

**Occupational Mobility of Japanese Immigrants and Economic
Development Politics in Brazil: The Case of Agricultural Cooperatives,
1930-1980**

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I examine how occupational mobility of Japanese immigrants – from colonos to land owners – and government policies towards economic development programs were crucial to the emergence of agricultural cooperatives in Brazil. Using data from a 1958 Japanese population in Brazil census and bibliographical material, I suggest theoretical and empirical guidelines for a better understanding of the interplay between the market and noneconomic factors in the experience of these cooperatives. It is argued that the agricultural cooperativism represented one of the main collective organizational devices of Japanese immigrants for economic activity coordination, as well as it aggregated potential resources for the inclusion of this population in political and social processes in the host society. Cooperatives of Japanese immigrants in Brazil increased significantly from the 1930s, and especially during the Brazilian military dictatorship they have become fundamental institutions for the agriculture modernization policies. To understand the conditions that allowed these entrepreneurships emergence and its outcomes for the Japanese immigrants and their descendants over time I consider external and internal organizational factors, like the State regulation through laws and economic development plans, political regime changes, the spatial mobility of immigrants, the growth of the regional economy and cultural characteristics of immigrants. I explore relevant political processes of Brazilian society to understanding the performance structures of these cooperatives on market, as well as the orientation and influence of social forces that operated over these structures, sustaining or modifying it over time.

Keywords: japanese immigration, brazilian-japanese, agricultural cooperatives, Brazil

INTRODUCTION

On October 24, 1969, Brazil was governed by a Joint of Provisional Governors due to the impossibility of president Marechal Arthur Costa e Silva finish his tenure. The Joint had prevented the vice-president to take charge through a constitutional amendment and gave possession to General Emílio Garrastazu Médici. The newspapers announced the appointment of ministers chosen for the next presidential term¹. To the Ministry of Industry and Commerce was appointed Fabio Ryodi Yassuda, a former farmer and son of Japanese immigrants, born in the state of São Paulo. Yassuda was the first Minister of Japanese origin to exercise a ministerial position in Latin America ever, and this fact was a source of pride for many Japanese and their descendants living in Brazil.

But the political rise of Yassuda also reveals other important elements to understand the trajectory of Japanese immigration to Brazil. Before occupying the post of Minister, he had been Secretary of Supply for the City of São Paulo and President of the National Confederation of Agriculture. Even more relevant is the fact that for more than twenty years Yassuda had been Managing Director and Vice-President of a major Brazilian agricultural cooperative, the Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia.

The Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia was one of the most prominent agricultural cooperatives in Brazil. It was founded in 1927 by Japanese immigrants, when the number of cooperatives began to increase significantly in Brazil's Southeast. Especially during the Brazilian military dictatorship, it became an important institution for the agriculture modernization policies. Here, agents acted decisively and guided this cooperative firm economic directions by assuming key positions in sectoral organs, public departments and ministries, reorienting the growth trajectory of the company according to the directions of government policy, obtaining and addressing resources of various kinds that contributed to its development. Later, it was considered the biggest cooperative firm in Latin America and, in 1987 was one of the twenty biggest Brazilian firms, according to the magazines specialized in business reviews².

Considering a past of persecution and repression against the Japanese in Brazilian society – especially in the years after the World War II – to a subsequent

¹ Correio da manhã, 24 de outubro de 1969, p.1.

² Maiores e Melhores 87, Revista Exame, 1987.

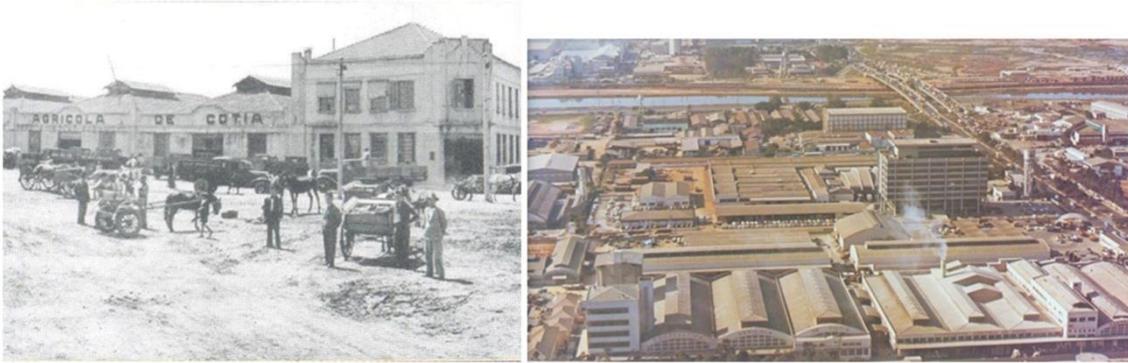
insertion in the Brazilian political and economic cores, one might ask: what were the conditions that allowed the access of those immigrants to Brazilian occupational structure? What were the mechanisms used by them to ensure better positions in this structure? How an immigrant population, that lacks some local cultural codes, mobilized and managed resources in order to take part into the political and economic life in Brazil?

I argue that the agricultural cooperativism represented one of the main collective organizational devices of Japanese immigrants for economic activity coordination in Brazil, as well as it aggregated potential resources for the their inclusion in political and social processes in the host society in the first fifty years of that immigration, especially in the state of São Paulo. To develop this research I adopt an approach that focuses on the socio-economic *phenomena* of immigration, considered by Robert Merton “a strategic research site”³. This approach is not only alluding to the fact that the bases of operation of the cooperatives were settled in the agricultural market. I am interested in investigating the construction and operation of the market, which constitute a historical outcome of social interaction forms corresponding to certain power relations between social groups (Abramovay, 2006). As posed by Evans (1980), I seek to develop a sociological approach to the economic *phenomena* examining business strategies as determined, in important dimensions, by certain social dynamics which, in the manner that the Economics usually conceives, would not be related to the market.

The performance of the Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia in building the Brazilian agricultural market is analyzed in details in my research. This paper is part of that research and has a more empirical feature. I present selected data and historical conjunctures that indicate the conditions that allowed the emergence and expansion of these cooperatives.

³ Merton, R. K., 1995. Foreword. In: Portes, A. (Ed.). The Economic Sociology of Immigration. Essays on Networks, Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship. New York: Russel Sage Foundation, pp.7-11.

The Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia main facilities: In the 1930s (left) and in 1978 (right)



Souces: Museu Histórico da Imigração Japonesa no Brasil and "Coopercotia 50 anos"

I propose a sociological approach to understand the dynamics of market processes not only as assumptions of economic action and rational behavior of agents in ideal conditions, but as influenced by social factors. If the markets were historically analyzed more for their results than the processes that took place there (Guimarães, 2009), the recent developments in the field of economic sociology have contributed to review this assumption⁴.

I seek to develop a political-cultural approach on markets to discuss how certain social structures come into existence, produce stable worlds, and are transformed (Fligstein, 1996). I analyse how the performance of japanese agricultural cooperatives in creating governance structures, laws, production and trading patterns, technical knowledge, among others, represented their social attempts to organize a market.

An investigation about the experiences of immigrants in local labour markets should be alert to the fact that when the market is analyzed only in terms of the exchange situation (i.e. the completion of the transaction between labour supply and demand), a variety of processes that precede and succeed it are left out (Sassen, 1995). In order to avoid a deceptively simple view, I consider the social conditions that enabled the development of cooperatives of Japanese immigrants in Brazil, like the State regulation through laws and economic development plans, political regime changes, the spatial mobility of immigrants, the growth of the regional economy and cultural characteristics of immigrants.

⁴ See Zelizer, 1988; Swedberg, 1994; Fligstein, 1996; Abramovay, 2004.

For this task, first I expose the broader political contexts in which the State regulation configured economic development plans and legislation for agriculture in Brazil between 1930 and 1980. Despite the restrictions and political persecution imposed to the foreigners due to projects of nationalization, the Japanese have found alternative ways of insertion in the occupational structure. At this point, I analyze the occupations of these immigrants in agricultural labor market in order to demonstrate how their mobility process – from colonos to land owners – created conditions for cooperative membership and also allowed the creation of a market structure for agricultural commerce.

Second, I describe the context of Brazilian military regime in which the agricultural development and modernization became main government goals, and I also focus on the protagonism of the Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia. In the second half of the twentieth century the diversification of agricultural production by small and medium producers became a hardly unnoticed reality in which firms, sectoral organs and business practices became standardized and were shaped by well-defined action boundaries. Also, the Brazilian State began to promote the economic development and this cooperative became the largest one in Latin America.

The ways in which agricultural cooperatives had developed in Brazil after World War II – and, I stress, the Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia was the major cooperative exponent at the period – was only one of several possible outcomes, as Granovetter (1998) argues in his study on electricity industry in the United States or Dobbin (2004) in the case of American and French railroads. This not necessarily means that the most technically or economically efficient ways of economic organization were reached and, therefore, it became legitimate, but that certain historical and social conditions of realization and interference of agents (both firms, individuals and groups) conducted the ways in which this market is structured. The historical facts make this claim plausible because, even though the Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia had the biggest operating structure that an agricultural cooperative could afford and controlled a significant share of the distribution of agricultural products, a stable position in the market was not completely ensured. In September 1994, after a period of financial crisis, this cooperative went into liquidation and was shut down, as well as other agricultural cooperatives of Japanese immigrants met the same fate.

The trajectory of rise and fall of the Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia makes the agricultural cooperative of Japanese immigrants a relevant issue to the immigration studies in Brazil. By creating appropriate structures for the organization of a market segment, that type of entrepreneurships represented one of the main collective organizational devices of Japanese immigrants for economic activity coordination. Supported over these structures, especially in the state of São Paulo, a second-generation elite of Japanese moved upwardly in Brazilian social structure and began to participate in the public management of the economy. The agriculture made it possible and a great example of this trend was the Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia.

POLITICAL CHANGES, NATIONALISM AND INTOLERANCE IN BRAZIL: ALTERNATIVES FOR MARKET INCLUSION THROUGH THE COOPERATIVISM

The beginning of Japanese immigration in Brazil is related to colonization projects initially sponsored by the state government of São Paulo that sought to attract foreign labour force for the coffee plantations. Unlike other countries in the American continent, the Japanese arrived in Brazil in the early twentieth century. From 1921 to 1940 the Japanese government became responsible for funding the costs of travel through the *Kaigai Kogyo*, the executive body of emigration created in 1917⁵. During this period, the institution sent around 164,000 Japanese to Brazil and the peak of the migration flow occurred between the 1930s and 1940s (Chart 1), mostly towards the state of São Paulo (Map 1).

It is important to consider that the large influx of Japanese immigrants in Brazil occurred in a specific context of Brazilian society characterized by deep political changes. In October 1930 an armed uprising called *Revolução de 30* took place in Brazil and led Getúlio Vargas to power⁶. Later, he conducted the 1937 coup called *Estado Novo* and ruled a dictatorial regime that lasted until 1945. From 1951 to 1954 he was democratically elected president.

In general, during the "democratic interval" (1945-1964) the economic policies were geared to the Brazil's fast industrial development and import substitution. In 1964

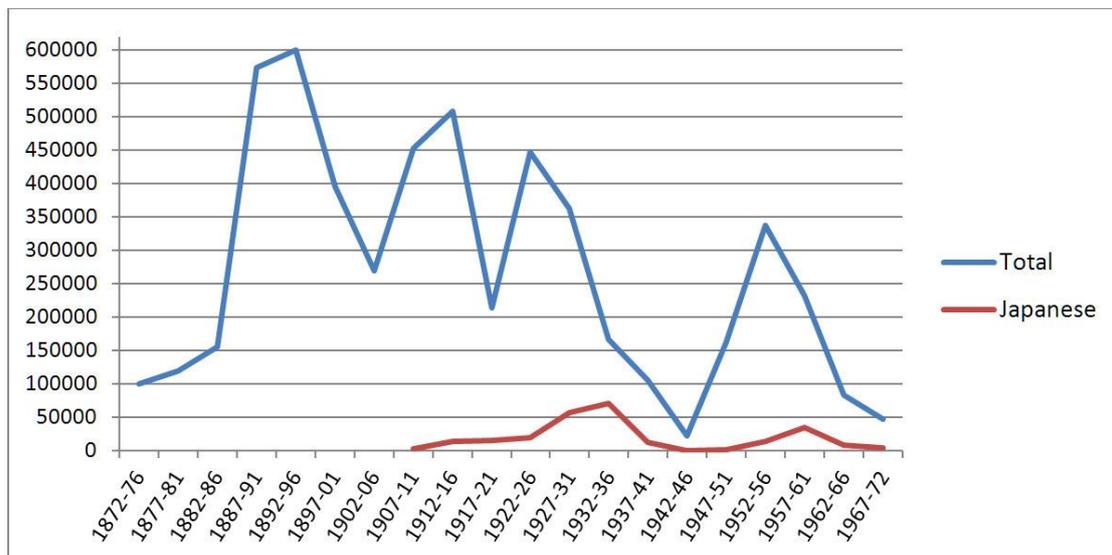
⁵ Nogueira, A. R., 1973. *A imigração japonesa para a lavoura cafeeira paulista (1908-1922)*. São Paulo: IEB.

