Transnational Faiths

Latin-American Immigrants and their Religions in Japan

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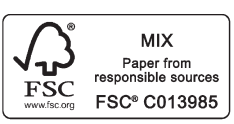

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Chapter 9
Transcendental Communications: The Reinterpretation of the Brazilian Spiritist *Continuum* in Japan

Rafael Shoji and Hugo Córdova Quero

> The material beings constitute the visible or corporeal world, and the immaterial beings constitute the invisible or spiritual world, that is to say, the spirit-world, or world of spirits. The spirit-world is the normal, primitive, eternal world, pre-existent to, and surviving, everything else. The corporeal world is only secondary; it might cease to exist, or never have existed, without changing the essentiality of the spiritual world. Spirits temporarily assume a perishable material envelope, the destruction of which, by death, restores them to liberty.
>
> Allan Kardec[1]

Introduction

In the early 1850s when Allan Kardec began researching about Spiritualism, little did he imagine that his work would developed into a faith that transcended time and space. Kardec – born in Lyon, France, as Léon Dénizard Hippolyte Rivail in 1804[2] – was in his early 50s when he compiled the first questions about the spiritual world and set his mind into answering them. Kardec's teachings – mainly expressed in his literary production – led to the formation of a new religious path, which, in order to differentiate it from other forms of Spiritualism, Kardec coined as 'Spiritism'. His first book was published on 18 April 1857 and was already signed with the pen-name 'Allan Kardec'. The title of that first work was simply *The Spirits' Book*.[3] Kardec was not alone in his quest to understand the meaning and the symbolism of the spirits' realm. Throughout the United States, the United Kingdom and France, hundreds of seekers have begun the same pilgrimage. Among the many famous Spiritualists of the time we can mention Ann Leah, Margaret (Maggie) and Catherine (Kate) Fox – usually known as the 'Fox

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[1] Allan Kardec, *The Spirits' Book*, translated by Anna Blackwell (Rio de Janeiro, RJ, 1996), p. 32.

[2] Raymond Buckland, *The Spirit Book: The Encyclopedia of Clairvoyance, Channeling, and Spirit Communication* (Canton, MI, 2005), p. 386.

[3] The title in French is *Le Livre des Esprits*.

sisters' – in New York, whose fame began in the 1850s–1860s.[4] Paschal Beverly Randolph, who was also the founder of the Rosicrucian movement, was another famous Spiritualist.[5] However, Kardec took his quest into a more systematized form, and his teachings and legacy continued in those who followed the way of Spiritism. Kardec's faith soon extended throughout the world. Although its popularity decreased in France, Spiritism:

> … flourished in South America – especially Brazil – and, to a lesser extent, in the Philippines. Kardec had adopted the terms "Spiritism" and "Spiritists" for his version of Spiritualism. These terms were used in South America along with the term "Kardecism" (*Kardecismo*).[6]

Spiritism took roots in Brazil in a fast and steady way. As part of the religious landscape in Brazilian society, Spiritism has become part of the faith and daily lived experiences of millions. In fact, Brazil is the country with the largest Spiritist community in the world.[7] Therefore, it is not surprising that Spiritism is one among the many religions that Japanese Brazilian migrants took to Japan, although this latter fact is still one of the less researched in Religious Studies.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the development of Brazilian Spiritism in Japan amidst the Japanese Brazilian migrant communities. Our particular interest is to analyse the reframing of Brazilian Spiritism in light of the encounter with Japanese religious practices. While the first section of the chapter deals with the establishment of Spiritism and other religions in Brazil – particularly in their connection to issues such as ancestor worship, karma and incarnation – the succeeding section focuses on the interaction of Spiritism within the Japanese religious context. The last part of the chapter suggests a (re)interpretation of the Brazilian Spiritist *continuum* in Japan. Our stance is that the blending of Japanese ideas and elements from the Brazilian religious world gives birth to eclectic and yet meaningful religious practices. This blending of spiritualities enable the incorporation and development of a hybrid spiritual world, adding both Brazilian and Japanese meanings to a domain of entities and practices which are frequently misconstrued. Given this context, the particular contribution of Japanese Brazilian migrants to the spiritual realm of the host country – Japan – is paramount and creative. Thus, enhancing new 'spiritual diasporas' and transnationalism within the *continuum* of the symbolic religious universe in Japan is fostered by the

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[4] Isaacs Ernest, 'Fox, Ann Leah, Margaret, and Catherine', in Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James and Paul S. Boyer (eds), *Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 2 (3 vols, Cambridge, MA, 1971), pp. 655–7.

[5] John Patrick Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth-Century Black American Spiritualist, Rosicrucian, and Sex Magician* (Albany, NY, 1997).

[6] Buckland, *The Spirit Book*, p. 386.

[7] Emma Bragdon, *Kardec's Spiritism: A Home For Healing And Spiritual Evolution* (Enfield, 2004).

particular hybrid or *mestiço*[8] identity of Japanese Brazilian migrants. In this sense, *mestiçagem*[9] evidences that ethnicity and religion partner in further developing a transnational faith such as Spiritism.

Data for this chapter comes from two separate fieldworks. Rafael Shoji conducted fieldwork in the prefectures of Aichi and Gifu in 2010, especially at the Christian Spiritist Centre of Japan (NEC-J) and Umbanda Christian Center (NUC), both located in the city of Toki, Gifu prefecture. Hugo Córdova Quero conducted fieldwork in the Kanto region in 2011–12, especially at the Christian Spiritist Community Francisco Cândido Xavier in the city of Ichikawa, Chiba prefecture.

