

Call for papers for the Young Researchers Colloquium:

## From Japan to Brazil and Vice-versa: Historical and Aesthetic Perspectives of a Diasporic Cinema

ENS Lyon (France) & online, June 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025

In 2024, the 77<sup>th</sup> Festival of Cannes' short film competition selected *Amarela* (2024), a film by Japanese-Brazilian director André Hayato Saito, which focuses on the experiences of Japanese-Brazilians. This event reflects a growing interest in a diverse, transnational, and multilingual filmography on the subject of the Japanese diaspora, particularly the Japanese-Brazilians, who are the largest group affected by return migration (or “detour migration” (Perroud, 2007)) to Japan. This Young Researchers Colloquium aims at visualizing and discussing that film corpus and its aesthetic, socio-historical and methodological issues.

The first massive immigration of Japanese populations to Brazil occurred in 1908, to replace European laborers at the coffee plantations of São Paulo (Nishida, 2017). Aboard the *Kasato Maru*, 781 migrants left Kobe's harbor in direction of Santos, located in the state of São Paulo, following previous migrations to Hawaii (1868), the United States (1880), and Peru (1899) (Han, 2017). Despite restrictions by the Brazilian government in the 1930s, these “*nikkeis*” (in Brazilian) or “*nikkeijin*” (in Japanese), meaning Japanese descendants born and living abroad, formed a significant community of around 2 million people by the 2020s. Today, this is the largest community of Japanese descent in the world.

In the 1980s, a reverse form of migration of Japanese-Brazilians to Japan began as Brazil faced an economic crisis. The Japanese authorities encouraged the return of *nikkeis/nikkeijin* by preferentially giving them “long-term resident” visas (*teijūsha*) (Cherrier, 2024), to meet the country's demand for low-cost labor (De Carvalho, 2003). Initially, migrants planned to stay only for a short time in Japan, which is why the Japanese term *dekasegi*—meaning short-term migrant workers—was used to describe them. However, their difficult reintegration upon returning to Brazil and economic issues led many of them to extend their stays in Japan, in a “vicious migration cycle” (Yamanaka, 2000). Most of them eventually settled permanently in Japan (Tsuda, 1999). If Japanese-Brazilians were the third-largest foreign community in Japan by the 2000s, they now form the fifth-largest foreign community in Japan at 204,879 people, after Chinese people (716,606), Vietnamese (432,934), Koreans (409,855) and Filipinos (276,615) (Cherrier, 2024). Japanese-Brazilians are also one of the country's main ethnic minorities, alongside Japanese-Koreans, *Burakumin*, Ainu, and Okinawans (Tsuda, 1999).

The Japanese diasporas, including those from Brazil, and associated issues (immigration, the making of diasporas, the affirmation of a cultural identity, and social integration) have been widely studied in social sciences since the 1990s, mainly in English, Japanese, Portuguese and French (see for example works from Jeffrey Lesser, Takeyuki Tsuda, Daniela de Carvalho and Pauline Cherrier).

The history of Japanese immigration is deeply intertwined with cinema. Indeed, the arrival of the first Japanese migrants coincided with the emergence of filmmaking in Brazil. In 1908, just a few months after the *Kasato Maru* docked, the State of São Paulo commissioned the production of a silent short film titled *Japoneses apanhando café nas fazendas paulistas*. Unfortunately, no copies of this film have been found. From the 1920s onward, non-fiction short films documenting the experiences of *nikkeis/nikkeijin* in Brazil became increasingly common. Hikoma Udihara, an amateur filmmaker, stands out as one of the most notable figures of this movement, having created nearly 85 short films between 1927 and 1959. As the practice of filmmaking became more established, the diffusion of films—mainly Japanese productions—increased within the Japanese-Brazilian community. In this context, traveling cinemas played a significant role, particularly in rural areas, by allowing Japanese immigrants to watch films. Alexandre Kishimoto (2013) highlighted the key role played by four movie theaters in the Liberdade district of São Paulo during the 1950s and 1960s. These theaters not only facilitated the dissemination of Japanese cinema within the Japanese-Brazilian community but also attracted Brazilian audiences with no Japanese heritage.

