Transoceanic passage brought nearly 189,000 immigrants from Japan to Brazil between 1908 and 1941. They were often geographically isolated in Japanese “colonies” as coffee plantation workers and thus able to maintain their Japanese linguistic and cultural identity.

A new imagined community coalesced in the several Japanese-language immigrant newspapers that also published locally produced serial fiction. This paper reads two representative works by Sugi Takeo, pen name of Takei Makoto (1909-2011), a first-generation immigrant and frequent contributor to the Burajiru Jih? newspaper.

In the short stories, “Kafé-en o uru” (Selling the coffee plantation, 1933) and “Tera Roshiya” (Terra rossa, 1937), it is the moonshine sellers who see steady profits from every race and type of immigrant laborer while the Japanese newcomers who naively dream of riches by bringing coffee to market reap only a bitter brew of poverty for their efforts.