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## **Conviviality-in-Action**

Of Silence and Memory in the Cultural Performance of  
Generations of Japanese Migrants in a Riverine Town in Brazil

Simone Toji



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# Conviviality-in-Action: Of Silence and Memory in the Cultural Performance of Generations of Japanese Migrants in a Riverine Town in Brazil

Simone Toji

## Abstract

The paper describes the effects of the encounter between the Brazilian intangible cultural heritage policy and the celebration of Tooro Nagashi, a cultural practice performed by groups of Japanese descendants in the Ribeira Valley. Based on the notion of “friction”, it identifies points of engagement through which new accounts and unsuspected silences involving Tooro Nagashi and its history emerge. Moreover, it characterises how silence as a collective manifestation is a sensitive feature of certain configurations of conviviality in contexts marked by histories of migration, global war, and state repression. In following the complexities of the case, this analysis reveals the evolution of the convivial situations of the families of Japanese descent in the Ribeira Valley as a living process, characterising it as conviviality-in-action.

**Keywords:** cultural heritage | conviviality | Japanese migrants | Brazil

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## 1. Introduction

It all began with a story. A Japanese traveller stayed at a boarding house in Sete Barras and one morning he went down to the Ribeira de Iguape River to wash his face but fell down and drowned. In 1955, a priest of the Buddhist faith, who had recently arrived in São Paulo, held the first memorial ceremony in honour of the traveller and six other unrelated victims, members of local Japanese migrant families. On that occasion, seven lanterns were released into the waters of the Ribeira de Iguape River in the small town of Registro. Since then, every year, on 2 November, All Souls' Day in Brazil, while the majority of the population is visiting the graves of their loved ones, other families are paying their respects by observing the small lanterns gently sailing across the Ribeira de Iguape River in Registro. For these families, it is time for Tooro Nagashi. *Tooro* means lantern and *nagashi*, to cast into the waters. Although it is more common to find the transliterated version *tōro*, I will maintain the spelling used by my interlocutors in Registro.

This is the story that has been persistently told until, in 2008, urged by the centenary of the Japanese immigration to Brazil, officials from the Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (Institute of National Historical and Artistic Heritage – IPHAN) encouraged organisations in Registro to request the preservation of local elements connected with the history of Japanese migration. Supported by the work of these officials and local researchers (IPHAN 2008a, 2009), the Japanese Brazilian Cultural Association of Registro, known by the Japanese term *bunkyo*, applied for Tooro Nagashi to be recognised as *patrimônio cultural do Brasil* (cultural heritage of Brazil) through the national intangible cultural heritage policy.<sup>1</sup>

This paper identifies the effects of this encounter between the celebration of Tooro Nagashi and the Brazilian intangible cultural heritage policy, uncovering new accounts and unsuspected silences involving Tooro Nagashi and its history. To examine the unfolding of this encounter, I borrow the idea of “friction”, which in the words of Anna Tsing refers to “the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” in engagements simultaneously co-produced by local and global dynamics (Tsing 2005: 4). Although this concept was first designed to follow the connections between the global and the local, I push this idea to the limits by extending its use also to the encounters between distinctive social and cultural universes.<sup>2</sup> Taking

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1 *Bunkyo* became the Japanese expression used by Japanese migrants and their descendants from different cities and regions in Brazil to refer to the cultural organizations they autonomously manage to promote what is considered Japanese culture.

2 Before Anna Tsing, Stephen Greenblatt (Greenblatt 1988) first used the idea of “friction” to refer to the differentiated and ambivalent interactions between the genders as the point of creation for Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* (1601-1602). Although Tsing’s and Greenblatt’s concepts differ in definition, scope and intention, it is interesting to acknowledge previous theoretical proposals using the term.

friction as the “grip of encounter” (Tsing 2005: 5) that sparks new evolvments – similar to the traction between the turning wheel and the surface of the road that produces movement – I consider the controversies arising from the encounter between the actors involved with the celebration of Tooro Nagashi and the cultural heritage field in Brazil as outcomes of friction that creates new areas of attention. For this reason, in exploring the divergent understandings about history, culture and belonging among the actors of the aforementioned universes, I am also interested in the unexpected effects that these interconnected universes in interaction exert upon one another. In the encounter being examined here, zones of collective silence and difficult memories arise from this entanglement, constituted by heterogenous and unequal arrangements of culture and power. Thus, the idea of friction may imply contention and conflict, but its application here is more concerned with the unanticipated consequences of the encounter being investigated.

In analysing this friction, I aim to discuss how cultural heritage policies in Brazil still overlook episodes of historical violence involving groups of migrants and their successive generations, enforcing essentialised representations of such groups, even after a democratic turn, with a more inclusive stance, was effected after a period of military rule. I examine this by highlighting what is silenced in the process of accepting or rejecting a cultural practice as cultural heritage. Simultaneously, in shedding light on what is being silenced in this process, we come to learn how silence can actually become a lively collective manifestation of certain configurations of conviviality in contexts marked by histories of migration, global war, and state repression. Following Michel-Rolph Trouillot, I consider silence “an active and transitive process” (Trouillot 1995: 48) that, even when unnoticed, can instigate the continuous reassessment of certain historical narratives. In this way, to follow the friction being considered here and approach the silences associated with the performance of Tooro Nagashi, I also assert that we need to recalibrate certain methodological conventions to reframe questions and recover overlooked dimensions that are significant in the identification of these situations of silence.

Thus, for the purposes of the reflection being developed here, I am also concerned with two primary methodological approaches to guide my analysis. Firstly, I will analyse issues of migration and respective histories within a global stance necessarily ingrained by local processes, as informed too by the original meaning of the idea of friction. This involves, for instance, taking into account actors and facts from both Brazil and Japan, interconnecting some lines of action at varied scales of action, to address the Japanese migration to Registro and Sete Barras, the two small municipalities in the south part of the state of São Paulo where the celebration of Tooro Nagashi became pronounced and spectacular in Brazil. Secondly, I will avoid certain scholarly assumptions about

migrants, their cultural expressions and socialities, such as presuming that migrants' collective manifestations invariably represent a common and diacritical identity, generally associated with ethnic or national senses of belonging, in the host societies. As I will contend, the celebration of Tooro Nagashi challenges us to think otherwise and compels us to nuance the meaning of this ritual and acknowledge its complexities. Imbued with these theoretical and methodological preoccupations when analysing the interaction between the Brazilian intangible cultural heritage policy and the celebration of Tooro Nagashi, we will be able to discuss conviviality as a processual and transformative phenomenon by taking this encounter as a case study.