Afterwards, two major university-trained Japanese-Brazilian filmmakers constituted the historical foundation of Japanese-Brazilian diasporic cinema: Olga Futemma, former director of the *Cinemateca Brasileira*, short film director, and producer of several films, and Tizuka Yamasaki, director and screenwriter. Among other films, Yamasaki directed *Gaijin – Caminhos da Liberdade* in 1980, a commercial and critical success (winning awards at Cannes and Gramado), which is considered the first fiction film focused on the Japanese-Brazilian community and which helped popularize the history of Japanese migration in Brazil. Concerning animated films, the Japanese-Brazilian community also played a pioneer role in Brazil: *Piconzé* (1972), one of the first Brazilian animated feature films in color, was directed by Ypê Nakashima, a Japanese artist who immigrated to São Paulo in 1956 and surrounded himself with around 30 animators from the Japanese community to make the film.

Today, several contemporary filmmakers from Japan, Brazil, and the Japanese-Brazilian community have explored diasporic issues. Their films have been appraised at festivals: from the fiction *Saudade* (2011) by Tomita Katsuya to the documentary *Okinawa Santos* (2020) by Yōju Matsubayashi, along with films by Paulo Pastorelo (*Tokiori - Dobras do Tempo*, 2011), Marcos Yoshi (*Bem-vindos de Novo*, 2021), Vicente Amorim (*Corações Sujos*, 2011), Nanako Kurihara (*A Grandpa from Brazil*, 2008), Tsumura Kimihiro and Mayu Nakamura (*Lonely Swallows*, 2012). Moreover, in 2008, for the centenary of the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants, a major retrospective of Japanese-Brazilian films was held in Brazil, followed by an international symposium at the Universities of São Paulo and Osaka. This event led to the identification and establishment of a *nikkei* Brazilian film archive, although the collection remains incomplete due to difficulties in getting hold of part of the films and their poor preservation.

Over the past 15 years, several studies on films addressing Japanese-Brazilian diaspora issues have been published in Portuguese (since the centenary) and Japanese (since the 2010s). However, these films remain under-explored by English- and French-speaking scholars. Two recent publications in English are worth noting: Ignacio López-Calvo's book on Japanese-Brazilian literature and films (López-Calvo, 2019) and Emy Takada's thesis on Tizuka Yamasaki (Takada, 2021).

As these films are gradually gaining attention from curators and researchers, it seemed important to us to invite international scholars to share their expertise and to engage in bilingual (English-French) discussions during this colloquium.

Proposals are expected to be diverse in terms of methodologies and objects of study. They are expected to discuss, through cinema and its ethical and sociopolitical stakes, these diasporic phenomena and their place in societies and national histories. Topics of interest may include (but are not limited to):

- The aesthetics of films addressing Japanese-Brazilian diasporic issues, particularly in relation to discourses on identity, memory, and intimacy (one might also question the aesthetic difference between fictions and documentaries);
- The circulation of film aesthetics between Japan and Brazil through the diasporic network;
- The contexts and challenges of production and distribution of these films, as well as the role of Japanese-Brazilian filmmakers and technicians within cinematic production and distribution networks;
- Japanese-Brazilian diaspora issues in audiovisual media and museum installations.

