

## Symposium Report

### **Title of Symposium: 25 Years of the Dekassegui Movement: Brazilians in Japan at a Crossroads**

(25年の経験：在日ブラジル人の転換点)

**Date:** December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016 (13:30-18:10)

**Venue:** Sophia University, Yotsuya Campus, Library Room L-921

**Keynote Speaker:** Professor Dr. Masato Ninomiya (University of São Paulo, Faculty of Law)

#### **Presenters :**

**Title: Transnational Networks and the Organizational Process of Japanese Brazilians**

Name: Gustavo Meireles

Sophia University, Graduate School of Global Studies, Doctoral Program in International Relations

**Title: The social role of educational institutions in an immigrant community**

Name: Maria Juliana Konigame

University of Tsukuba, Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of International Public Policy

**Title: "Plowing the land": some considerations on the dissemination of Brazilian Spiritism in Japan**

Name: Alvaro Kanasiro Katsuaki

University of Tsukuba

Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of History and Anthropology

**Title: Language Maintenance and Shift in the Brazilian Community in Ibaraki, Japan: Evidence from Brazilian Immigrants from the First and Second Generation.**

Name: Flávia Rocha Feijó

University of Tokyo, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Department of Language and Information Sciences

#### **Commentators:**

Angelo Ishi (Professor – Faculty of Sociology, Musashi University)

Edson Urano (Associate Professor – Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tsukuba)

The financial crisis of 2008 had an enormous impact in the Japanese economy and negatively affected the Brazilian community. While around 70.000 of these migrants decided to go back to South America, those who stayed were compelled to

organize themselves, both to endure the difficult times, as well to demand solutions from the authorities. In October 2015, the Tokyo Brazilians' Citizen Council approved the Declaration of Yokohama. In this document, the members of the council declared the end of the so called *dekassegui* period and vowed to be active members in Japanese society. Since the beginning of the immigration process of Brazilians to Japan, the community has gone through amazing changes, both in number and in character. This symposium attempted to understand some of these changes by addressing different aspects of the community, namely the matters of associativism, religion, education and language.

In his presentation, keynote speaker Professor Dr. Masato Ninomiya discussed the main developments in the 25 years since the 1990 enactment of the reformed Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition. Having witnessed many of the events that impacted the Brazilian community and actively studying them, Professor Dr. Ninomiya presented a unique view of these facts and his take on Brazil-Japan relations.

In the first presentation by a graduate student, Gustavo Meireles highlighted the changes in how the Brazilian community in Japan organizes itself, focusing on the role of networks between associations of Brazilians abroad in this process. In his findings, he stresses that the role played by the Brazilian government through its embassy, consulates and citizens' councils, as well as the networks created between the Brazilian community in Japan and in other countries around the globe can prove significant in terms of providing expertise and resources necessary for the bolstering of the community in the Asian country.

The second presentation, by Maria Juliana Konigame, aimed at describing the various roles Brazilian schools have within the community. According to her study, each educational institution in Japan has its own view about their role in society and some schools provide services that go beyond educational issues. Therefore, the debate about the relationship between schools and NPOs and the roles of all actors involved (schools, NPOs and government) needs to be better understood, once there is no single solution to the problem of education and well-being of Brazilian students in Japan.

As for the third presentation, Alvaro Kanasiro Katsuaki portrayed the evolution of different religions that cater the Brazilian community in Japan, paying special attention to the case of Spiritualism. This religion has been brought to Japan by Brazilian migrants and through them has grown in the country. The different strategies these migrants have used to expand the religion vary depending on factors such as fluency in the Japanese language and closeness to Japanese culture.

Lastly, Flávia Rocha Feijó introduced her research on the Portuguese language ability variation amongst different generations. Based on data she collected in Ibaraki Prefecture she concluded that social networks of the informants have a significant impact on the language behavior of the second generation, especially for the maintenance of Portuguese among this generation.

Comments from the professor focused on the importance of the event itself and also on the future of the Brazilian community in Japan. It was stressed that this was the first attempt by Brazilian scholars in Japan to discuss in an academic environment matters that affect the Brazilian community in the country. In that sense, the event itself reflects changes the community is facing. As for the future of the community, the different presentations portrayed a tendency to prolonged stay in Japan and a gradual inclusion in different sectors of the Japanese society. However, there are still matters for

concern. The education of younger generations was cited as an essential step towards integration in Japanese society.

This Symposium provided an opportunity for Brazilian researchers of different generations and various fields to gather and discuss the Brazilian community in Japan. As a first attempt to do so, the event was successful in debating relevant issues for the community and advocating topics that should be on the academic and political agenda of both countries.