of non-binary people, according to the interviewees' reports.

CONCLUSION

Nikkei, Nippo-Brazilians, yellow Brazilians. Many forms were created to refer to these Brazilians who carry different stories about the construction of Brazil as a nation. "A hybrid figure. A Brazilian yellow figure with its particularities. There are infinite different ethnicities and mixed races" (Lina Tag, interview),⁶⁰ sums up singer Lina Tag. This statement shows how Japanese descendants in Brazil have created a series of ways to relate to their Japaneseness, and none of the groups presents itself in a totally homogeneous way. According to researcher Camila Aya Ischida (2010): "The individual (re)creates and (re)constructs his identity in the context that arises, or rather, from the elements given by the context. In the reflective process that is engendered, identifications are forged" (Ischida 2010, 14).⁶¹ And she adds: "It is important to remember that in the current situation, the *Nikkei* are, above all, people who, despite having a common ancestor and a peculiar physiognomic mark, carry different experiences in living together and in the struggle with otherness" (Ischida 2010, 17).⁶² That is why the various recent works that seek to give visibility to these discussions are so necessary, many of them cited in this text, such as the research of Érica Rosa Hatugai (2001; 2018), Igor José Renó Machado (2008; 2011), Victor Kebbe (2008; 2014), and many others that deal with this multiplicity.

All this diversity and variety of trajectories, however, still seem to struggle to get rid of widespread stereotypes. But more and more collectives are coming together on social networks to discuss the prejudices and representation of Japanese descendants living in Brazil. These debates attract many young people who no longer see themselves as connected with the culture of their ancestors and/or do not feel contemplated by established associations in the country and by their discourses of legitimacy or "fusion" to a greater or lesser extent. They also see in the narrative of "model minority" a bias of oppression, and organized communities as accomplices of this idea, either by manifesting themselves against the notion that Brazilians of Asian origin suffer prejudice or by simply

60. "Uma figura híbrida. Uma figura amarela brasileira com suas particularidades. São infinitas etnias e miscigenações diferentes."

61. "O indivíduo (re) cria e (re) constrói sua identidade no contexto que surge, ou melhor, a partir dos elementos dados pelo contexto. No processo reflexivo que se engendra, identificações são forjadas."

62. "É importante lembrar que na conjuntura atual, os *nikkei* são antes de tudo pessoas que mesmo possuindo um ancestral comum e a marca fisionômica peculiar, carregam experiências diversas no convívio e no embate com a alteridade."

omitting themselves from these dialogues. As Bruna comments: “The ‘model minority’ brings positive views specifically to capitalism. If we put it on the individual, this is a form of oppression” (Bruna Aiiso, interview).⁶³ Bruna’s speech expresses that the split found between the positioning of Japanese descendants is mainly political. The social advantages that the idea of “model minority” brings to the capitalist world are weights in a balance that reinforce the division between a group that defends conservative, liberal, and right-wing values and another, that defends that overcoming structural prejudice cannot happen in a social organization that is not left-wing.

Thus, overcoming and humanizing Brazilians of Japanese descent seems impossible without a deep awareness and a renunciation of the privileges that this racialized group receives in Brazil. Although this perspective is not encouraging and seems difficult to materialize, the formation of these young groups with other biases gives hope that new support and protection networks can be created, with different approaches to and new ways of dealing with these issues in Brazil. The strengthening of these networks, the dissemination of information, and a shared and organized worldview will be fundamental for this movement to become, in fact, a militancy, having capillarity and protagonism in these social struggles. For all this to happen, art can be an important ally.

There are still few examples of performance artists of Japanese descent gaining great media prominence. When it happens, the big media seem to prefer artists who have a position that reinforces the idea of friendship between the two nations and that evokes a harmonious relationship, which ends up sounding like a self-praise to Brazil itself and to the idea that Brazil is a country that welcomes its immigrants well and without prejudice, hiding its xenophobia episodes, as reported at the beginning of the text, and everyday microaggressions. With the advent of social networks, however, thinking that manifestations outside this standard can gain projection and become an important tool for expanding the debate on the yellow issue in Brazil, raising awareness, and recruiting new members to form a future organized militancy is possible today. The clip for the song “Amarela” (Yellow), by Lina Tag, has more than fifteen thousand views on her YouTube channel, which has just over a thousand subscribers, being the singer’s most viewed authorial song. This shows how the capillarity of the musical work can represent a significant advance in the formation of a new perspective.