In the following sections, I will briefly introduce the origins of the Brazilian intangible cultural heritage policy and its interactions with the practice of Tooro Nagashi. I will then characterise this friction at work, detailing its particulars and combining different materials, such as historical documents, state law and regulation, administrative files, and interviews with local residents of the Ribeira Valley. In exploring the friction between the intangible cultural heritage policy and the celebration of Tooro Nagashi, we will be able to identify the points of engagement through which each social and cultural universe illuminates the other in ways not previously imagined, revealing the emergence of narratives and points of silence hitherto ignored. Afterwards, I will discuss the features of conviviality that the case draws our attention to and will conclude with a few considerations.

## **2. The Brazilian Intangible Cultural Heritage Policy**

The national intangible cultural heritage policy in Brazil was created as a response to the shortcomings related to existing cultural heritage policies. Since the 1930s, these policies had been responsible for the election of sites, buildings, and objects predominantly associated with the Portuguese royal family and prominent settlers, as well as Brutalist works by Brazilian architects and urbanists inspired by Le Corbusier. As a result, this practice tended to emphasise Brazil as a nation of a colonial past and a modern future (Chuva 2009). Encouraged by the democratic process that took place after a period of military rule, the intangible cultural heritage policy emerged out of the concern to implement more comprehensive understandings of heritage in which “forms of expression, ways of creating, making and living” were considered cultural heritage of the same status as “scientific, artistic and technological creations, works, objects, documents, buildings and other spaces intended for artistic and cultural manifestations, urban complexes and sites of historical, scenic, artistic, archaeological, paleontological, ecological and scientific value” (Brazil 1988: Article 216).<sup>3</sup> Established in 2000, the

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<sup>3</sup> All translations are by the author unless otherwise indicated.

national intangible cultural heritage policy is deemed innovative not just because it expands the range of subjects eligible to be granted national cultural heritage status beyond physical objects and buildings but also because it claims to finally take into consideration elements that are “bearers of reference to the identity, the action, and the memory of the different groups that compose the Brazilian society” (Brazil 1988: Article 216). The intangible cultural heritage policy was designed to advance the acknowledgement of the legacies of social groups previously overlooked, such as those of indigenous, maroon and popular culture communities, whose cultural contributions, seen from within the parameters of the cultural heritage field, do not primarily revolve around material expressions. At the international level, the Brazilian intangible cultural heritage policy anticipated the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in three years, being recognised by UNESCO officials as a successful national experience on intangible cultural heritage (Toji 2021).

Such international appreciation notwithstanding, international migrants’ histories and legacies have long been neglected by cultural heritage policies in Brazil. Since its inauguration in 2000, the intangible cultural heritage policy has awarded the status of Cultural Heritage of Brazil to more than fifty cultural elements. However, none of them is related to foreign migrant groups.

### **3. The Disturbing Gap**

Observing how the Brazilian intangible cultural heritage policy engages with the case of Tooro Nagashi is an opportunity to view how migrants and their descendants are being characterised as minority groups in the country. Importantly, it enables researchers to investigate how their heritages is expected to feature in the reconfiguration of a Brazilian imagination that is reconsidering its narratives as a nation in pursuit of a democratic agenda. As the Tooro Nagashi file is still in progress, we track down how the policy is being implemented in its very movement of consolidation.

Going back to the case of Tooro Nagashi at IPHAN, after the submission of its application in 2008, a communication from the director of IPHAN’s Department of Intangible Heritage in 2009, informed that, based on the assessment of its board of experts, the celebration of Tooro Nagashi was considered to be “an important reference for the Japanese Brazilian community” and, consequently, “relevant” for recognition by the national intangible cultural heritage policy (IPHAN 2008b: no page). However, the request was challenged. The main argument is that the celebration lacked a sufficient amount of time to be considered an established tradition (IPHAN 2008b: no page; see IPHAN n.d, 2008a). IPHAN defines that any cultural expression should hold a minimum of seventy-five years of sustained existence to be considered cultural



heritage, designating this rule as “historical continuity”. This reduced time span was deemed inconsistent by IPHAN officials and the board of experts as in 2008, Japanese immigration to Brazil had only occurred 100 years earlier. In the meantime, there was an inexplicable gap between the arrival of the first groups of Japanese migrants to Brazil in 1908 at the port of Santos and the celebration of the first Tooro Nagashi in the 1950s in Registro. IPHAN’s director advised searching for other Tooro Nagashi performed elsewhere in the country with the aim to possibly identify an older one, as well as “to explore further the study of its origins and its associated universe in the country of origin and/or abroad” so to provide “information on the transplantation processes, and the replication and reinvention of modes of making, thinking and being in the world of the Japanese Brazilian community” (IPHAN 2008b: no page). Although the application was welcomed, since for IPHAN standards, it represented a proposal from the “Japanese Brazilian community”, the performance of Tooro Nagashi in Registro did not possess all the formal attributes required to be considered for cultural heritage recognition.

In examining the terms of IPHAN’s statement, a few implicit assumptions about groups of Japanese migrant groups and their descendants become clear. First, it is significant that these groups were circumscribed under a term in the singular, the “Japanese Brazilian community”. Second, the groups of migrants of Japanese origin in the Ribeira Valley region, where the municipalities of Registro and Sete Barras are located, were accounted as a continuation of the first groups of migrants that arrived in 1908, assuming that Japanese migrants are a homogenous group of people. This “community” would consequently maintain a holistic and consistent “culture” which other Japanese Brazilian groups in distinctive areas of the country would share, being likely to find the celebration of Tooro Nagashi spread across the country. Third, even though the communication admitted that this “culture” may be transformed, as it can be “transplanted”, “replicated and reinvented”, it contradictorily required a search for Tooro Nagashi “origins” in Japan without extending the historical continuity of the celebration to the time before the arrival of the first Japanese families in Brazil (IPHAN 2008b: no page). In sum, the IPHAN statement expresses an essentialised vision about the presence of these migrants and their descendants and simultaneously creates a specific mode of othering by insisting on their Japanese origins. Therefore, by considering Tooro Nagashi a continuation of a Japanese tradition, the time lapse between the arrival of the first Japanese migrants to Brazil and the first celebration of Tooro Nagashi in Registro sounded disturbing in terms of IPHAN’s standards. The gap had to be filled either by finding an older version of Tooro Nagashi or another cultural expression that held seventy-five years of historical continuity.

It is noteworthy that the national intangible cultural heritage policy acknowledges that groups of Japanese background are “groups that make up the Brazilian society,” but certain standards of that policy are still preventing their cultural expressions from being granted appropriate recognition. In the following sections, IPHAN standards and assumptions are contested in light of evidence from other materials. By engaging with the questions posed by IPHAN officials and board of experts, several unexpected facts regarding migrants of Japanese origin in Brazil and the case of Tooro Nagashi emerge.

