

BRAZILIAN WORKERS' QUALIFICATION  
IN THE LABOUR PROCESS IN JAPAN

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

LABOUR FIELD OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN JAPAN

BRAZILIAN WORKERS IN THE JAPANESE LABOUR PROCESS

THE BACKGROUND OF THE PROFESSIONAL FORMATION OF BRAZILIANS IN JAPAN

LIMITS AND ADVANCES OF THE QUALIFICATION OF THE BRAZILIAN WORKERS IN  
JAPAN

NOTES

BRAZILIAN WORKERS' QUALIFICATION IN THE LABOUR PROCESS IN JAPAN

Lili Katsuco Kawamura(\*)

INTRODUCTION

Brazilian workers form a major part of the foreign workers in Japan, they are almost all descendants of second, third, or fourth generation Japanese, including the half-castes( mestizos). Brazilians who are not descendants of Japanese are the husbands and wives of Brazilians descending from Japanese, because of Japan's specific laws concerning migration, which give the permission to work in Japan only to Japanese descendants and their families until the 3rd. generation("sansei"). In the same manner, there are "nikkey"(1) who are from other Latin American countries such as Peru, Argentina, and Bolivia. Considering the total number of foreign workers, such as the Chinese, Malasians, Filipinos, Iranians, and Indians, among others, who are not necessarily Japanese descendants but are in Japan under other conditions, living clandestinely because of government accords. In Aichi-ken, the region with most Brazilians, they made up 15% of the foreign population in 1991. Brazilians comprise approximately 80% of the Latin American population in this region. In 1992 in Hamamatsu (Shizuoka-ken), the Japanese city with the largest concentration of Brazilians, more than half of the foreigners are Brazilians. (2)

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The great presence of Brazilians in Japan has to be understood by the large international migration process of workers from "underdeveloped" countries to "advanced countries". Although the migration of workers has occurred in the past, for example the Mexicans in the United States, actually, the phenomenon is on a global level: Latin American workers go to the United States, East Europeans and Africans go to Western Europe, and Asians and Latin Americans go to Japan. Close to 8 million foreigners are living in the United States from 1981 to 1990, and this number is increasing. The presence of minority groups (hispanics, Asians, etc) has altered the composition of the North American population (actually, 75.6% of the 248.7 million North Americans are considered caucasian). Refugees from socialist countries and from North Africa are continuously emigrating to Western Europe (3). Workers from Asian countries (China, Korea, Malasia and the Philippines), middle Eastern countries (Iran, Iraq and Pakistan), and Latin American countries (Brazil, Peru, Argentina) are emigrating to Japan.

The increasing migration of workers bring some social problems to Japan. This is the becoming theme of discussion among researchers at congresses of Sociology, Economics or Social Education, and among some Japanese workers Meetings.

Why are foreign workers, the majority of whom are Brazilian, coming to Japan?

After the qualitative development --- expressed by organizational changes in the process of production, distribution, and consumption based on new technologies

(principally the technologies of organization) --- Japan has come to face problems related to the continuation of a qualified production. One of the principle problems is the lack of workers for unqualified labour. Therefore, there is a great preoccupation of the factories to insert new forms of organization in the process of production, connecting new equipment with new labour organizational methods, to solve, at least in part, the problem of labour shortage.

The accelerated economic development on the one hand, and the tendency of the young population to decrease---at present there is an average of 1.5 sons per family---and the exclusion from the labour market of a large contingent of women within productive age, on the other hand, forces a significant part of the small factories to face the labourer shortage problem. The majority of Japanese workers search for the biggest and most respected companies, where they will remain until retirement age. So, the small factories, mostly contracted to big and medium sized companies, have to face the problems of production because of the labourer shortage, with a risk of ceasing activities at their factories. Those factories fail to appeal to foreign workers in Japan. At first, these factories utilized seasonal labour from Japanese migrants, called "dekassegui"(5), coming from northern and southern areas to advanced regions and returning to their places of origin thereafter. Later, those factories employed other foreign workers, like; Chinese, Iranians, Malasians, and Filipinos, and finally Brazilians and other Latin Americans of Japanese descendant.

The international migration of workers,

especially considering that they come from the Third World to the First World, gives us an idea the workers are necessarily gaining major work's qualifications, because they are doing technologically advanced work, which would contribute to the development of their countries of origin. However, an analysis of specific aspects of the insertion of the Brazilians in the work process permits us to obtain a precise and perhaps a different understanding about this affirmation, because it permits us to evaluate the nature, the grade, and the sight of their qualification.

Here, the qualification is understood as the knowledge, strategies, and behaviors acquired in Japan, in interaction with the workers' background, related with the labour field. To understand the specifics of Brazilian's insertion in the labour process, we will talk about the contracting enterprises, the specific labour contract forms, the labour process's technologies, the access to the Japanese training process, the workers' previous education acquired in Brazil, as well as aspects of the Brazilian, labour market.