63. “A ‘minoria modelo’ traz visões positivas especificamente para o capitalismo. Se a gente colocar pro indivíduo, isso é uma forma de opressão.”

Also, examples show that performance art manifestations disseminated in associations can be subverted, re-signified, and become the stage for various discussions about prejudice and stereotypes. This is the case of the Californian groups San Francisco Taiko and Kinnara Taiko, founded in 1968 and 1969, respectively, and which sought to articulate what it meant to be Asian American amid the debates about Civil Rights that were taking place at the time (Ahlgren 2018). In Brazil, the Bahian *taiko* group from Salvador, Wadō, stands out, counting on some members of the LGBTQIA+ community and clear positions against homophobia in its social networks. The group also sees itself as a safe and welcoming place for any member to express their gender and sexuality (Stela 2020).

“All musical listening is a form of confrontation, of meeting worlds and meanings, when identity becomes self-conscious and, therefore, threatened through its own interrogation” (Kun *apud* Ahlgren 2018, 14). May music, in this way, be increasingly used so that new stories are told, so that movements can strengthen and expand their debates, and so that the performative activities that already occur can be re-signified and appropriated to new contexts and serve new dialogues. With these and many other actions, we will finally be able to overcome stereotypes and divisions in favor of a more humanized gaze.

TRANSLATION
Otávio Manzano
Kavakama

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- Ahlgren, Angela K. 2018. *Drumming Asian America: Taiko, performance, and cultural politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Azevedo, Rodrigo. 2018. Descendentes de japoneses são mais inteligentes; herança cultural explica. *Gazeta do Povo*, Mar. 18, 2018. Accessed February 5, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3xcymGe>.
- CPM 22 anuncia saída de Japinha após supostos casos de assédio. 2020. *UOL*, Aug. 17, 2020. Accessed February 5, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3YgbQba>.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Garcia, Rafael Mariano. 2020. *O corpo na arte do taiko contemporâneo*. Dissertação de mestrado, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Campinas.
- Hatugai, Érica Rosa. 2021. “Ler, no corpo da mestiça”, beleza, corporalidades e fronteiras no parentesco nikkey: as experiências de mulheres nipodescendentes no Brasil. *Cadernos Pagu*, no. 63: 1-16.
- Hatugai, Érica Rosa. 2018. *Um corpo como fronteira: parentesco e identificações entre descendentes nipônicos “mestiços”*. Tese de doutorado, Universidade Federal de São Carlos, São Carlos.
- Hikiji, Rose Satiko Gitirana. 2005. Etnografia da performance musical: identidade, alteridade e transformação. *Horizontes Antropológicos*, vol. 24: 155-184.