#### 4. The First Silence

The first category of materials to explore is the historical documents related to the presence of Japanese migrants in the Ribeira Valley region. This area has also been important to other groups that are today referred as *quilombolas*, *caiçaras* or *guaranis*.<sup>4</sup> The existence of Japanese migrants in the small towns of Registro and Sete Barras was the result of numerous negotiations between representatives of the state of São Paulo and the Japanese government in the early twentieth century. The Japanese colonisation company Tokyo Syndicate signed a contract, in 1912, with the government of the State of São Paulo for “the establishment of Japanese settlements in the area situated between the Ribeira river and the colonies of Pariquera-Açu and Cananéia” (APESP, BR SPAPESP SEAGRI, KKKK 1927a). In this contract, 50,000 hectares of land were granted, making the Japanese company responsible for introducing two thousand Japanese families.

It was a first attempt by Japanese colonisation companies to organise settlements in Brazil after initial overseas experiences in Hawai’i, Taiwan, Korea, and particularly the United States. The transformations introduced by Meiji politicians not only shaped a modernity inspired by Western practices but also reorganised Japanese society in a way that, by the end of the nineteenth century, Japan contended with problems of overpopulation. Influenced by Malthusian approaches, policymakers assumed that the surplus domestic population demanded additional land abroad, justifying policies that combined migration and expansionism in the Pacific and the Americas (Lu 2019). Therefore, following previous settlement experiments in other areas, the endeavour in the Ribeira Valley was an effort to test whether farmer migration, land acquisition and permanent settlement could become a viable colonisation model, which also differed

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4 *Quilombolas* are Afro-Brazilian residents of settlements generally established by groups of Black free men and escaped slaves since colonial times. *Caiçaras* are the inhabitants of the coastal regions of the south-eastern and southern Brazil who are considered descendants of Africans, indigenous people, and Europeans, bearing a way of life based on subsistence agriculture, hunting and fishing. *Guaranis* are a group of culturally-related indigenous peoples, distinguished by their use of the Guarani language.

from the arrangements that directed the first Japanese families in 1908 as temporary labourers for coffee plantations in Brazil.

Brazil and other countries in Latin America became valid options in the eyes of Japanese planners when, in 1907, the enactment of the Gentlemen's Agreement halted Japanese migration to the United States. Anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States arose out of both geopolitical and racial concerns. In geopolitical terms, North American authorities were watchful of Japan's presence in the Pacific Rim after the country emerged victorious from the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). In racial terms, North Americans, generally speaking, equated Japanese migrants with Chinese ones, regarding both groups below the white population and qualifying them as undesirable. In light of such Anglo-American racism, Japanese politicians and administrators considered colonisation in Brazil to be a workable alternative (Lu 2019).

The interests of Japanese authorities were in line with those of the elites of the state of São Paulo, who were in pressing need of migrant labourers after the Italian government prohibited emigration to Brazil in 1902 because of problems involving the poor treatment of its nationals in coffee plantations. Although, at the national level, Brazilian society was divided between those who deemed Japanese migrants as racial obstacles and those who saw them as contributors to the project of “whitening” the nation (Lesser 1999, 2013), Japanese immigration was thus, pragmatically, viewed favourably on account of the severe shortage of labour in Brazil. Moreover, authorities of the state of São Paulo were also interested in developing remote areas within its territory.

Back to the Ribeira Valley, in 1913, the contracts of the Tokyo Syndicate were transferred to the Burajiro Takushoku Kabushiki Kaisha (Brazil Colonization Company) without any changes to the text of the agreement (APESP, BR SPAPESP SEAGRI, KKKK 1927b). However, due to difficulties on the part of the government of the state of São Paulo in identifying and demarcating the land, the Iguape City Council, as a matter of urgency, granted 859 hectares so that the Japanese company would not miss its deadlines nor renounce its responsibilities (Midorikawa 1928). As a result, the land on the left bank of the Ribeira de Iguape River, called Jypovura, was granted free of charge to the Burajiro Takushoku Kabushiki Kaisha. In that same year of 1913, about thirty families recruited in the city of São Paulo were the first to occupy the 33 lots prepared in Jypovura. This first settlement was named Katsura Colony, after the Minister of Industry and Commerce of Japan, who participated in the management of preceding colonial settlements overseas. In 1914, the first three families arrived in the Registro Colony, even though the land conceded by the government of the State of São Paulo was not fully demarcated. Only with the increase of Japanese families from different

provinces who arrived from Japan in 1917 did the population grow in Registro (Handa 1987).

In 1919, all Japanese colonisation and immigration companies in Brazil were merged into a single entity, now directly managed by the Japanese government through the Kaigai Kōgyō Kabushiki Kaisha (Overseas Enterprise Company Limited) – known in Brazil by its acronym KKKK, whereas in Japan it was referred as Kaikō. All contracts, rights and obligations of the Burajiro Takushoku Kabushiki Kaisha were then transferred to the KKKK (APESP, BR SPAPESP SEAGRI, KKKK 1927c). On this occasion, land demarcation was still in progress in the region that would form the Sete Barras settlement and in 1920, the first families arrived there (Handa 1987). The Japanese colonisation of the Ribeira Valley region was thus implemented primarily in the three settlements of the Katsura Colony, the Registro Colony, and the Sete Barras Colony.

Whilst the development of the Ribeira Valley colonies was still in progress, the high permanence rate of settlers was perceived as an encouraging result. In an attempt to avoid the missteps of previous colonisation experiences, the Japanese government was thus willing to directly support the colonisation enterprise in Brazil. In May 1924, members of the Imperial Economic Council introduced numerous “measures to encourage the protection of emigrants” (National Diet Library 2014a), such as the creation of financial institutions that could provide appropriate credit to emigrants’ businesses and the establishment of health and educational organisations within the settlements.<sup>5</sup> As Célia Sakurai underlines, the migration of Japanese to Brazil was a tutored immigration, “sustained from the beginning through guidance, support and supervision from representatives of the Japanese government”, which “through its different branches and agents, explicitly participated in the process of settling these immigrants successfully” (Sakurai 1998: 3). Moreover, according to Sidney Xu Lu, encouraged by what was happening in the colonies in the Ribeira Valley, the Japanese government began to reshape its overall migration and colonisation policies, consolidating its authority as a “migration state’ that promoted and controlled overseas migration on an unprecedented scale” (Lu 2019: 184).

In Brazil, the colonisation initiative of the Ribeira Valley was likewise acknowledged as successful by Brazilian public agents who were responsible for monitoring the development of the settlements. In 1935, one of them affirmed:

As for agricultural production, in addition to rice, which is a staple product of the domestic economy of the Japanese and whose production figures are constantly increasing, there is tea, whose planted bushes multiply by thousands from

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<sup>5</sup> All sections of documents from the National Diet Library were translated from Japanese to Portuguese by Masaaki Toji, followed by the translation from Portuguese to English by the author.

year to year. [...] Coffee is also widely cultivated; its production is processed in Registro and exported to Santos.

[...] Other crops such as beans, corn, soybeans, sugarcane and roots are almost exclusively for local consumption.

[...] Regarding the production and movement of capital, the Japanese colonisation has produced very appreciable results (APESP, BR SPAPESP SEAGRI, KKKK 1935).