This study consists as a part of the research project about the Brazilian workers in Japan at Nagoya University-School of Education, since April 1993, with the support of Campinas State University(UNICAMP) and the São Paulo State Research Support Foundation(FAPESP).

The affirmations and analysis where there are not bibliographic indications are based on data from research obtained through questionnaires, interviews, and observations at some factories(large, medium and small) in Aichi-Ken, Shizuoka-Ken, Gunma-Ken, and the Tokyo regions;

and some employment contracting firms in Aichi-Ken; and from Brazilian workers in Toyota-Shi, Hamamatsu-Shi, and Oizumi-Shi, where the majority of Brazilians reside.

#### LABOUR FIELD OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN JAPAN

The foreign migrants labour field in Japan is limited to small factories subcontracted(6) by large companies, principally in the areas of automobiles, electronics and electronic products; additionally, in some industries of food and civil construction. These factories are concentrated in Aichi -Ken(mainly in the cities of Toyota and Toyohashi), in Shizuoka-Ken (in the cities of Hamamatsu and Shizuoka), in Gunma-Ken(in the cities of Ota and Oizumi), in Kanagawa, and in Tokyo. In the last two years, we can observe a significant transference of workers to the service sector, such as; restaurants, shops, hospitals, etc., in view of the recession of the Japanese economy, which mainly affected the automobile sector. In this process, there seems to be a dispersion of Brazilian workers to other regions, where, in spite of the reduced salaries, there exists job opportunities for foreigners.

The Brazilian migration to Japan began in the mid-80's, when the first Brazilians began to significantly migrate to the city of Oizumi, to work at small factories of electronic products. Traditionally, this city dealt with the presence of "foreigners", like the Japanese from the underdeveloped regions of the north and south of Japan, Americans from the United States air bases that were located here after WW II, and the Chinese, Iranians, Malaysians, and Filipinos who came in search of a job. The owners of small

factories in Oizumi, in view of the lack of Japanese workers and the difficulties with available foreigners (Iranians, Malaysians, etc.) many times in illegal situations in the country, feared an end of their industrial activities. Some of them went to Brazil in search of Brazilian workers of Japanese descent, principally those born in Japan, which allowed them the possibility to maintain and develop their businesses. To protect themselves against the worker shortage and against other adversities, some owners formed an entrepreneurs association of Oizumi, with the function to regulate the process of inserting Brazilian workers in the businesses, as well as to give assistance to the foreign workers to prepare necessary documents and arrangements for them to live and work in Japan.

Facing the same problem of a workers' shortage, small factories subcontracted by large automotive industry located in Aichi region, had to look for foreign workers, principally those of Japanese origin ("nikkey"). That is quite different from the system used by owners in Oizumi, who adopted the process of directly contracting the workers. The major part of those small factories in Aichi-ken and Shizuoka-ken utilized the services through the contracting firms for recruitment, selection, and contracting of Brazilians and other foreigners, also some other factories used the intermediation of government labor agencies.

In the general contracting system, there is a specific contracting form, wherein little firms settle contracts for a determined time with small factories (factories subcontracted by large and medium

plants to make automobile parts and components) to move and to become responsible for the human resources of determined production section. Based on this contract, the contracting firms are doing the recruitment, selection and training of workers(in general foreigners) to be employed in these sections, becoming responsible for these labourers. By this contract the firm gets a pre-determined amount of money, from which the salaries for workers is removed. The profit is associated with the decrease of the expense of the workers and with the renewal with the client factories.

The process of intermediation permits the use of many practices by the employment contracting firms, onerous for the worker, especially when they look for immediate profits at all costs. The main contracting system of workers is the temporary and indirect contract, that permits the employer more liberty to use the worker, through the maintenance and the removal of workers from one factory for another, according to the immediate interests defined by the proposals and contracts. In addition, this system gives to the employer many possibilities to return the worker into the labour market, without legal consequences. This contracting system makes the worker more dependent on the "good will" of the employment contracting firms, that was expressed in the labour conditions, payments, medical assistance, and living conditions. In this aspect, we can observe a tendency where these contracting firms are following the foreigner labour market fluctuation. In the cases of a big demand for foreign workers( from 1986 to 1992), there is a tendency for progress in salary, labour conditions, and living conditions; otherwise (since 1993,



when a significant part of Brazilians were dismissed) those conditions become worse, and, frequently, these conditions are followed by the sentence : "if you are not happy, go away".

The workers direct contracting system by the factories was predominantly for a "temporary job", with some rare exceptions. In this case, different from the subcontracting system, the factories had to assume the costs from the workers (the costs of the contract the costs of medical assistance ,and, in some cases, the costs of living).