⁶ For more information on this issue, see Fausto, B., 1997 and Fausto, B., 1978.

occurred the *Golpe Militar*, a coup led by the Armed Forces against the democratically elected government of President João Goulart. The Brazilian military government led the country until 1985 and its authoritarian regime promoted a number of changes in the regulation of economic policies. Unlike previous governments, the military chose agriculture as a strategic sector for the country's development.

With the creation of a new Brazilian constitution in 1934 the entry of foreigners in the country has become increasingly restricted and controlled by the hand of the State. More than that, the constitution exposed the eugenicists and racists principles that claimed a white racial superiority and the need to prevent the coming of "threatening" and "dangerous" foreigners, such as Asians⁷. Thus, from 1934 the entrance of Japanese immigrants was limited to 2,711 persons per year.

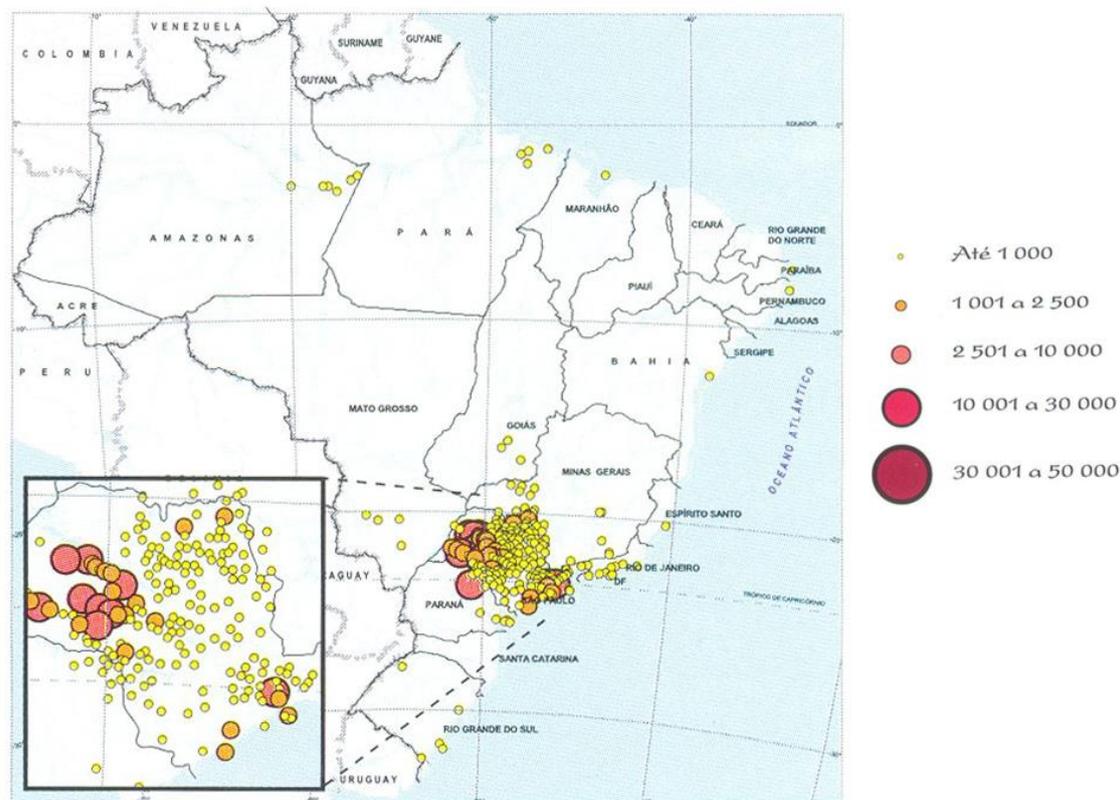
Chart 1 – Foreigners who entered Brazil by period and the Japanese, 1872-1972



Source: Levy, 1972.

⁷ For more information on this issue, see Leão Neto, V. C., 1989. A crise da imigração japonesa no Brasil (1930-1934) – Contornos diplomáticos. Brasília: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão.

Map 1 - Distribution of Japanese population by federation units (1940)



Source: IBGE, 2008, p.35

The *Estado Novo* government was characterized by centralization of power, nationalism, anti-communism and its authoritarianism. A brand new constitution was created once again in 1937, political parties were extinguished and the intolerance to foreigners became increasingly justified by a nationalist project, also known as *Campanha de nacionalização*. Thus, numerous prohibitions against foreigners entered into force⁸, making it a crime to speak a foreign languages, to publish newspapers or magazines in foreign languages, to create associations and hoisting flags of other countries. The government also prohibited any political activity by immigrants.

On the economy regulation, Vargas sought to centralize the market coordination through the hands of the State. His government stimulated the creation of state-owned enterprises in infrastructure sectors, rearranged laws and practices of economic policy and created the first nationwide law of labour rights. In opposition to an agrarian past

⁸ Decreto-Lei nº 383, de 18 de Abril de 1938.

of late industrialization, the Vargas government discourse was based on the idea that development was the main task of the public administration. Under this perspective, in 1932 the cooperative activity became regulated⁹, and in 1933 the Ministry of Agriculture has undergone several changes in ways that the federal government sought to relate directly with producers, particularly through public agencies and stimulated import substitution and diversification of agricultural activity.