Yet, these significant outcomes were not sufficient to reverse the escalating anti-Japanese attitude among Brazilians. Although Japanese policymakers took measures as early as 1924 to “prevent anti-Japanese tendencies in Brazil” and promote the “goodwill between the two countries” (National Diet Library 2014a), such as establishing health projects that benefited both Brazilians and Japanese migrants and recommending its nationals to be open towards the prevalent religion in Brazil, migrants from Italy, Portugal, and other Western countries were openly preferred to those from Japan, the latter of whom were frequently viewed with suspicion.

For Japanese authorities, the colonisation project in Brazil was an ideological effort to overcome the limitation associated with Western imperial racism. Since the League of Nations Commission rejected Japan’s proposal to include the clause of racial equality in the Covenant of the League, Japan realised that the same principles that drove the European colonial incursions did not apply to other nations, particularly those of non-white populations. Arguing that the world’s lands should be redistributed based on the actual need of nations according to their population sizes, Japanese expansionists considered the installation of settler communities established in Brazil an occasion to demonstrate in practice how the Japanese would treat the inhabitants of host countries as equals and bring them development and progress (Lu 2019: 206-235). However, a rising nationalistic inclination gradually dominated Brazil, which neutralised any kind of esteem for the Japanese presence in the country. In 1934, a new Brazilian Constitution determined the adoption of a quota system that abruptly curtailed the entry of migrants in general (Brazil 1934: 121, 6-7). With the advent of the autocratic regime of the Estado Novo (New State) in 1937, more restrictions limited the entry of migrants and introduced successive control measures (Brazil 1937). In 1938, decrees prohibited the instruction of languages other than Portuguese to children under 14 years of age and blocked migrants from the working in the administration of companies and organisations (Brazil 1938a) and from the exercise of political activities in Brazil (Brazil 1938b). Then, in 1939, another decree enforced “adaptation” as a policy that required non-Brazilians to solely make use of Portuguese in communal spaces such as schools and religious organisations (Brazil 1939). In 1941, following Brazil’s alignment with the Allies during

the Second World War, Italian, German and Japanese-language newspapers were banned. With Brazil's definitive rupture of international relations with the Axis countries in 1942, migrants from Italy, Germany and Japan were forbidden to speak their native languages in public places, to meet and also to travel without the authorities' knowledge (Brazil 1942a). In the same year, the Brazilian government issued a decree that expropriated the assets and estates of German, Italian and Japanese nationals in Brazilian territory (Brazil 1942b).

For the settlements in the Ribeira Valley, the above measures had particular consequences. Officials developed strong reservations toward the settlements managed by the KKKK. A report of 1934 raised concerns about the nature of the Japanese settlers:

The Japanese is a useful element for its work qualities, with organising and progressive sense. However, he is pernicious, due to his tendency to cluster together, combined with few possibilities of *mestizaje* (APESP, BR SPAPESP SEAGRI, KKKK 1934).

Appropriating the wording of social evolutionism, the Japanese settlers in the Ribeira Valley were depicted as an abstract noun in the singular with a capital j – the Japanese – similar to the operation of essentialisation regarding the cultural heritage policies discussed above. Desirable qualities such as “useful”, “work qualities”, “organising sense”, and “progressive” were acknowledged and appreciated, but the imputation of being inclined “to cluster together” and indisposed to “*mestizaje*” was a threat to Brazilian national interests. Even the “work qualities” of the settlers in the Ribeira Valley were seen as disadvantageous in an earlier account:

This great capacity for work and production [of the Japanese] constitutes another great disadvantage because it displaces and eliminates competition with nationals and other foreigners, annihilating them (APESP, BR SPAPESP SEAGRI, KKKK 1931).

Moreover, officials responsible for monitoring the demarcation of the areas warned about the risk of offering continuous and extensive fields to the Japanese company because of a supposed concealed will to create a Japanese domain in Brazil:

The [KKKK] Company often justifies the land purchased from private individuals as being for administrative purposes, among others, to connect donated lands. These connections are fully justified, the paths, bridges, etc., are made on third-party land, to connect the plots. [...] Despite this justification, there remains the possibility of making acquisitions that go beyond what is necessary, susceptible to creating future embarrassments due to the formation of an excessively large

territorial patrimony occupied by an element, which, after land discrimination, is difficult to absorb (APESP, BR SPAPESP SEAGRI, KKKK 1934).

Owing to these anti-Japanese attitudes in Brazil, in 1937, the contract with the KKKK was brusquely terminated and not renegotiated, despite incessant appeals from KKKK executives (São Paulo 1937). From 1938 onwards, as already mentioned, organisations of Japanese migrants were prohibited from operating; only sports associations were allowed. For this reason, the Registro Baseball Club (RBBC) became the only remaining collective organisation for the settlers for many decades to come. When reflecting on the most acute period of state repression regarding migrants in the country, after the Brazilian government declared a state of war in 1942, some of my interlocutors in Registro recalled their parents describing episodes in which Japanese families set books and newspapers on fire as a precautionary measure, and Brazilian school teachers of Japanese heritage being turned away from their posts. Another one recounted the following anecdote:

Because at that time, we couldn't get together much because of the war. They thought that we were terrorists, so the Japanese couldn't [...] – we were heavily monitored. Very censored, indeed (interview with Mitsugui Sakano in IPHAN 2008a: no page).

With the progression of repressive measures towards migrants, large numbers of Japanese were faced with the grim choice to stay in Brazil or return to Japan. In 1939, a survey organised by Shungoro Wako, a resident in the municipality of Bauru, São Paulo, inquired whether other fellow countrymen living in Brazil would opt for permanent residence or return to Japan. Although, of the total of 12,000 letters, 85% answered that they would opt to return to their home country, Wako exposed the dilemma lived by the Japanese migrants in Brazil who were at the crossroads between the “longing for their homeland” and “the gratitude to the country in which they lived and contributed” in such turbulent times (National Diet Library 2014c). Toomo Handa characterised this impasse as “the suffering of immigrants between two nationalisms” (Handa 1987: 595). Nevertheless, the war continued to spread its effects, and in 1942 embassies and consular representations of Japan in Brazil were shut down, leaving the Japanese communities in the country with a general feeling of being left behind, as expressed in the memoirs of Rokuro Kayama:

[...] the Consul General, the Japanese Ambassador and other diplomats secretly returned to Japan. We had to recognise that we were the Emperor's offspring on one side, but on the other, we were then abandoned without being able to say farewell (National Diet Library 2014b).

Diplomatic relations between Brazil and Japan were finally reconstituted in 1949 when the Treaty of San Francisco re-established peaceful relations between Japan and all the countries within the Allied group. Brazil reopened its embassy in Tokyo and signed a bilateral trade agreement with Japan. It was only a year later that the Brazilian government finally liberated previously confiscated properties.