In general, the employment contracting firms, that are emerging with the increasing of Brazilian workers in Japan, are initiatives by Japanese ex-workers or as an expansion or change of some employment bureau previously offered only to Japanese workers; nowadays they are part of all the activities, those that come to exist because of the workers migration process of "nikkey". This situation specifically seems to be that these contractors want to define their work pattern by various forms, those that go to the contracting firms which want to establish an efficient production pattern like the respected factories, until the other firms, and those that want imediate results and profits, which adopt practices to exploit workers, prosper from a rude capitalism. On the side of the workers, we can observe drastic practices like "abandonment of one's job", a tentative solution to resolve the troubles deriving from those practices of explotation, or because they can not adjust to the operative work. For this practice they can use the precarious job contract, mainly in periods of a large

demand for foreign workers. Those practices, from the employment contracting firms or from the foreign workers can affect the development of the labour relations, because they can cause animosity between both parts.

#### **BRAZILIAN WORKERS IN THE JAPANESE LABOUR PROCESS**

The foreign workers are working at small factories subcontracted("shita-uke") by big plants to produce pieces and component parts, which are searching to adapt all their activities and production with the necessity of those big plants, by their adaptation of the labour process according to the patterns required by the big companies of models, specifications, materials, daily amount of products,etc. These factories constitute the periphery of sectorial organization of the industrial production, but, sometimes, according to the complexity of the product, they are using new technologies too, such as the robotic. In the automotive area, for example, the biggest companies determine their maker's mark, models, quality and quantity of the products for the consumption market, establish their production methods and technologies, and their labour process organization. These big companies are subcontracting a complex group of entrepreneurs, to carry out parts of their production and complementary activities, of medium and small firms. Among these last ones, there are factories making pieces and component parts for automobile production and eletronic products. Here are the majority of Brazilian workers, among other foreigners.

The complex and high technology is present in large and medium companies; which are using only Japanese

workers. However, even in small peripheral firms, using simple technologies (in comparison with the big and advanced companies), when there are more complex operations, these are carried out by Japanese workers, with job relations according to the labor legislation and with expectation of staying in the factory for many years, even until the retirement age. The simple activities, that, in general, but not necessarily, are characterized as hard, dangerous, and dirty work, have been carried out by foreign workers in, addition to unqualified Japanese workers. That is true here, where there is a worker shortage.

Even in the little "peripheral" factories, the labour process is developing, like in the majority of the Japanese industries, according with the labor organization system by team, group, or cell. Each worker carries out a quantity of operations related to the elaboration of a piece or some part of this piece. However, all the members of this team are familiar with all operations executed in this group labour process. Periodically, the workers have to change their work place with their co-worker, mainly in the case of impeachment(absent, sickness, temporary absent, etc.). Each work team has a "leader" chosen by the workers' imediate manager, in some cases occupied by Brazilians that obtain, in some form, the trust of the manager by term of service, leadership, experience in the whole team activities and the capacity to communicate in the Japanese language. Some workers have the responsibility in the operation of the automatic work line, with robots; it is enough for the worker to pay attention to the problems of the automatic system, controlling the income of materials, the correct

working of the equipment and the exit of the pieces or products. A small number of Brazilians are contracted as permanent employees("shaim") like Japanese workers; in this case they have some opportunities to do complex jobs or enter a managerial position.

It is relevant to distinguish that the opportunities of contact with new technologies and the access to training system are within the limits appointed in the labour process where Brazilians are employed. As we can observe, Brazilians are working at less sophisticated jobs, even so, they are utilizing automatic equipment. Daily they are working at a limited number of operations to carry out the previously fixed production program for the job team. Differently from the fordist practice, there is a flexibility to execute the different operations, even that in the limits of time of work, because, at alternate days or periods, there is the possibilite of changing the work place with another worker. In some factories, this practice has extended for different working groups in the same section, which permit, not only the replacement of workers in cases of absense, but also in cases of displacement of the sections where there is a reduction of the production demand to sectors where there are a temporary necessity of production increase. This flexibility is connected with the oscillation that occurs in the demand of pieces and components in programations that attend the demands( proportion, delivery time table, etc.) required by the big contractors companies. So, there is demanded from the Brazilian worker a determined work rythm (mostly defined by the rythm of the equipment and machines of the production

line), a determined precision and quality in the execution of the tasks, this means capacity of attention, skill and speediness in the execution of the operations. In this kind of task speech is not necessary, on the contrary, silence and continuous attention is needed in the labour process. The ability of communication required in the work consists in understanding the solicitations that are given (generally in Japanese language), the norms and regulations of the factory; learn the work technics; and the use of the equipment and instruments of work, as well as the quantity of what he needs to produce dialy and the precautions to be taken in the work environment. By this way, although not essential, the knowledge of the Japanese language would facilitate this communication, only rarely the Japanese workers succeed in communicating in another language. So, the Brazilians who succeed in assuming the position of "leader" of the working group know, at least speak and understand, the Japanese language.