In this context in which the entry of foreigners in Brazil was extremely restricted, and their activities were policed, the cooperativism emerged as an alternative for rural immigrant workers. Under the command of Juarez Távora the Ministry of Agriculture encouraged the formation of cooperatives by providing credit, basic infrastructure and technical guidance. This soon produced some results, and the number of officially registered cooperatives in Brazil grew 992% between 1930 and 1943¹⁰. In the state of São Paulo, the cooperative movement was also stimulated by specific programs, especially with the creation of the Department of Cooperative Assistance in 1933¹¹.

Therefore, regarding the social opportunities offered to the immigrants in the nationalization context of the 1930s, the Vargas development policies had a double aspect: politically, the participation of foreigners became increasingly limited, until reaching a violent persecution during World War II in the case of the Japanese, Italian and German population. Economically, the creation of laws, support to trade unions and cooperatives, among others, represented possibilities of insertion of immigrants in the labour market.

Brazil's entry in World War II strengthened the arguments in favor of political persecution of the Japanese by Vargas dictatorship. On January 29, 1942 Brazil broke diplomatic relations with the Axis Alliance¹². After the break, there were several procedures adopted by Vargas against the Japanese, Germans and Italians, including the freezing¹³ and confiscation of assets¹⁴, arbitrary arrests and the removal of the entire population of these three countries from the Brazilian Coast¹⁵. The advent of war made

⁹ Decreto nº 22.239, de 19 de Dezembro de 1932.

¹⁰ Em 1930 havia 175 cooperativas registradas e, em 1943 havia 1.912. Source: Da Silva, 2010, p.159

¹¹ Decreto n. 5.966, de 30 de junho de 1933.

¹² Jornal do Brasil, 29 de janeiro de 1942.

¹³ Decreto-Lei nº 4.166, de 11 de Março de 1942.

¹⁴ Decreto-Lei nº 5.777, de 26 de Agosto de 1943

¹⁵ A Tribuna, 9 de julho de 1943.

the *quotidien* of Japanese extremely inhospitable: the entry of immigrants from enemy countries was interrupted¹⁶ and the managerial staff of their cooperatives had to be replaced by Brazilians.

The environment of insecurity and isolation of the Japanese was reinforced by linguistic, cultural differences and exclusion from Vargas nationalist project. Also, it gave ballast to an ideological split between those immigrants. Basically, there were those who accepted Japan's defeat and those who believed that Japan had won the war. The internal conflict between Japanese immigrants was taken so seriously that some Japanese immigrants who accepted the defeat of their mother country in World War II were assassinated by Japanese extremists¹⁷.

In October 1945 Vargas was deposed by a military movement, as a result of political pressure against the repressive regime he ruled since 1937. The following year elections were held, political parties returned to the legality and Eurico Gaspar Dutra became president until 1951. Through elections, Vargas returned to power where he remained until 1954, when he committed suicide due to political scandals. In his last government Vargas restored diplomatic relations with the Japanese government.

In 1952 the entry of immigrants from that country was resumed in Brazil, but in smaller contingents. The largest share of Japanese immigrants entered the country through private initiatives, i.e., without relying on fundings linked to government colonization projects. For instance, in 1955 the Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia started its own immigration project called *Cotia Seinen*, bringing about 1,500 young Japanese to work in agricultural production.

The Brazilian economic policies in the period of "democratic interval" (1945-1964) had to deal with a balance of payments deficit. Some stabilization procedures were taken by federal government to ensure an infrastructure project for economic development, enabling the integration of heavy industry with capital, applying public capital in strategic ventures like petroleum, electricity and steel. In general, this period

¹⁶ Between 1942 and 1952 only 412 Japanese entered in Brazil.

¹⁷ This split of the Japanese population in Brazil after WWII became a public issue. In 1952 UNESCO conducted research in Brazil under the command of anthropologist Izumi Seiichi to assess the psychological situation of Japanese immigrants after the conflict. For further information, see Izumi, S., 1973. A Estrutura da Psicológica da Colônia Japonesa. In: Saito, H. , Maeyama, T. Assimilação e integração dos Japoneses no Brasil. São Paulo: Edusp.

was characterized by the acceleration of industrialization and urbanization, and the deepening integration between agriculture and industry. Thus, State intervention in agriculture was intensified (Beskow, 1999) and the main characteristic of agriculture in the period was to work as a source of transfer of resources to the urban and industrial sectors of the Brazilian economy. (Delgado, 1985).

In that period the Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia stood out in the sector of food production and supply, working in four Brazilian states. Later, during the military regime, it played an important role in the development of Brazilian agriculture. Before addressing this issue, I show some characteristics of the Japanese population in the state of São Paulo.

THE JAPANESE POPULATION IN THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO: OCCUPATIONAL CHANGE AND SPATIAL MOBILITY

The early studies of Japanese immigrants in Brazilian social sciences were written between the 1940s and 1970s. They sought to demonstrate in theoretical and empirical bases that the experience of Japanese immigration was a case of success in terms of "assimilation" or "integration" into the host society. These studies, however, must be understood by considering the historical context of its production. Many authors in the social sciences attempted to counter-argue certain opinions that asserted the inferiority and the 'inassimiliability' of the Japanese, especially in the period after World War II¹⁸.

In these studies the culture was a strategic dimension for analysis: according to some authors (Saito, 1964; Cardoso, 1972; Vieira, 1973) it enabled to find examples of social construction of "ethnicity" for political and economic purposes. In other words, the cultural characteristics of the Japanese immigrants were strategically mobilized in order to improve the market performance of individuals and groups. The critical point of these studies is that, from a conceptual standpoint, economic activities and culture might exist in two independent spheres, which reduces the possibilities to explain the phenomena. Economic activities were interpreted as concrete results of previously