At this point, it is opportune to return to the questions and assumptions raised by the IPHAN regarding the case of Tooro Nagashi. The evidence of the historical documents and related literature regarding the settlements in the Ribeira Valley and the historical process of the Japanese migration to Brazil in the twentieth century lead us to reconsider at least two points. One refers to the presupposition that Japanese migrants can be categorised as homogeneous. As I have shown, the groups directed to the Ribeira Valley experienced different conditions and circumstances from those that first arrived in Brazil in 1908, and the year 1913 is a more significant milestone for the first. The other point refers to the temporal gap between the arrival of the first Japanese migrants in 1908 and the celebration of the first Tooro Nagashi in the 1950s. By briefly tracking the complex interconnections between numerous events at the local, national and global levels, an escalating process of state control and oppression towards migrants of Japanese origin in Brazil was brought to the fore. Because the settlements were directly connected to the Japanese government, they possibly suffered more intensely from the actions perpetrated by the Brazilian government, resulting in a historical silence around the period. Given such an impact, it is not surprising that the public manifestation of cultural practices from groups of Japanese legacy would only gain expression in the Ribeira Valley from the 1950s onwards after Brazil and Japan resumed their diplomatic relations.

Due to the evidence brought by the above historical materials, the question of the historical continuity regarding the celebration of Tooro Nagashi changes shape. The gap identified by the IPHAN turns out to be a sensitive period of historical continuity. In considering the meaning of this historical gap as an expression of the difficult historical experience of groups of Japanese legacy caused by repressive measures implemented by the Brazilian government, the celebration of Tooro Nagashi then becomes a collective act of resilience. The silence about the previous period thus actually manifests the existence of a “heritage that hurts” (Uzzell and Ballantyne 1998: 152) and a painful history that was left to be forgotten (Ricoeur 2000). In “the works of memory” (Jelin 2002: 14), the silence over this critical moment suited not only the Brazilian government, whose representatives and officials perpetrated the successive acts of repression described above, but it also served the Japanese government, which by the same time was equally inflicting similar measures upon the populations



of militarily occupied areas in Korea and China (Nanta 2012; Souyri 2014). It was mutually convenient not to come to terms with such instances of historical violence.

In the next section, “the works of memory” will continue to surprise us with another twist in this encounter between the Brazilian intangible cultural heritage policy and the celebration of Tooro Nagashi. Before proceeding, it is worth summarising what was hitherto discussed. I began with the IPHAN’s response to the submission of the celebration of Tooro Nagashi to be recognised as Cultural Heritage of Brazil. Based on an arbitrary notion of historical continuity, the IPHAN spotted an absence of Tooro Nagashi performances in the Ribeira Valley before the 1950s. In exploring the historical records and references regarding the Japanese immigration to the Ribeira Valley and Brazil, the identified absence was, in fact, a register of a period of intense repression and control over migrants of Japanese heritage. Awkwardly, the narrow statement issued by the IPHAN sheds light on a period of intentional silencing in the history of the country. The friction between the standards of the intangible cultural heritage policy and the celebration of Tooro Nagashi thus revealed that the performance is actually the heir of a traumatic historical experience in the Ribeira Valley.

## **5. The Second Silence**

The performance of Tooro Nagashi gained a new historical perspective in the encounter between the universe of the celebration and the domain of the Brazilian intangible cultural heritage policy after being confronted with the historical evidence related to the Japanese migration to Brazil and the Ribeira Valley. In this section, I consider how the celebration supported the re-organisation of families of Japanese origin in the Ribeira Valley. After the traumatic experience of the historical period introduced above, the celebration of Tooro Nagashi positioned them in new terms. However, this process was not consciously organised as a coherent program. As we will understand from those who participate in the making of the performance in Registro and from another unanticipated outcome of the friction we have seen thus far, it spontaneously took shape in unusual ways.

Now, we finally return to the story that opened this paper. Local oral histories claim that the Kasuga family has been central to the organisation of Tooro Nagashi in Registro since its inception. In the 1950s, when the Japanese traveller went to the banks of the Ribeira de Iguape River, in Sete Barras, to wash his face, but slipped down and drowned, the Kasuga family, as members of Nichirenshu Buddhism, reported the occurrence to the monk Emyo Ishimoto, who was based in the city of São Paulo. Years later, in 1955, as there were six other families of Japanese migrants in Registro whose members had lost their lives in the Ribeira de Iguape River, the monk, with the support

of the Kasuga family, performed the first ceremony in honour of the departed. On the occasion, seven lanterns were released into the waters of the river in Registro. Since then, the service has been performed annually. The ceremony is performed to comfort the souls of ancestors that once a year visit their living families during the Obon holiday, and by releasing a lantern into running waters, families guide their ancestors to return peacefully to the other world.

In 1952, monk Emyo Ishimoto and his wife, Toyoko “Myoho” Ishimoto, were sent to São Paulo by the Nichirenshu Buddhism in Japan to establish its first congregation in Brazil. The first years were arduous since the young couple was advised to gather without any financial support the existent Nichirenshu followers that were scattered across Brazil. When the Ishimoto met members of the Kasuga family in São Paulo and learned about the passing of the man for whom a *toro* (lantern) was cast by a family of Nichirenshu faith in Sete Barras, monk Emyo Ishimoto promptly decided to be involved with the families in the Ribeira Valley region (Toji 10/7/2008). Following a long period of hostile treatment from the Brazilian government and society and abandonment from the Japanese authorities, the population of Japanese descendants in the Ribeira Valley regained some comfort through solidarity with a religious movement from Japan.

In the early days, when the event of Tooro Nagashi involved only a dozen participants in Registro, the lanterns were made by each family honouring the passing of its loved ones. The Kasuga family became responsible for hosting the affiliates of Nichirenshu Buddhism arriving from São Paulo. The other families who participated in the inauguration of the first seven lanterns in 1955 also continued to assist in the preparation of the service. The Akune household has been in charge of making the *manjū*<sup>6</sup> offered for the souls of the deceased, whereas the Yoshimoto became responsible for preparing the location where the religious ritual usually takes place. As the number of participants in the celebration increased, so did the costs and responsibilities. For instance, lanterns had to be fabricated in bulk, and the Kasuga family contracted the carpentry services of the Shimada. Preparations began to require months in advance, including the fundraising necessary to cover the expenses. Contributions were collected among the many Japanese-Brazilian families in the region and local businesses in Registro.

Throughout the years, the responsibilities within each household have been transferred from one generation to the other. In 1984, monk Emyo Ishimoto was survived by his wife, Toyoko “Myoho” Ishimoto, who, also a monk of Nichirenshu Buddhism, continues to perform the ritual in Registro. In the 1970s, Bunzo Kasuga was replaced by his son Keaso Kasuga, who, in the late 1990s, a few years before his death, handed over the responsibility to the newly-formed Japanese Brazilian Cultural Association of Registro.