Besides learning how to use instruments, equipment, and specific materials for the production of a determined piece or component, the workers are obliged to adapt to the group work system, team or cells ---used by the major part of the enterprises---incorporating the techniques, behaviors and values connected to the organization of the production.

In the sector of commerce and services, part of the workers succeed in changing the condition of industrial labourer to small merchants or service performer directed to the consumer market constituted mostly by Brazilians. Being in Japan for a long time, about 5 to 7 years, they had the

opportunity to establish themselves in the commerce( restaurants, markets, sale of used cars, newspaper and magazine shops, clothes, and Brazilian products shops) and services, with the Japanese financial investors, mainly in the cities of Ota and Oizumi in the Gunma -Ken. Another part have come to work as employees of restaurants, pubs, and other services of Japanese proprietors. Others had the opportunity to work for newspapers and services that appeared also as a function of the great presence of Brazilians in the country, like newspapers written in Portuguese language directed especially to the Brazilians, and assistant services and support to the Brazilians created by prefectures, community associations, and agencies for information to foreigners. Also some found jobs at the employment contracting firms, as translators and in functions of following assistance and control of the workers. The Brazilian workers of the service sectors, as employees or as "small owners" are not in contact with advanced technological equipment except as organizational forms adopted in the general system of commerce and service performer in Japan.

In general terms, the majority of Brazilians work as labourers in the small factories in the automobil and eletronic sectors. In the last two years, we have observed a tendency of a change of occupation of these workers, with a considerable change to the commerce and services, directed by a high proportions of dismissals in the industrial sector, caused by the desceleration of the Japanese economy. This process is followed by a displacement of workers from the industrial areas, traditionally with a

concentration of foreign workers, to other regions of the country.

## THE BACKGROUND OF THE PROFESSIONAL FORMATION OF BRAZILIANS IN JAPAN

The Brazilian workers in Japan are almost totally, Japanese descendants ("nikkey"), who are mostly constituted by small agriculturists, small merchants, autonomous services (mechanics, hairdressers, accountants, travel agents, etc.) many speciality technicians, superior level professionals (engineers, doctors, psychologists, lawyers, educators, nurses, teachers), secretaries, bankclerks, office assistants and students of many subjects. They come from Brazilian areas where Japanese and descendants were concentrated, like the States of São Paulo, Parana, Para and also from the State of Minas Gerais and others.

Historically, "Brazilian Japanese Communities" were localized in São Paulo City and adjacent areas, mainly in the Mogi's area, and cities located in the northwest and the ones situated at the Alta Paulista area, according to the coffee's expansion route(7). From São Paulo State, they extended to Parana State, initially to the cities of Londrina and Maringa, following the coffee's expansion to this area. Some went to nearby cities of Mato Grosso State and Minas Gerais State. In addition to the spacial mobility, there occurred another social-spacial mobility, with the escape of the youth to the big cities and capitals(metropoles) intending to proceed with their studies at a superior level or to work in services and companies with better prospects of money and career. Escaping from the limited possibilities of social ascent of



the small country cities, principally since the middle of the 60's(sixties)(8). So , the remainder living in the cities were mostly the aged persons and ones that take part in rural and comercial activities.

A considerable contingent of young "nikkey" started to attend universities and faculties mainly in subjects of engineering, of exact sciences, biology, nursering, and medicine. Others occupy administrative jobs at banks, accountance offices, and big commercial and industrial enterprises, controlled by Japanese and Japanese descendants.

We can say that the influence of the Japanese traditional culture brought by the imigrants that went to São Paulo and the acquaintances that were developed in Brazil had been attained by a similar form between the descendants that were located in São Paulo, Parana, Mato Grosso and Minas Gerais, with variations caused by the regional differences of the origins in Japan. The biggest difference occurred among the ones who stayed in the country in small cities and the ones who stayed in capital and large cities.

The "Nippo-Brazilian communities" localized in Para have another historical origin. They are constituted of Japanese and descendants who settled down posteriorly in this area, in a fight against the bad weather and succeeded to affirm themselves economically with the production of black-pepper. Here they also developed into "Nippo-Brazilians" communities, preserving most of the customs, traditions and the Japanese language. The descendants also dispersed to other areas of the country,

for economic or other kind of oportunities.

Besides the different regional origins and the professional variety, the Brazilians show a variety of cultural influences, depending on which Japanese generation they are from (first, second or third) or the non-Japanese descent. This fact had acted on the origin of the insertion of workers into Japanese society.

The cultural formation of the first generation of Japaneses in Brazil ("nissei") shows up very differently from the other later generations. Most of them had direct contact with the customs of traditional Japan (period of Meiji) brought by the immigrants, mainly in the family, that was constituted as the principle nucleus of living, despite the significant influence of cultural and sporting associations created by Japanese and descendants. In the case of "nisseis", the Japanese parents themselves (at least one of them) used the native language, accepted the customs of alimentation and of the house's ornamentation, participated in festivals and typical Japanese commemorations, accepted Japanese customs in cases of birth and death of relatives, accepted Japanese religious practice, and so on. Generally living in rural areas or small country cities, the "nisseis" had more possibilities to live in "Nippo-Brazilians communities", where they put into practice sports, dances, and music copied from Japan. Generally, these descendants followed the news of Japan, by newspaper written in Japanese, important events which happened in Japan, and music and movies in vogue. Also, they had access to magazines (for adults and children) and books imported from Japan.