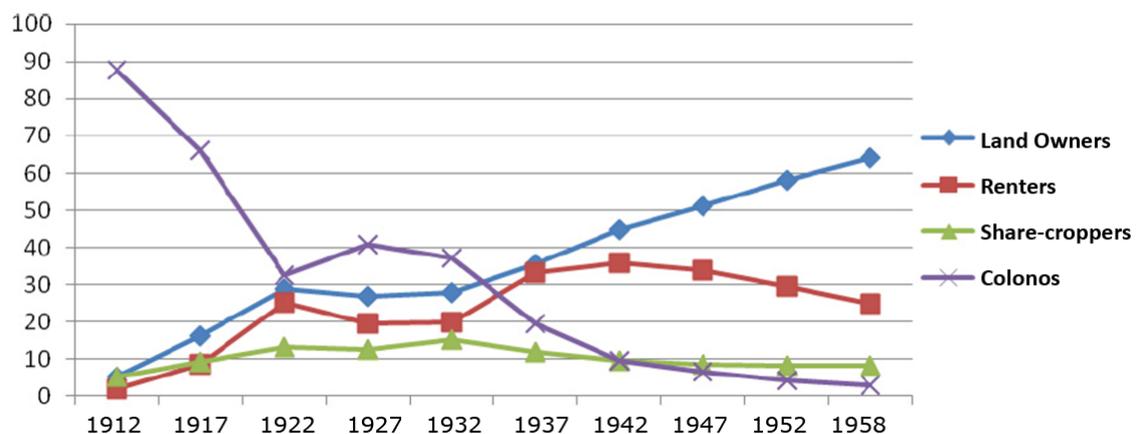
¹⁸ See Taniguti, G. T., Jesus, M. G., 2012. Sociologie de l'immigrant: Hiroshi Saito et l'institutionnalisation des études sur les Japonais du Brésil (1940-1960). *Brésil(s)*, v. 2, pp.201-224.

constituted "ethnic" strategies, and not in its dynamics, marked by uncertainties, failures, interests, power, political and structural constraints.

To overcome these limitations I suggest new contributions from recent debates on the social construction of markets and survey data from "*The Japanese Immigrant in Brazil*" (1964, 1969). Despite possibly having some consistency limitations related to its data processing, this can still be considered the most comprehensive source of data on the population of Japanese immigrants in Brazil.

Basically, between 1908 and 1958 a large portion of Japanese immigrants in Brazil experienced upward occupational mobility, considered within the agricultural occupations. This was accompanied by intense geographic shifts, initially towards the Western Region of the state and, later, towards the city of São Paulo (Saito, 1961). In the meantime, the agricultural cooperatives of Japanese have emerged, mostly in the state of São Paulo¹⁹. Chart 1 below illustrates the changes in occupational status for immigrants Japanese householders from 1908 to 1958 and Table 1 shows the main agricultural cooperatives of Japanese origin in the late 1930s.

Chart 1 - Occupational mobility of Japanese immigrants by period, 1912-1958



Source: The Japanese Immigrant in Brazil, 1969, v.2, p.241, table 255

¹⁹ Seabra (1977), based on data from the Department of Cooperative Assistance (DAC) of the Department of Agriculture of the state of São Paulo, counts 23 cooperatives of Japanese and 4,875 associates at the end of the 1930s. The growth trend in the number of Japanese cooperatives was constant at least until the 1950s, according to the author.

Table 1 – Agricultural Cooperatives of Japanese Immigrants and nationality of its associates, 1930s

Cooperativas	Associados	Japoneses e desc. (%)	Brasileiros (%)	Outros
Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia	1360	90,3	7,7	2
Cooperativa Agrícola Sul-Brasil	125	99,2	0,8	-
Cooperativa Agrícola Bandeirante	47	100	-	-
CAM de Mogi das Cruzes	418	95,5	1,4	3,1
SCA de Bastos	700	100	-	-
Cooperativa Agrícola de Tietê	567	100	-	-
CP de Banana de Juquiá	279	100	-	-
CAM de Cafelândia	269	94,8	4,1	1,1
SC do 2º Núcleo colonial de Utsuka	161	100	-	-
Cooperativa Agrícola Garça-Vera Cruz	157	100	-	-
CAM de Pompéia	117	100	-	-
SCA dos Agricultores de Registro	85	100	-	-
Cooperativa Agrícola de Getulina	83	98,8	1,2	-
Cooperativa Agrícola de Marília	78	100	-	-
CA de Monte Alto	71	100	-	-
CAM de Taquaritinga	71	100	-	-
CA da Fazenda Aliança	70	100	-	-
CA de Avaré	69	100	-	-
CA de Paraguaçu	63	100	-	-
CA da Araçatuba	57	100	-	-
SCA Suburbana da Capital	45	100	-	-
CA de Ourinhos	36	100	-	-
CAM de Suzano	10	100	-	-

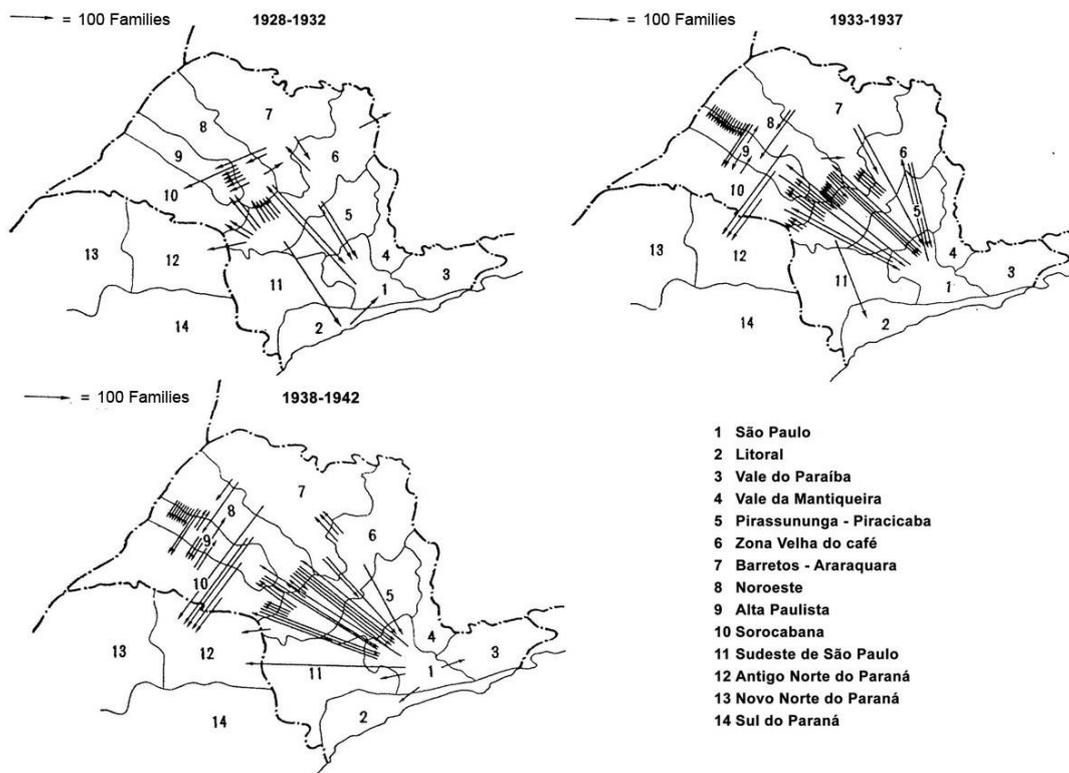
Source: Seabra, 1977, p. 33

Between 1930 and 1941 about 100,000 Japanese arrived in Brazil. They had very different destinies due to coffee farming restrictions promoted by the federal government. The agricultural diversification was encouraged, so many of them began to move to the north of Paraná state, Alta Paulista and Sorocabana Regions and around the city of São Paulo (Map 2).