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6 A traditional Japanese confection, usually made from rice and buckwheat flour, and a filling of red bean paste.

Mário and Amélia Kasuga, children of Kesao Kasuga, continue to welcome the members of the Nichirenshu Buddhism in Registro; the Akune family, through Tereza Akune, continue to provide the *manjū* offered during the ceremony; the Yoshimotos, through Osvaldo Yoshimoto and his wife Elena Yoshimoto, are still in charge of carrying out the ceremonial preparations; and the Shimada, now through the work of Rui Shimada, continue to do the necessary woodworking services.

Within this history of successive transformations through the different generations of participants, the celebration of Tooro Nagashi has created varied memories and meanings for those who contribute to its making. The diversity of these recollections and senses of commitment was made more noticeable during the activities regarding the submission of Tooro Nagashi to become a Cultural Heritage of Brazil when several interviews were arranged by local researchers, *bunkyo* representatives and the IPHAN officials to support the application (see “Testimonials and interviews” in IPHAN 2008a: no page). Each interview offered details that interrogated assumptions not only on the part of the IPHAN officials or *bunkyo* representatives but also the families involved with the celebration. For instance, it was with glaring surprise to discover that, possibly, no one in the Kasuga family was actually a member of the Nichirenshu Buddhism, as Amélia Kasuga clarified:

We are Buddhists, as descendants of Japanese, right. My grandmother was Buddhist, so she looked for a Buddhist temple in São Paulo to pray for my grandfather because my grandfather was very ill. So, it was this search for a temple – I don’t know if she only looked for this temple or others, I don’t remember – but on those trips to find a place, she met *obo-san* [priest] Emyo Ishimoto, from Nichirenshu Buddhism of Brazil. So [...] it was all through my grandmother, who travelled to request prayers for my grandfather. And then, I believe she made friends [with the Ishimoto], went to [the Nichirenshu Buddhist] temple, and attended the services. As she lived here in Serrote [a district of the municipality of Registro],<sup>7</sup> when she went to São Paulo, she would always go to this temple (interview with Amélia Kasuga, IPHAN 2008a: no page).

Additionally, in Registro, Amélia’s grandmother used to attend the Hongwanji Buddhist Temple too. Amélia could not affirm either whether her father, Kesao Kasuga, could be considered a Nichirenshu follower, as his involvement was restricted to the organisation of the Tooro Nagashi. Still, she vehemently attested to his continued commitment to the celebration, despite other possible religious attachments.

Likewise, the other families involved in the celebration, the Akune and the Yoshimoto, report a similar situation. Teresa Akune, who has been responsible for the offering

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<sup>7</sup> District refers to areas far from the municipality’s urbanised area.

of *manjū*, and Osvaldo Yoshimoto, responsible for the preparation of the ceremonial site, had both a sibling who drowned in the Ribeira de Iguape river and their parents participated in the first celebration in 1955 (see interview with Nobuyoshi Sasai, Torajo Endo, Osvaldo Yoshimoto, and Teresa Kimiko Akune, IPHAN 2008a: no page). Their families were Buddhists, however, affiliated with the Hongwanji Buddhist Temple in Registro. In a slightly different fashion, Rui Shimada, who continues to craft the lanterns as his father previously did, declared:

My grandmother who lived together with us was a Buddhist. My father followed the Episcopal line. We [he and his brother] are baptised in the Catholic Church, but are not practicing Catholics (interview with Rui Shimada, IPHAN 2008a: no page).

As it is common within families and across generations, religious bonds varied and it is significant to realise that what connects all these families to the celebration of Tooro Nagashi is not a shared faith in Nichirenshu Buddhism. Simultaneously, it is noteworthy that the Nichirenshu Buddhism, through Emyo and “Myoho” Ishimoto, never intended to perform the Tooro Nagashi ceremony as an act of proselytism, as suggested by the absence of a branch in Registro. Instead, it is frequent for those involved in the organisation of the event to assert a more general meaning for the celebration:

I don't think there's a great difference in being Catholic or Buddhist [...] I think it's a tribute that is made that is valid for any religion (interview with Rui Shimada, IPHAN 2008a: no page).

One cannot forget All Soul's day. One cannot forget it because it is universal. Besides, as it is said, no matter the religion, this is our duty because one day we will leave [this world]. We have to pay homage to the departed, so we can be honoured too after we leave, on All Souls' Day. That's what I think (interview with Mitsugui Sakano, IPHAN 2008a: no page).

This comprehensive sense was also regarded as overcoming ethnic boundaries, as Rui Shimada again remarked:

Today, with all the organisations that are involved, [Tooro Nagashi] is no longer just a celebration about immigration or about religion, a Nichirenshu ritual[...] it has become a ritual for other religions as well. I think it is no longer so specific to [Japanese] immigrants (interview with Rui Shimada, IPHAN 2008a: no page).

Indeed, the transformations that the celebration of Tooro Nagashi underwent through the decades confirm the statement. In the 1950s, the main means of transportation in the Ribeira Valley region was precisely the Ribeira de Iguape River. The railroad from Santos only reached as far as the city of Juquiá and, from there, steamboats departed

for Registro and cities further along. For a long time, the Ribeira de Iguape river was the main connection for the circulation of people and goods in the region, being part of the daily life of the locals but also bearing a large number of fatalities in its waters. Consequently, at the beginning, the celebration of Tooro Nagashi was performed to comfort the victims who drowned in the Ribeira de Iguape river.

With the opening of a few roads in the region, such as the one that connects Registro to Juquiá, the Ribeira de Iguape river began to lose its function as a connecting path. In the 1960s, with the construction of highway BR116 to link the State of São Paulo with the country's southern region, the Ribeira de Iguape River ultimately lost its place as a connecting route. Since its inauguration, the city of Registro gained a new position on the regional political and economic map. Now, on the margins of one of the main national transport routes, Registro became a reference point of passage in a national development plan that adopted the automotive traffic model. Still, the integration into this new modernisation project created impacts for locals. The mounting number of accidents and violent deaths involving motor vehicles came to disturb what was seen as the natural rhythm of human life and required spiritual responses.

The first religious movement to deal directly with this matter in Registro was the Seicho-No-Ie. Present in the city since the 1950s, the local Seicho-No-Ie chapter began to hold services in tribute to the victims involved in accidents on the highway BR116 soon after its opening. Seicho-No-Ie is one of the new religious movements created in the 1930s in Japan, which was consolidated abroad mostly after the Second World War in a similar fashion as the Nichirenshu Buddhism. With time, and with the declining numbers of victims of the Ribeira de Iguape river, the celebration of Tooro Nagashi also embraced the reverence for the victims of accidents on highway BR116. At first, the Seicho-No-Ie service and Tooro Nagashi celebration took place independently, but in the 1980s, as the affinities between the two religions were recognised, and they began to perform in association with one another. Since that time, on 2 November, in the morning, the Seicho-No-Ie service has been celebrated on the margins of the highway BR116, under a large white cross near the entrance access to the city. A few hours before dusk, on the same day, the Nichirenshu ceremony has been performed on the banks of the Ribeira de Iguape River, in the city centre, followed by the release of the lanterns.