Traditionally, the Japanese and their descendants were connected to the agricultural activities in Brazil, participating in the cultivation of a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Even today, they control the production and commercialization of a considerable part of the sector of agricultural and cattle products. In the past, they were involved in activities of merchandise and services of country towns, like; restaurants, pub, green groceries, beauty parlours, laundries, mechanic workshops, etc...

A proeminent Japanese influence in the formation of these descendants consists in the maximum valorization of the school education (even all the family members sacrifice themselves so what one of the members can get an elevated scholarship formation), of the family (mainly the parents), of the discipline in the work, and the autocontrol of emotions. Generally, they tried to do studies connected with exact and biological sciences, not just by the valorization of the occupations like doctor and engineer in the Brazilian society, but principally by difficulties in subjects that involved the use of expression and communication, demanding fluency in the Portuguese language. In the 60's and 70's there was a large presence of "nisseis" in courses of engineering and medicine, and also physics, chemistry, and math, pharmacy, and odontology, mainly in the universities located in São Paulo.

However, this generation, mostly those who lived in town, had a life influenced by Brazilians of many other origins, mainly at school, in the neighborhood, at church, at the market, and at other activities. So we can not say

that the "nisseis" were a mere reproduction of the ancient Japanese in Brazil, but Brazilians with a strong Japanese cultural influence, although because they participate in the larger society, they claim themselves to "exit from the world to enter in another".

The ones from third ("sansei") and fourth ("yonsei") generations, except those who are still in "Nippo-Brazilian communities" of country towns, have a reduced influence of the customs and the Japanese language. Sons of "nisseis" parents (at least one of them), many of whom were liberal professionals, teachers, high and middle employee of enterprises, merchants, commercial employees, bank clerks in big cities or capitals, have a more integrated formation with the Brazilian society and wider than the "Nippo-Brazilians communities". With residence disbanded in the big cities, with "western" customs of alimentation, festival commemorations (Christmas, birthday, marriage ceremony, etc.), relationship with parents, little informal opportunity of contact with the Japanese language, the later generations can, with some exceptions, be considered "more westernized", which means, their expressions show more cultural characteristics and behavioural proportions of the Brazilian society.

As a general rule, the descendant of Japanese, relative to Brazilian population, have a high level of scholarship, inclusively, with a significant proportion showing a superior level. They are distributed in many economic activities, concentrating on the production of agricultural and cattle products, in the wholesale and retail trade, in the jobs of high and mid administration of

the industry, technical services, hospital, education and others. Actually, the "nikkey" are in the largest variety of economic activities of the country, that expanded with the industrial development since the middle of the 50's. Besides the merchants and small and medium industries, are professionals of many areas, such as; doctors, engineers, economists, administrators, bank clerks, managers, researchers, teachers, secretaries, office assistants, and occupying posts in industries, banks, hospitals, schools, universities, consulting, counselling, and information offices, among other sectors.

By these, we can indicate different characteristics between descendants of the first generation ("nisseis") and the ones from the other generations; the first generation has manifested familiarity with the language and customs of ancient Japan. The fact that they are more familiarized with the Japanese language and customs, in principle, would facilitate the adaptation of the workers, by allowing more facility of communication. On the other hand, the non-familiarity of the Japanese people with the foreign countries, in view of its historic homogeneity, has made it difficult to accept the customs, attitudes, and foreign values of the Japanese. So, by some of these, there is a greater predisposition to communicate with people through the socio-cultural expressions that have similar aspects.

The workers that have more possibilities of better job opportunities, even those for remuneration, and to participate in more qualified activities, are those who have better conditions of communicating and

participation at work, like; serving as a translator in the communication between Japanese and Brazilians in the enterprises, being able to understand and assimilate quickly the forms and rules, written and spoken, in the Japanese language, being able to correct their own doubts and problems at work, etc...

Some aspects of the cultural inheritance of the Japanese descendants merit prominence by easily adapting themselves to work (and to social life), which are: knowledge of Japanese language, respect and obedience to superiors and elders, submission to rules, norms and regulations, discipline at work, and discreet behaviour in social relations.

Also, there is a relatively high educational level, because a big part of the Brazilian workers have completed high school and a considerable proportion reached the college level, this is associated with the accentuated educational valorization by the "Nippo-Brazilians" communities. Although the education obtained in Brazil is not considered by the undertakers, like an important item for the admittance to services, it helps in the worker process, by the worker conforming to his area of interest, and, principally, if his scholarship formation or his previous professional experience in Brazil is related to his work in Japan.