The map below illustrates that between 1928 and 1932 most immigrants who performed interregional migration moved out of from Noroeste agricultural zone (40.1%) and the zone that received more immigrants from other areas was Alta Paulista (23.2%). From 1933 to 1937 the zone that Japanese emigrated the most was Noroeste (31.3%), and the zone that received most part of this population was Alta Paulista (29.5%). This trend is repeated in the subsequent five years, from 1938 to 1942, with

respectively 26.9% and 20%. In this latter period we can also highlight the irreversible moving trend in direction to the city of São Paulo and its outskirts.

Map 1 – Main drifts of inter-regional migration of Japanese population, 1928-1942



Source: *The Japanese Immigrant in Brazil*, 1969, v.2, p.209

Changes in agricultural production by product type show that cotton became the main product farmed by the Japanese, followed by suburban agriculture. If immigrants arrived in large numbers in the state of São Paulo in this period, their economic activities were no longer those carried by previous ones, therefore, what is observed is a change in the concentration of immigrants in agricultural zones and farming diversification.

In the 1930s occupational change occurs sharply among the Japanese. Those who had arrived in the previous period could acquire small farms and engage in other types of products after a few years working as colonos. In that period there was a definitive change of occupation from colono to land-owner, renter or share-cropper.

Table 2 shows that the percentage of Japanese who planted coffee on the status of colonos gradually declined between 1932 (35.2%) and 1942 (6.5%) and the

percentage of those who planted cotton and suburban farming on the status of renters or land-owners increased in the same period.

Table 2 – Main farm products of Japanese immigrants by occupational status, 1932-1942 (%)

	Coffee			Cotton		Rice	Suburban Farming		
	Land owners	Share-croppers	Colonos	Owners	Renters	Renters	Owners	Renters	Other
1932	14,4	12,6	35,2	4,5	7,4	3,8	3,4	6,5	15,2
1937	12,5	4,6	14,8	11,4	20,3	2,8	4,2	6,9	22,5
1942	14,6	3,2	6,5	14,1	20	2,3	7	9,1	23,2

Source: *The Japanese Immigrant in Brazil*, 1964, v.2, p.241, table 256

The development of agricultural cooperatives by Japanese immigrants was due in part to their occupational upward mobility and their geographical shifts, but other factors beyond those related to the labor market might be considered. Initially, between 1927 and 1931 the Japanese government stimulated cooperative providing funding for this type of activity through the general Consulate. Rinzo Aoki, the Japanese Consul in Brazil was a major cooperative enthusiast and creator of *Cooperativa Central Agrícola Nipo-Brasileira*, an administrative cooperative that coordinated the activities of the first other Japanese agricultural cooperatives. Moreover, it helped the organization of *Sanseiren Undo*, an organization devoted to stimulate youth participation in cooperatives. Under this setting, cooperative principles were largely brought from Japan.

The organization of small producers in agricultural cooperatives allowed these immigrants to coordinate and channel their production to markets of large cities, especially São Paulo. After the creation of specific legislation by Vargas, cooperative activities went on major proportions and were at the center of discussions on the development of agriculture. Under this configuration, Japanese immigrants were able to build a kind of vertical integration of hierarchies and interlocal market connections from production to commercialization of agricultural products i.e., a commercial structure.

Between 1943 and 1958 the concentration of Japanese population in the main agricultural zones of the state of São Paulo (Noroeste, Alta Paulista, Sorocabana and Zona Velha do Café) started to decline, while the growth of concentration in São Paulo

and its surroundings became visible, as Map 2 displays. According to the survey data, between 1943 and 1947 the zone that suffered greater deconcentration in relation to the total was the Noroeste (23.6%), and the city of São Paulo received the most part of the immigrants. This trend remains constant for the period between 1948 and 1952, when 24.9% left the Noroeste zone and 26.5% was driven to the capital city. Between 1953 and 1958 the percentages were 21.5% and 38.6%, respectively.

Map 2 – Main drifts of inter-regional migration of Japanese population, 1943-1958



Source: *The Japanese Immigrant in Brazil*, 1969, v.2, p.209

Changes in agricultural production by product type in that period show that the vast majority of Japanese moved their production to suburban agriculture. Between 1947 and 1958 the properties dedicated to agriculture and suburban practically doubled, the properties rented for this purpose also grew but at a slower pace. Table 3 shows that the percentage of cotton farmers decreased considerably, the number of coffee land-owners increased 7.1% and, most importantly to the present discussion, the

percentage of suburban farming land-owners doubled, reaching 20.5% in relation to the total farm production.

Table 3 – Main farm products of Japanese immigrants by occupational status, 1947-1952 (%)

	Coffee			Cotton		Rice	Suburban Farming		Other
	Land owners	Share-croppers	Colonos	Owners	Renters	Renters	Owners	Renters	
1947	16,5	3,2	3,9	12,6	15,4	2	11	12	23,3
1952	21,3	4	2,2	9	9,9	1,6	15,3	13,8	22,9
1958	23,6	3,8	1	4,6	3,4	1,4	20,5	16	25,7

Source: *The Japanese Immigrant in Brazil*, 1964, v.2, p.241, table 256

In 1958 the Japanese and their descendants were already distributed in relatively wide occupation categories (see Table 4). Within 150,271 cases 84,408 or 56% were agricultural laborers, 65,863 or 44% were distributed in non-agricultural occupations. Women were considerably employed in service-related occupations (34.4%) and professional and technical occupations (34.3%).