In the 1990s, under the coordination of *bunkyo*, the celebration of Tooro Nagashi was visibly expanded and became more spectacular. In agreement with the Nichirenshu Buddhism, the celebration was characterised as inter-faith. The ceremony has continued to be presided over by Nichirenshu Buddhism but is now attended by representatives of other faiths, such as the Anglican Episcopal Church, the Catholic Church, the Messianic Church, and the Registro Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, in

addition to Seicho-No-Ie. Furthermore, visitors from other cities across Brazil began to attend the celebration and the number of *tooro* augmented dramatically, reaching more than two thousand. From this period onwards, the celebration came to honour the dead in its most broad sense. Therefore, over time, Tooro Nagashi, which began as a homage to the victims of the Ribeira de Iguape river, is today celebrated in respect for all souls in general.

As a process sensitively embedded in a traumatic historical experience, the celebration of Tooro Nagashi throughout the years provided means for the Japanese migrant communities in the Ribeira Valley to articulate a humanist vision that was inspired by a non-Western tradition but consolidated under the dynamics of a migratory context. As an expression of cosmopolitanism from below (Kurazawa 2004; Appadurai 2013), the celebration became an on-the-ground social practice concerned with universal claims proposed by non-hegemonic actors. The scope of such claims can be accessed, for instance, when appreciating a striking fact that emerged during the activities associated with submitting Tooro Nagashi to become a Cultural Heritage of Brazil. In the encounter between the national intangible cultural heritage policy and the celebration, this unexpected story emerged from the testimonial of the family in Sete Barras that hosted the Japanese traveller who is remembered as the original casualty of Tooro Nagashi, disturbing the established history of the celebration.

Nobuyoshi Sasai was an eight-year boy when the Japanese traveller arrived at his family's boarding house in Sete Barras in 1949 (See interview with Nobuyoshi Sasai, Torajo Endo, Oswaldo Yoshimoto and Teresa Kimiko Akune, IPHAN 2008a: no page). He recalled that one day the visitor took a particular interest in his father's chanting of the *Nam myoho rengue kyo* sutra as a follower of the Nichirenshu Buddhism. The next day, the guest's body was found floating on the river. His name was Keitaro Imanishi, and, in fact, he died by suicide, according to the note he left. A year later, Nobuyoshi Sasai's family paid their respect to the unknown deceased by improvising a lantern and throwing it into the Ribeira de Iguape waters. Although the family did not know who Keitaro Imanishi was nor whom to reach out to inform about his passing, a grave for him was maintained by the family. After some years, the priest from the Nichirenshu Temple of São Paulo came to perform the ceremony in honour of the deceased and the celebration of Tooro Nagashi was annually performed until, in 1955, it was transferred to Registro. In the 1980s, relatives from another town in the state of São Paulo reclaimed Imanishi's remains.

Nobuyoshi Sasai's interview was followed by intense rumours questioning the veracity of his words. The main point of contention being the information on the traveller's suicide, which contradicted the version that he accidentally slipped down and drowned. Some argued that if the visitor died by suicide, according to certain Buddhist principles,

he would not be allowed to receive post-mortem respects. Nobuyoshi Sasai retained that the guest was an elderly man in his eighties and his father also remarked that the man was at a stage when he was “very tired of life” (IPHAN 2008a: no page). A few days after his interview, Nobuyoshi Sasai shared a copy of the document that attested to the purchase on the part of his family of a burying place in the local cemetery for Keitaro Imanishi. The story of the celebration of Tooro Nagashi then gained an unexpected turn from a resolute soul, the soul that symbolically became the foundation for the celebration in the Ribeira Valley. For unclear reasons, the local collective memory in the Ribeira Valley kept silent on the dismal aspects of this historical occurrence, an account that is still not widely accepted and is reluctantly conserved by most of the participants involved with the celebration of Tooro Nagashi. Whatever the reasons for the silence concerning the suicide, the Sasai family story, in fact, only reinforces the humanist concern orienting the celebration of Tooro Nagashi, showing how these ethics of respect and care was present from its very beginning. The characterisation of the first fatality as a suicide reveals the compassionate disposition not to leave unobserved any human existence, reaffirming the importance of every life, first of an unknown traveller of Japanese origin, next of members of local Japanese families, later of any victim of the Ribeira de Iguape river, so of any human being.

Breaking the long-standing effects of the unspoken traumatic atmosphere of rejection and abandonment left by the previous historical period of repressive measures, the celebration of Tooro Nagashi turned out to be an organised social manifestation of the families of Japanese heritage in the Ribeira Valley. It became a ritualistic response (Hirsch 2014, 2019) of later generations in relation to the personal and collective trauma of previous ones. After an enduring period of silence about the historical violence previously suffered, the traumatic experience was thus reconfigured as a public demonstration of care and respect in reverence to someone’s life as a ritualised form of solidarity, recognising the humanity of others in a broad sense.

## **6. Conviviality as Process**

In the last section, the human character of the celebration of Tooro Nagashi was uncovered in another twist in the friction between the celebration and the Brazilian intangible cultural heritage policy, which disclosed another silence related to the performance. Tooro Nagashi is not the only cultural manifestation enacted by the groups of Japanese background in the Ribeira Valley. There are other sociocultural expressions that, for example, preserve ancient Japanese traditions, such as the New Year’s celebration in honour of ancestral deities that families of Raposa commemorate, a district in Registro (Sensui 2021). However, the case of Tooro Nagashi is particularly significant in that it was elected by the Japanese Brazilian Cultural Association of

Registro to feature as a Cultural Heritage of Brazil, showing an awareness that the celebration holds a convivial value in the establishment of a dialogue with the national framework of the cultural heritage policy.

Yet, the convivial configuration that has unfolded throughout the analysis of the case indicates a form of living together in tension (Costa 2019). This conviviality is marked by a traumatic historical experience of global war and state repression that has been embedded in the lives of these migrants of Japanese legacy in silence. Silence thus became constitutive of a mode of living together in the uneven historical configuration of conviviality involving these Japanese migrant communities. As Pollack (1993) observes, silence over the past may be founded on the necessity of finding a *modus vivendi* with those who perpetrated or endorsed violence that is too uncomfortable to address. Such silence is thus less the outcome of an effort to forget than a management of memory (Pollack 1986).