The participation of Japanese descendants in similar labour as industries in Brazil is still low, because it is still a recent phenomenon. By a general rule, the "nikkey" are not familiarized with the operating labour, so, in Japan, they work mostly like labours at factories in

the automobile, electronic, alimentary, and civil construction sectors.

The demand for Brazilians by the industries in Japan, since the second half of the 80's, coincided with the years of an accentuated recession of the Brazilian economy. Contingents of workers were dismissed (even in more elevated levels of the factories), small and medium-sized merchants have found difficulties to maintain their activities, technical professionals and also those of a superior level have found difficulties to maintain their job (mainly those who have been recently-admitted or recently-graduated). With a high inflation, which in the 90's reached more than 30% per month, the difficulty to sustain the families increased, creating a large contingent of the Brazilian population living in misery.

The prospect of better earning conditions to solve one's economical and financial problems made the Brazilian "nikkey" --- by the degree in which the Japanese government permitted only the entrance of descendants and their relatives to work in Japan --- to migrate increasingly to this country for some years, as a worker.

The Japanese and descendants with financial difficulties in Brazil, mainly young people from 18 to 36 years old, coming from many different sectors of work, from rural and urban areas, and from small and large cities came to compose a determined class of labourers in Japan. By this way, we can say that while working in Japan, the Brazilians of various conditions and professions became involved in a process of "homogenization" of work conditions, as a labourer in small and medium factories "subcontracted" by

the automobile and electronics sectors. The workers themselves express a conscience of this situation, even if many reject it, mainly in an affirmation of this point : "Here we are really "peons". Even if we are an engineer, doctor or anything."

To the Japanese managers, the variety of previous work experience in Brazil does not signify a qualification for activities in the Japanese factories. First, because the lack of labour is restricted in some sectors, in which the task is simple and of immediate apprenticeship; second, there is not a demand for previous technological knowledge; and finally, there is not a recognition of the Brazilian professionals in Japan. Although, certain types of behaviour of workers accepted in Brazil, seem to disturb the adaptation of Brazilians into the Japanese work process, with a high rotation in the work market; the independence and lack of collective spirit, the personal non-involvement in work (the enterprises seen as a family), a flexibility of execution of the obligation and honorarium between others.

The migration of Brazilians to Japan seems to have followed stages of entrance of: Japanese and relatives who returned to Japan, followed by "nisseis", and later by sanseis, yonseis, half-castes and non-descendants. By the work nature, the search for young people by enterprises (18 to 38 years old) actually shows a very distinctive point in the initial stage of immigration: young Brazilian workers with a reduced Japanese cultural influence side by side with the "nisseis" with a accentuated level of this cultural inheritance.



## LIMITS AND ADVANCES OF THE QUALIFICATION OF BRAZILIAN WORKERS IN JAPAN

Some parameters permit us to define the range and the nature of the qualification obtained by Brazilians in their experience of work in Japan, which are; the labour field, the nature of the employment, the access to technological knowledge, in addition to the "background" brought from Brazil.

We can say as a general rule that the process of qualification of the Brazilian workers is limited by the work field where they are inserted, which means: in the "peripheral" factories of the subcontracted effectively to the large enterprises of the automobile and electronic sectors, by civil construction firms, services of restaurants, bars, etc., and in auxiliary services of healthcare and cleaning of hospitals and other establishments. Even for the Japanese that work in the same condition as the Brazilians, the limitations to the qualification are similar.

The access to the most complex system of workers training is destined to the employees with more responsibilities and more complex activities in these small and middle firms. Besides this, they cannot count on a their own training system with short, medium, and long duration courses, like what occurs in big companies. Some big companies have professional courses of high school and college level, with a complex curriculum. In many of these big enterprises, there are sectors of production of equipment or machines to be used in their own

production which requires the worker to be at a high level of qualification, making it possible to develop knowledge for their own work process.

In view of the simplicity of the jobs, the Brazilians learn the "work" only in the work place (OJT - On the Job Training), with a maximum duration of a week. Generally, they do not participate in training courses or other activities for the formation of workers. Even the problems that occur in the work process are mainly solved by the group leaders. It needs to be made clear that the leader also executes the tasks of the work group, while at the same time teaches a task, resolves problems in the work line, and verifies if everything is going according to the initial program.

From the time they enter a factory, each worker can use the assistance of an old employee ("sempai") "responsible" for his adaptation into the enterprise, who can be a co-worker of the same group (team) of production or the leader of this group. This kind of training (OJT) constitutes the most common pattern of apprenticeship adopted in the enterprises for all the initial employees, even in big companies. The more complex the training is the longer the requested period in which the worker will be connected to a "sempai" (normally the period varies from one to two years for Japanese workers in big enterprises or complex sectors of factories).