Table 4 – Employed Japanese population with 10 years old and over by Occupational group and percentage of women,1958

	N	Employed (%)	Women (%)
Total	150271	100	
Farmers	84408	56,2	22,1
Professional	5328	3,5	34,3
Managerial	1262	0,8	1,2
Clerical	5088	3,4	28,8
Sales	23881	15,9	15,9
Fisherman	129	0,1	2,3
Miners	4	0	0
Transport	3272	2,2	0,2
Craftsmen	18451	12,3	22
Unskilled	464	0,3	12,7
Service	7984	5,3	34,4

Source: *The Japanese Immigrant in Brazil*, 1964, v.2, p.55, table 25

In general, these data allow us to observe an irreversible trend of change in agricultural occupations of the Japanese population in the state of São Paulo between 1908 and 1958. For scholars in the field of immigration studies, this trend needs to be understood in relation to the forms of market organization in which these immigrants

were located. This might allow us to observe the specificity of this population in relation to the trends valid for the total population. The labour market structure in Brazil changed significantly in the 1960s, when the first time the urban population surpassed the rural population (Hasenbalg, Silva, 1988). But the political and structural constraints did not affect the population the same way, so that the responses and alternatives they found to overcome the barriers for economic insertion are varied. As we have seen, the Japanese lived the events of Brazilian society in quite particular ways. If one does not consider the role played by agricultural cooperatives to the experience of these immigrants, their mobility movement would represent only a most immediate result of broader societal trends.

According to Seabra²⁰ in the early 1950s the share of agricultural cooperatives in the distribution of food products in the city of São Paulo was expressive. It was a period of expansion of cooperative activities and its market, which accompanied economic growth of the city of São Paulo. At the end of the 1960s agricultural cooperatives created by Japanese immigrants already revealed the foundations of their attempts to coordinate a market.

THE MILITARY REGIME AND THE ECONOMIC AND SYMBOLIC RAISE OF AN AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE

As we saw earlier in this paper, it was during the Brazilian military regime (1964-1985) that the first time a son of Japanese immigrants took up a ministry. He had been vice-president and director of the *Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia*. In that period this cooperative firm experienced a great expansion, began operating nationwide, collaborated with government development projects for agriculture and became one of the largest Brazilian firms in the late 1980s. Also, I argued that the characteristics of Japanese immigrants in the labour market were essential to the emergence of agricultural cooperatives in the state of São Paulo.

In this topic the main argument is that the singular performance of these cooperatives on market — especially the *Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia* — during the military regime also worked a field for symbolic representation of the Japanese in

²⁰ Idem, *Ibidem*.

Brazilian society. This cooperative operated in processes of price competition standardization between firms in order to reduce risks and, therefore, created structures of political and institutional performance, such as: technical expertise, price control, credit attainment, territorial expansion, participation in government projects, industrialization and export. This resulted in an effective control of the market in which this cooperative firm operated.

From the 1960s there were few Japanese immigrants who arrived in Brazil. Despite the lack of data to support this assertion, we can say that a significant portion of employees and members of that cooperative were son of Japanese and, thus, it worked as a kind of a “middle rung” for the second generation labor market entry, an issue broadly discussed by authors who share the perspective of "ethnic economies" as Light (2004) or “ethnic enclave” as Portes (2006) . But, in the Brazilian context, the raise of Japanese cooperativism also poses a question of cultural matter, in which symbolic elements are important components to understand the trajectory of these immigrants.

We saw that for decades the public acceptance of Japanese population in Brazil was questioned, and even the Brazilian State promoted the political persecution of those immigrants. The acceptance a "Brazilian identity" with the participation of the Japanese and other foreigners was a slow and difficult social phenomena, as Lesser (1999) shows. It involved processes of constant negotiations on national identity. At this point, I argue that the agricultural cooperativism can be considered as one of the several fields in which the processes for symbolic negotiations occurred.

The Cooperative Cotia was at the epicenter of a symbolic legitimation process that provided it the designation of one of "three bastions" of Japanese "colony" in Brazil²¹. Thus, in the popular imagination of the Japanese living in Brazil and imaginary about them, it represented a constant reference in multiple dimensions, but mainly with regard to the positive aspects of labour and agriculture²².

The military regime was characterized by repression, censorship and suppression of individual freedoms. Economically, among other things, the regime sought to promote the growth and industrialization of agriculture, supported by a number of

²¹ See, for example: Toyama, 2009.

²² In the special section of the 80 years of Japanese immigration of the newspaper O Estado de S. Paulo, 06.18.1988, agriculture and cooperative work are represented by the Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia.

government development plans (Table 5). Brazil's economic coordination was performed by authoritarian government hands, while the State assured its centrality as main development engine. The difference from previous governments is that in the military regime the State began to consider agriculture as a strategic sector for the country's development and, therefore, several action plans were taken.

Table 5 – Brazilian government's economic plans, date and main targets for the agricultural sector

Name of the Economic Plan/Program	Date	Main targets for the agricultural sector
Plano Trienal	1963-1965	Expansion of food production; Correction of the export products sector deficiencies; Production of raw materials for the domestic market;
Programa de Ação Econômica do Governo	1964-1966	Expansion of food production; Production of raw materials for the domestic market; Colonization in the Northeast region; Manpower training; Credit expansion
Programa Estratégico de Desenvolvimento	1968-1970	Increasing productivity of commodities; Programs for the use of farm inputs; Strengthening and specialization of credit; Industrialization incentive in rural areas;
Metas e Bases para a Ação do Governo	1970-1973	Financial and tax incentives; Investment in agriculture development programs; Increase of agricultural production (6 to 8% by year); Technological development of agricultural sector; Strengthening agricultural infrastructure; Expansion of Colonization areas; Modernization of the supply system;
I Plano Nacional de Desenvolvimento	1972-1974	Financial and tax incentives; Increase of agricultural production; Technological change; Dissemination of farm inputs use, especially in the Northeast and Midwest; Agricultural research;
II Plano Nacional de Desenvolvimento	1975-1979	Respond to market demands for domestic consumption; Increase exports; Stimulate agroindustry;

Source: Neto, 1997

Initially, in the early 1960s, some operational limitations threatened the Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia. It was necessary to adequate itself to a set of substantive legal, financial and credit changes put in place by the new political regime²³. Then the cooperatives started to show their political influence on economic decisions. For example, in 1996 the government extinguished tax rebates on agricultural products

²³ Decreto-Lei nº 59, de 21 de Novembro de 1966

that existed previously. In defense of cooperatives and especially the Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia, Deputy Yukishigue Tamura made rants at the National Congress in order to convince the government to resume the tax rebate as a constitutional grant, especially for potatoes²⁴.