As the works of memory (Jelin 2002) continued to evolve in the Ribeira Valley, the celebration of Tooro Nagashi became a first means to socially and symbolically reorganise the public standing of the local families of Japanese heritage in terms of a humanising reference. Though it still did not enable the expression of the subterranean reminiscences of the painful period of repression, the celebration converted the darkness of the past into a purposeful collective ethics for the present and the future. As a historical process, the case of Tooro Nagashi exemplifies conviviality as a transformative ground and an unfolding course of “co-constitution of domination and resistance” (Nobre 2017). In this process, the celebration of Tooro Nagashi emerged as a space within which “the very meaning and scope of conviviality” (Appadurai 2017: 9) has been ritualistic put to debate by the groups of Japanese descent in the Ribeira Valley, who are continually pushing the terms of its convivial proposal towards a more humanising and comprehensive sense.

Simultaneously, in grasping this conviviality by way of the concept of “friction”, the encounter between the socio-political universes of the Brazilian intangible cultural heritage policy and the celebration of Tooro Nagashi also enacted a convivial development significantly marked by unanticipated and ambiguous outcomes (Heil 2019), such as the surfacing of situations of historical silence that were previously unnoticed, characterising such entanglement as a startling living process.

## **7. Considerations**

As outlined in the above sections, the Tooro Nagashi application for the title of Cultural Heritage of Brazil generated responses from the governmental organisation responsible for the national cultural heritage policies in Brazil and ended up disclosing



how difference and belonging within the Brazilian society are tailored and negotiated. In the spirit of the new democratic framework established by the Constitution of 1988, those of Japanese legacy can be considered by the governmental agency as one of the “different groups that compose Brazilian society” (Brazil 1988: Article 216), namely the “Japanese Brazilian community”. Through the national intangible cultural heritage policy, migrants’ legacies can only be considered heritage if they demonstrate historical continuity and are associated with a homogeneous group of identity that manifests a homogeneous culture that stands in contrast with other groups of difference in the country. As a result, the intangible cultural heritage policy in Brazil operates by considering migrants as groups of difference among other groups forming the nation, a multiculturalist model that acknowledges the non-national as part of the national by means of only the working notions of closed and holistic groups of difference.

The historical documents associated with the presence of migrants in the Ribeira Valley, as well as the understanding of those who closely participate in the celebration of Tooro Nagashi, evidenced how the IPHAN’s assumptions do not represent these local actors or take full account of their collective history and the performance of Tooro Nagashi. Nevertheless, in this encounter between the celebration of Tooro Nagashi and the field of cultural heritage in Brazil, not only were the institutional standards of the IPHAN’s intangible cultural heritage policy questioned as arbitrary and charged with essentialist assumptions, but these same standards also revealed, in unanticipated ways, certain areas of sensitive memory regarding the collective history of migrants in the Ribeira Valley and throughout Brazil. In this friction, zones of historical silence were unexpectedly brought to the fore by the interactions established between the actors of the celebration of Tooro Nagashi and the national intangible cultural heritage policy.

In this interaction, whereas the IPHAN’s intangible cultural heritage policy presupposed that cultural manifestations follow a sort of cumulative historical continuity for at least seventy-five years for any manifestation to be sufficiently eligible to become cultural heritage in Brazil, the celebration of Tooro Nagashi exposed that, in the face of acts of violence and repression, cultural continuity may likewise be composed of historical silences, as the historical documents and references about the migration process of groups of Japanese origin in the Ribeira Valley and the country confirm. In this case, the gap does not mean an absence of history; instead it denotes the traumatic collective experience of some migrant groups in Brazil. In taking into account this period in the historical continuity of Tooro Nagashi, the celebration becomes an heir of a difficult heritage.

Equally, the image of a Japanese Brazilian community conveyed by the IPHAN turns out to be untenable in view of the heterogeneity of the groups of migrants directed to the Ribeira Valley. The historical documents show these groups as experiencing diverse

migratory courses as settlers of different trajectories, some were already living in the city of São Paulo, and others had arrived from different regions of Japan. Simultaneously, this heterogeneity is also manifest in the ambiguous religious affiliations of almost all participants in the celebration of Tooro Nagashi. Thus, if a sense of the participants' belonging is expressed through the celebration, it is not to claim a unified Japanese Brazilian identity; nor is it to stress a particular religious faith, since the majority of those involved in the celebration has never been affiliated to the Nishirenshu Buddhism.

Instead, the Tooro Nagashi narrates something beyond questions of identity, and the story about the visitor who drowned in the Ribeira de Iguape river remains fundamental in signalling a collective reason for the celebration. Although the difficult memory of the suicide of the elderly traveller is still not widely accepted by the local participants, the mere act of embracing an unknown man's death, no matter the circumstances of his earlier life, is remarkably significant. Besides not knowing him and not sharing the same religious attachments, a group of people of Japanese background in the Ribeira valley expressed reverence for the life of this man and others. Beyond kinship, affinity or religion, the performance of Tooro Nagashi connected all those who were willing to pay their respect for someone's passing in a common appreciation of a human condition: life and death. For this reason, it is not surprising that the celebration became overtly inter-faith throughout the years, given its humanising concern. Therefore, Tooro Nagashi should not be considered a means for people to show how Japanese they are or how Buddhist the world can be, as the national intangible cultural heritage policy infers. Quite the reverse, the celebration is performed as an acknowledgement that everyone shares a common condition of mortality that should be respected. Therefore, Tooro Nagashi particularly stresses that heritages of migration do not necessarily need to claim an identity; they can perform collectively the openness to care for another and become original proposals for conviviality from migrant subjects (Amescua 2013).

The analysis undertaken was crafted to connect various sorts of materials, such as state law and regulation, administrative files, historical documents, interviews, and ethnographic notes, in an effort also to reach an interdisciplinary convivial methodological approach (Berg and Nowicka 2019) that would suit the examination of the particular forms of conviviality in view. Under the concept of "friction", the traction of socio-political worlds and research materials not only revealed the silences concealed in the case of the celebration of Tooro Nagashi, but it also exposed the need to fashion accompanying methodological dispositions that do not restrict the analysis in a national-led historical gaze or an ethnic assumption about migrants' senses of belonging. In respecting the nuances involved in the case, we are able to follow the evolution of the convivial situation of the families of Japanese legacy in the Ribeira Valley as a living process, which I designate here as conviviality-in-action.

Local participants in Registro organised a response to the IPHAN's communication in 2019. The municipal authority requested the reopening and reassessment of the Tooro Nagashi submission (IPHAN 2008b). After careful argumentation by the IPHAN officials from São Paulo, the submission was approved by the board of experts to proceed, and the rule of "historical continuity" is currently being revised. The friction between the celebration of Tooro Nagashi and the intangible cultural heritage policy is still in progress. Whether the case of Tooro Nagashi will keep influencing the configuration of the policy and whether the policy will continue to exercise its effects on the celebration is something to be seen, but, as shown in the paper, the story is still in progress.

## **8. Acknowledgements**

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## 9. Abbreviations

APESP: Arquivo Público do Estado de São Paulo

KKKK: Kaigai Kōgyō Kabushiki Kaisha

SEAGRI: Secretaria da Agricultura do Estado de São Paulo

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