The ones who enter an enterprise by the way of an employment contracting firm, receives an early orientation of norms and rules of the work, conduct rules at work and at home, because they take over paternally and

also control many aspects of the life of the worker. In the factory, they receive instructions about the principles, the norms, and the regulations of the enterprise and are directed to the work place for the apprenticeship of the tasks (OJT).

The capacity to rapidly incorporate new techniques, the speed and the exactness in the tasks, the attention on the execution of the tasks, and the capacity to exercise various tasks (flexibility), are indispensable principles of the workers qualification. At one time, almost all the Brazilians in Japan did not have experience as labourers in Brazil, so they all the learned the techniques, as simple as they could be, to constitute the qualificative aspects of the worker. On the other hand, by this same fact we can observe a larger versatility in the work of Brazilians, the services, suited with the aspect of the flexibility of the organization system of the work process at Japanese enterprises. This characteristic permits the Brazilian worker not only to obtain more efficiency in the execution of the tasks, but also to have a larger opportunity for a change of employment, for better salaries, or more gainfull or less hostile work conditions. This last aspect disrupts the general practice of the Japanese workers and places itself against the enterprises expectations.

An important element in the worker's experience at the factory is the knowledge obtained by the worker about the techniques, the behaviours, and the principles of the work in the cells (staff, group, or team), work system scattered in all areas of economic activities in Japan and that are also being increasingly accepted in the West. The

system of group work means the search for an "optimum" integration between the workers and the equipment and automatic machines for executing of the expected production with precision, quality, and speed. In this context, the worker learns the techniques of execution of the tasks in agreement with the co-workers of the group and in accordance with the dynamics of the automatic equipment. So, it is of importance that the worker knows the other tasks of the group in order to supply the vacancies to reach the production objective defined before: each one can replace the other, in cases of impeachment so that the tasks of the absent go on being realized which allows the equipment and machines to be able to continue operating uninterruptedly on the expected program.

As a general rule, in the factories' services, the qualification of the Brazilian worker consists in the acquisition of simple techniques of production, of organization and of the discipline at work, besides the assimilation of conduct and principles of the group work system. In certain cases, we can verify the acquisition of techniques of use and control robots and other automatic equipment. This level of qualification for the work signifies, primarily, the acquisition of behavioural standards (discipline, posture, principle, etc.) for an easy adaptation of these workers in the process of industrial work.

Although the companies do not give formal value to the professional experience and the formal education previously obtained by the worker, these, in many cases, have facilitated the understanding and the execution of the

work techniques, even without the knowledge of the Japanese language.

If we think of the qualifications of the Brazilian worker, within the limits of the labour process, we can say that there is occurring a process of "stagnation" in the potencial currents of their profession, previous experience, and their formal education, in the way that by coming to Japan, with the primary objective to acumulate funds to return to Brazil in better financial condition, perhaps signifies a gap in the development of their professional activities, considering that the great proportion of Brazilians have a minimum scholarship level of high school , and a significant portion with a college level of education. To other workers though, it can signify an advancement , as the financial earnings enable them to initiate new commercial activities or services in Brazil, especially for the ones who were unemployed or had to end their economic activities.

The different opportunities of qualification are presented to the Brazilians that can occupy some managerial function or are contracted as functionaries of the permanent board("shaim") in factories, contracting firms, and entities of installment of public services, by the possibilities of participating in training courses, technical meetings, and contacts with other sectors, factories, and services.

In the particular case of the employment contracting firms, the activities of the employees are connected to the process of contracting and attendance at the work and the home of the Brazilian

workers under the responsibility of these enterprises. These employees have an opportunity to obtain information about some strategies used by enterprises in the administration employees. Most of the time, those employees exercise the function of "shock absorbers" in the conflicts among the workers, employment contracting firms, and factories.

In other cases, some Brazilians who came at the beginning of the migration process, after some years of work in factories, became established as small merchants (restaurants, sale of used cars, green groceries, small shops, clothing shops, video rental shops, etc.) and investors, attending to the demand of the consumer market formed by the presence of Brazilians. These small "owners" can acquire experience about the organizational form from their commercial activity, as well as about the specific relationships necessary for their business (with suppliers, prefectures, banks, etc.). Others became factory employees, with contracts similar to the Japanese's contracts, occupying inclusive functions of manager. In these cases, the Brazilians have manifested a greater motivation to stay for a longer period of time in Japan.

The limitation of the opportunities by their qualification in the work process does not extend to the few Brazilians who succeed in entering the public information services, in newspapers or nongovernmental agencies for information and assistance for foreigners; neither does it extend to Japanese enterprises in Brazil with their main office in Japan. In addition, there is a small number of Brazilian students in Japan who, like the students who came from other countries, are doing

"arubaito", a kind of part-time work, such as, translation activities, teaching Portuguese language courses, and informations services for foreigners.