By becoming Central Cooperative in 1966 the Cotia became one of the few ones allowed to operate in the whole country, which required the development of specific sectors such as technical assistance, export, import, technology, credit, finance, marketing, storage and transportation. Its range reached new levels: nationwide scale production and international trade. Its capitalization strategy was boosted with grants from public agencies, especially the federal government ones.

In 1971 the cooperative laws has changed again in ways to stimulate exports and mainly to follow the increasing demand generated by the real incomes and the growth of urban population. From 1974, when II Plano Nacional de Desenvolvimento began, the Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia adopted an investment strategy focused on long term debt to cash flow from their assets, differentiating itself from other agricultural cooperatives. In partnership with this cooperative the federal government has implemented agricultural development projects in some regions of the country, especially the Northeast and the Widwest²⁵. In total, 12 settlement projects were developed by Cotia in public-private partnership.

The years of 1975 and 1976 were those that Cotia had its highest rate of indebtedness²⁶, when most of the credit was obtained through the National Cooperative Credit Bank (BNCC), extinct in 1990. Among the various benefits Cotia enjoyed we mention especially the easy access to credit, strategies to reduce production costs, tax exemption, reduced interest rates. The colossal proportions of the firm and its success in the market attracted the attention of specialists, resulting

²⁴ Tamura was the first politician of Japanese descendance who held a political office in Brazil. In 1947 he was elected alderman of the city of São Paulo and in 1951 was elected federal deputy for ARENA party. "*Cooperativismo e isenção do imposto de circulação aos horti-granjeiros na constituição brasileira. Defesa no Congresso Nacional pelo deputado Yukishigue Tamura*". O Estado de S. Paulo, January 18, 1967.

²⁵ For example: Programa de Assentamento Dirigido do Alto Paranaíba (Minas Gerais state), Pirapora (Minas Gerais state), Paracatu (Minas Gerais state), Carlinda (Mato Grosso state), Teixeira de Freitas (Bahia state), PADSUL I (Minas Gerais state), PADSUL II (Minas Gerais state), PADSUL III (Minas Gerais state), Litoral Paulista (São Paulo State), São Joaquim (Santa Catarina state), Projeto Vale do Rio São João (Rio de Janeiro state), Projeto Curaçá (Bahia state).

²⁶ For an analysis of the Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia capitalization trajectory see Vegro (1992).

even in a Harvard case study²⁷.

In the early 1980s the performance of this cooperative reflected the impact of the oil crisis: its agricultural production and operational sector went through a phase of contraction. In general, Brazilian agriculture had positive growth rates and higher than the other sectors of the economy. Its bases was modernized enough to compete in foreign markets, but because of its heterogeneous structure the conditions and performance of the companies did not follow a single standard. The incentive towards an increasing industrialization was prioritized so that the cooperatives had to adequate itself to this new trend. In the first half of that decade external financing became scarce and interest rates rose, creating difficulties for the balance of payments. A main symptom of this period was the devastating inflation that reached 250% in 1985 (Abreu, 1989).

In the case of Cotia uncontrolled inflation created problems for production costs, especially for members and, in addition, governmental facilities were now much more restricted or even no longer existed. In 1985 the military regime was under pressure, increasingly challenged by the public opinion and social movements. There are possibly many reasons that led the Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia into debt, but it is still hard to find a unique convincing explanation on the literature. Some say that it occurred mainly because of the difficulties that have reached their credit sector (Vegro and Gonçalves, 1994; Panzutti, n.d.). Others say that this was accompanied by the decline of its privileged position in public development projects for agriculture and by changes in government's rural credit policy (Markovitch, 1996). All of them are unanimous to say that the debit of its members increased continuously until the final position of indebtedness. In 1984, the ratio debt / total movement of the year was 15% and in 1992 this ratio reached 125.88%.

But instead of trying to make the most adequate analysis to explain its financial collapse in technical terms, we can assume that this fact is constitutive of the market, not because most competitive firms are those able to survive by imposing themselves in terms of competition, but because market depends on how certain structures are built, maintained and changed. This dynamic results in part from social processes,

²⁷ Unpublished material. The original copy has no bibliographical reference.

historical and social conditions.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Although scholars have contributed to the study of Japanese immigrants in Brazil decades ago, currently there is a lack of a theoretical and empirical agenda of discussion. Based on survey data and bibliography I tried to address a discussion in which the historical experience of Japanese immigrants in the state of Sao Paulo can be re-interpreted. The recent contributions in the fields of economic sociology and migration studies offer some conceptual guidelines to proceed on this task. Analyzing the performance of Japanese population in labour market I tried to show how the agricultural cooperatives were developed and subsequently became one of the main instruments to coordinate of their economic activities.

Especially between 1908 and 1958 the Japanese shift constantly from agricultural zones within the state of São Paulo. The majority of this population was composed by rural workers and the inter-regional migration was accompanied by attempts to diversify production through land acquirement, sharecropping or renting. Cooperative initiatives facilitated the process of production and commercialization by creating market structures. But certain historical conditions and the interference of agents conducted the ways it happened, i.e., certain market configurations was resulted from actions of individuals and groups. In the case of agricultural cooperativism, the performance of firms is a strategic site to observe the creation of appropriate structures for market organization by Japanese population.

Supported over these structures, especially in the state of São Paulo, the second-generation of Japanese moved upwardly in social structure and some of them started to participate in the public management of the economy. The Cooperativa Agrícola de Cotia may be considered as a major example of firm in which agents acted strategically in pursuing specific goals in ways that modified both the mobility of Japanese and their symbolic representation in Brazilian society. The massive expansion of this cooperative and its participation in various government agricultural projects during the military regime is strongly related to the experience of Japanese immigrants in Brazil. Although extremely complex and fruitful for research purposes, the interplay between market and

noneconomic factors in the Japanese immigration in Brazil experience remains quite undiscussed by scholars.

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