- Hirata, Joe. 2020. Histórico. *Joe Hirata*, 2020. Accessed May 2, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3RNJSB3>.
- Igarashi, Yoshikuni. 2000. *Bodies of Memory: narratives of war in postwar Japanese culture, 1945-1970*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ischida, Camila Aya. 2010. *A experiência nikkei no Brasil: uma etnografia sobre imaginários e identidades*. Dissertação de mestrado, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo.
- Ito, Carol. 2020. Meu nome não é japa: o preconceito amarelo. *TRIP*, Mar. 12, 2020. Accessed May 24, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3JUFu1j>.
- Japinha (CPM22). 2020. *SítioVeg*, Jun. 29, 2020. Accessed February 5, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3lat04l>.
- Kebbe, Victor Hugo. 2014. Ser japonês, ser nikkei, ser dekassegui: contornando metáforas de parentesco e nação. *Revista de Antropologia da UFSCar*, vol. 6, no. 1: 63-80.
- Lesser, Jeffrey. 2007. *A Discontented Diaspora: Japanese Brazilians and the meanings of ethnic militancy, 1960-1980*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Lesser, Jeffrey. 1999. *Negotiating National Identity: immigrants, minorities, and the struggle for ethnicity in Brazil*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Lorenz, Shanna. 2007. *"Japanese in the Samba": Japanese Brazilian musical citizenship, racial consciousness, and transnational migration*. Tese de doutorado, Universidade de Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh.
- Machado, Igor José de Renó, Victor Hugo Kebbe e Cristina Rodrigues da Silva. 2008. Notas sobre família transnacional. *Revista Interdisciplinar da Mobilidade Humana*, vol. 16, no. 30: 79-98.
- Machado, Igor José de Renó. 2011. Japonesidades multiplicadas: sobre a presença japonesa no Brasil. In *Japonesidades multiplicadas: novos estudos sobre a presença japonesa no Brasil*, org. Igor José de Renó Machado, 5-17. São Carlos: EdUFSCar.
- Moreira, Matheus. 2020. Em meio à epidemia de coronavírus, orientais no Brasil relatam preconceito e desconforto. *GZH*, Feb. 3, 2022. Accessed October 7, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3YjEh82>.
- Nascimento, Toni. 2021. Mamonas Assassinas, quem foram? História, carreira e tragédia. *Segredos do Mundo*, 2021. Accessed February 5, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3YgnltZ>.
- Pettersen, William. 1966. Success story, Japanese-American style. *New York Times*, Jan. 9, 1996. Accessed February 9, 2023, <https://bit.ly/2PuBqVN>.
- Rodrigues, Flávio. 2020. Os tambores que vibram em nós: a comunidade de prática do taiko na cidade de Atibaia e a quebra de estereótipos. In *30º Congresso da Associação Nacional de Pesquisa e Pós-Graduação em Música*, Manaus, 7 a 11 dez. 2020.
- Rossini, Rosa Ester. 2005. A Memória Congelada do Imigrante: a solidariedade intergeracional dos japoneses e dos nikkeis no Brasil e no Japão atual. *São Paulo em Perspectiva*, vol. 19, no. 3: 34-43.
- Sakurai, Célia. 2007. *Os japoneses*. São Paulo: Contexto.
- Seelig, Ricardo. 2020. Os discos mais vendidos no Brasil em todos os tempos. *Collectors Room*, Sep. 28, 2020. Accessed February 5, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3lcuqek>.

- Stella, Elizabeth. 2020. "I Saw Myself Represented": Taiko and Anime in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. In *65° SEM Annual Meeting*, Ottawa, out. 22-31, 2020. Virtual.
- Takai, Fernanda. 2020. Bio. Fernanda Takai, Jul. 2020. Accessed February 5, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3DTM5p9>.
- Turino, Thomas. 2008. *Music as social life: the politics of participation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Urbano, Krystal e Maria Elizabeth Pinto de Melo. 2018. A representação dos asiáticos na TV Brasileira: apontamentos Iniciais. In *41º Congresso Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação*, Joinville, 2 a 8 set. 2018.

Flávio Rodrigues, Master's student in Music, with an emphasis on Ethnomusicology, at the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP). He carried out postgraduate studies in Preventive and Social Music Therapy at Faculdades Metropolitanas Unidas (FMU, 2017) and graduated in Music at Faculdade de Artes Alcântara Machado (FAAM, 2015). He is a member of the thematic project "O Musicar Local: new trails for ethnomusicology", in a partnership between researchers from UNICAMP and the University of São Paulo (USP), since 2020 and also works as a musician, composer, and educator. f263863@dac.unicamp.br.

Use license. This article is licensed under the Creative Commons CC-BY License. With this license you can share, adapt, create for any purpose, as long as you attribute the authorship of the work.

Submitted: 07/17/2022
Resubmitted: 10/14/2022
Accepted: 01/04/2023