On the whole, the Brazilians with a knowledge of Japanese language and a familiarity with the customs, attitudes, and principles of the Japanese culture have found more acceptance by the enterprises to exercise more qualified functions, almost always associated with aspects of the communication between Brazilians and Japanese. This fact is supported by the fact that most Japanese still have difficulties assimilating aspects of foreign cultures, mainly those related to Brazil and other Latin American countries. Also, the change in Japan's Immigration Law, permitting Japanese descendants up until the third generation("sansei"), with their relatives (even non descendants) to work in Japan, has started an acceleration of the migratory process to Japan. This has made possible an elevated presence of Brazilians who do not succeed in communicating easily with the Japanese, so there has come into existence many communication services between both, which are realized by Brazilians familiar with the language and aspects of Japanese culture.

The importance attributed by the Japanese to knowledge of the language and the adoption of attitudes and values of the Japanese culture, mainly by the exercise of functions where more responsibility and necessity of communication are needed, points to the aspect of familiarity with the Japanese culture as one of the basic elements to ascend in the hierarchy in the labour process, within the preestablished limits of participation by foreign workers.

This aspect can better understood when related to an important Japanese cultural aspect: the value of the integration of the people with similar behaviours, attitudes, and values in a collective for the realization of a project or job. In this case, "to be different" can be dangerous to the successful result of the collective undertaking as a measure in which emphasizes the individuality. In this way, the limits of the work field reserved for the foreigners, one of the principle events of qualification of Brazilian workers seems to be the knowledge of the Japanese language and incorporation of attitudes and behaviours of the Japanese culture, mainly the ones who favor inserting themselves into the collective.

This space is generally occupied by "nikkey" workers, familiar with Japan's language, customs, and values independently of their educational level or professional experience in the native country. In the factories, employment contracting firms, informations services, community centers, and cultural associations, there is observed an increasing insertion of Brazilians with a knowledge of the Japanese language. On the other hand, it is interesting to observe the search for knowledge of Brazilian language and culture by the Japanese connected to these activities, hoping to occupy or to better execute their related functions with the Brazilians.

In the measure by which the worker in foreign countries is subjected to the influence not only of economics, but principally of cultural and social influence, his own experience of life can constitute a process of apprenticeship and an important element of qualification .



In this perspective, the qualification of foreign workers, particularly the Brazilians, it has to be focused on a large-scale perspective, including the apprehension of the knowledge provided by the life in a society considered highly developed. In this way, the qualification includes aspects related to the strategies founded and established by Brazilians to survive in a cultural reality of an advanced society, that will give a more complex and richer vision of the experience of these workers in the Exterior and the nature and values of their qualification. We will try to approach this aspect in later texts.

### Notes

(1) "Nikkei" are the Japanese descendants born outside of Japan and include "nissei" (2nd. generation), "sansei" (3rd. generation), "yonsei" (4th. generation), and half-castes (mestizos).

(2) The data about the Aichi prefecture was calculated from the data obtained from the Secretary of the Aichi Prefecture, Department of Regional Topics, and the references to the city of Hamamatsu were obtained from the Hamamatsu's Research Report (1993), under responsibility of the Professor Toyoie Kitagawa, from Toyo's University, Tokyo.

(3) Extra paper "World Media" from the newspaper "Folha de São Paulo", 1991.10.28, page 2-5.

(4) Among others we can cite: Congress of Sociology, realized in Tokyo, Toyo University, October of 1993; Social Education Congress, realized in Nagoya, Nagoya University - Faculty of Education, July of 1993, Japan's Workers Syndicate Congress, realized in Gamamori, October of 1993 and International Seminary of the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), Nagoya, 1991.

(5) The term "dekassegui" was used originally to designate the Japanese migrants in the period between two harvests of a product in the undeveloped areas in the North and South that went to work in the industrialized areas (center) of Japan. The term came to be used predominantly for the Brazilians who left Brazil to work temporarily in Japan. See "Dekassegui", organized by Ninomiya, Masato Estação Liberdade, Japanese Culture Brazilian Society, 1992.

(6) About the system of subcontracting of enterprises in Japan see, among others, Kagami, Mitsuhara: "Strategies for competition of production: The Focus of the East Asian", RAE, - Vol. 33, number 5, September-October 1993, p.10-31 and Mitsui, Itsutomu: "The importance of subcontracting relationship", paper presented in the Work Sociology Congress, Tokyo, October 8 and 9 of 1993.

(7)Vieira, Franscisca Isabel S.: The Japanese in front of the São Paulo's expansion, Pioneira Library/ Ed. USP, São Paulo, 1973.

(8) Data based on the author's experience, from her childhood together with some Nippo-Brazilians Communities.

See also: Handa, Tomoo: Memories of a Japanese Immigrant in Brazil, T.A. Queiroz Ed./ Nippo-Brazilian Study Center, São Paulo, 1980 and Saito, Hiroshi (organizer): The Japanese Presence in Brazil, EDUSP/T.A. Queiroz Ed., São Paulo, 1980.