### **Scientific committee:**

Pauline CHERRIER (University of Aix-Marseille, IrAsia/CEJ-INALCO)

Kevin J. MCKIERNAN (University of Minnesota Twin Cities)

Alberto DA SILVA (Sorbonne Université, CRIMIC)

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### **Organizing committee:**

Romane CARRIÈRE (ENS Lyon, CERCC)

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### Submission details:

Individual paper proposals, in English or in French, are to be sent to [lucie.rydzek@univ-lorraine.fr](mailto:lucie.rydzek@univ-lorraine.fr), [romane.carriere@ens-lyon.fr](mailto:romane.carriere@ens-lyon.fr) and [emmanuel.dayre@ens.fr](mailto:emmanuel.dayre@ens.fr). They must comprise:

- Name, firstname, affiliation, email address, presentation on-site or online
- Title
- Abstract (up to 3000 characters including spaces)
- Bio-bibliography (up to 500 characters including spaces)

Presenters will have 20 minutes to present their paper in English or in French, followed by 10 minutes of questions. All visuals need to be in English.

The colloquium will be hosted at the Ecole Normale Supérieure Lyon, France. Online presentations will be possible for those who can not join in-site, although we encourage on-site presentations. The colloquium may lead to the publication of a shared book.

### Calendar:

- Submission deadline: March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025 (23:59, UTC+1)
- Committee decision: by April 2025
- Colloquium dates: June 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025

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### Indicative filmography:

- *Amarela* (2024, 15'), Andre Hayato Saito
- *Bem-vindos de Novo* (2021, 105'), Marcos Yoshi
- *Aos cuidados dela* (2020, 25'), Marcos Yoshi
- *Okinawa Santos* (2020, 90'), Yōju Matsubayashi
- *Tokiori - Dobras do Tempo* (2013, 110'), Paulo Pastorelo
- *Goldfish GoHome* (2012, 98'), Shōhei Shiozaki
- *Saudade* (2011, 167'), Tomita Katsuya
- *Dirty Hearts / Corações Sujos* (2011, 90'), Vicente Amorim
- *Lonely Swallows: Living as Children of Immigrant Workers / Kodoku na Tsubame-tachi: Dekasegi no Kodomo ni Umarete* (2011, 88'), Tsumura Kimihiro et Mayu Nakamura
- *Furusato 2009* (2009, 50'), Tomita Katsuya

- *Grandpa from Brazil / Burajiru kara kita ojiihan* (2008, 60'), Nanako Kurihara
- *Permanência* (2006, 70'), Helios Ishii
- *Gaijin: Ama-me Como Sou* (2005, 131'), Tizuka Yamasaki
- *Cartas* (2004), Helios Ishii
- *The City of Lost Souls* (2000, 103'), Takashi Miike
- *Chá Verde e Arroz* (1989, 11'), Olga Futemma
- *Retratos de Hideko* (1981, 10'), Olga Futemma
- *Gaijin: Roads to Freedom / Gaijin: Os Caminhos da Liberdade* (1980, 112'), Tizuka Yamasaki
- *Piconzé* (1972, 80'), Ypê Nakashima

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- HIRANO Kyōko, "Itakura Fumiaki, *Cinema and immigration : Japanese-American film reception and identity (Eiga to imin: zaibei nikkei imin no eiga juyō to aidentiti)* (Shin'yōsha, 2016)", *Eizōgaku*, n° 97, 2017, p. 87-90.
- KATSUO Hugo, "A Identidade Nacional em Disputa: memória, estrangeirismo e fronteira em "Gaijin – Caminhos da Liberdade"", in Monica Setuyo Okamoto and José Carvalho Vanzelli (eds.), *Nipo-brasileiros: arte, cultura e história*, São Paulo, Pimenta Cultural, 2023, p. 87-100.
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- TAKADA Emy, *Shapes of Nikkei Feelings: Tizuka Yamasaki's Cinema of Emotion in the Millennium Films*, PhD Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2021.
- TAKAHASHI Yuri, “Reflection on the documentary *Mirikitani's Cats*: War memory of Japanese-Americans (*Dokumentarii eiga “Mirikitani no neko” kara tou: nikkei amerikajin no sensō no kioku*)”, *Ritsumeikan gengo bunka kenkyū*, vol. 28, n° 3, January 2017, p. 183-193.
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