Ancestor Worship and Religious Diversity in Brazil

Among the many religious practices found amidst the Brazilian religious landscape, references to ancestor worship are presented as possible in many religions but are not well-known spiritual praxis. Not an exclusive feature of Spiritism, some form of ancestor worship is shared with Camdomblé, Umbanda and Asian religions, especially Japanese Buddhism. Nowadays, all these religions are prominent actors within the complex religious world in Brazil. However, the history of religious pluralism and the recognition of those religions in a predominantly Christian society entail a long process in Brazil.

Historically, Roman Catholicism was the most powerful religious organization since the times of the Portuguese colony until well into the twentieth century; although in present times that power has decreased considerably. While Brazil still hosts the largest Roman Catholic population in the world,[10] the advancement of other religions has resulted in lesser and lesser priests as well as lay members. Currently, Christians in Brazil represent 86.8 per cent of the total population. Of that percentage, 64.6 per cent are Roman Catholics while 22.2 per cent are Protestant evangelicals, a growing population. Furthermore, the population with no religious affiliation has also increased.[11] This has forced the Roman Catholic Church to pursue new ways of enticing new members – such as the 'singer fathers' who offer concerts in football stadiums – although this situation dramatically increases a grey zone of 'experimentation' and 'new religious projects'.[12]

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8 Mixed-race or racial hybrid.

9 Racial hybridity.

10 Jon S. Vincent, *Culture and Customs of Brazil* (Westport, CT, 2003), p. 71.

11 Denise dos Santos Rodrigues, 'Os sem religião nos censos brasileiros: sinal de uma crise do pertencimento institucional' [The irreligious in Brazilian censuses: Sign of a crisis of institutional belonging], *Horizonte*, 10/28 (2012): p. 1134.

12 Patrícia Birman and Márcia Pereira Leite, 'Whatever Happened to What Used to Be the Largest Catholic Country in the World?', *Daedalus*, 129/2 (Spring 2000): p. 285.

Notwithstanding, Brazil is a nation in which the religious coexistence of different religious movements is nowadays a common phenomenon.[13] Moreover, switching or holding multiple religious affiliations in one's biography is a historical feature, and often commended as an asset as society esteems valuable both religious hybridity and racial *mestiçagem*.[14] Unmistakably, the Brazilian spiritual world emerged from the beginning with a transnational and multicultural character through the intertwining of local Native Brazilian religions, European Roman Catholicism and imported faiths from Africa and Asia, brought by slaves and immigrants respectively. For example, many people only appear in statistics as 'Roman Catholics', although in reality more often than not their only contact with that faith was during baptism when they were infants. Some of them are Roman Catholics,[15] who experience multiple religious affiliations throughout their lives by intermixing religious beliefs whose provenance is not rooted in Roman Catholic teachings such as the notion of reincarnation. In general, Brazilians relate the notion of reincarnation to Spiritism or to the various kinds of Afro-Brazilian religions.[16] This situation has remained constant until current times, especially among individuals in the diaspora. We should remember that 1991–92 were the years in which the migration of Japanese Brazilian workers to Japan was at its peak,[17] thus enhancing the presence of those religious beliefs among the migrants in the diaspora.

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[13] José Jorge de Carvalho, 'An Enchanted Public Space: Religious Plurality and Modernity in Brazil', in Vivian Schelling (ed.), *Through the Kaleidoscope: The Experience of Modernity in Latin America* (London, 2000), p. 276.

[14] This has been analysed by Paulo Freire especially in his *Casa-grande & Senzala: Formação da Família Brasileira sob o Regime da Economia Patriarcal* [Master's house and slaves' dwelling: Formation of the Brazilian family under the scheme of the patriarchal economy] (São Paulo, SP, 2003), where he addresses this topic by referring to the colonial plantations as an 'interdependent family' where the Portuguese masters as well as the Indigenous and African slaves were related through a patriarchal system. This constituted the base for his notion of *mestiçagem*, which he saw as both positive and as an option to the imitation of the European discourse on race. See Richard Follett, 'The Spirit of Brazil: Football and the Politics of Afro-Brazilian Cultural Identity', in Annalisa Oboe and Anna Scacchi (eds), *Recharting the Black Atlantic: Modern Cultures, Local Communities, Global Connections* (London, 2008), p. 80. See also Philip Galinksy, *'Maracatu Atômico': Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in the Mangue Movement of Recife, Brazil* (London, 2002), p. 114.

[15] David J. Hess, *Spirits and Scientists: Ideology, Spiritism, and Brazilian Culture* (University Park, PA, 1991), p. 14. See also Hideaki Matsuoka, *Japanese Prayer Below the Equator: How Brazilians Believe in the Church of Messianity* (Lanham, MD, 2007), p. 49.

[16] José Jorge de Carvalho, 'El Misticismo de los Espíritus Marginales' [The mysticism of marginal spirits], *Marburg Journal of Religion*, 6/2 (June 2001): p. 2.

[17] Higuchi, Naoto y Kiyoto Tanno, 'What's Driving Brazil–Japan Migration? The Making and Remaking of the Brazilian Niche in Japan', *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, 12 (2003): pp. 31–47; Keiko Yamanaka, 'Feminization of Japanese Brazilian

As already mentioned, these beliefs do not always relate to the official teachings of Roman Catholicism. However, they are important factors within the religious landscape in Brazil. How did this situation come into being? Four historical events should be noted to understand how these notions became so ingrained within the symbolic universe of the religious spirituality of Brazilians: a) the Yoruba religion and the development of Afro-Brazilian religions; b) the dissemination of Spiritism; c) the incorporation of Asian religions to the Brazilian religious landscape; and d) the blending of the Japanese and the Brazilian spiritual symbolic worlds. All these events are greatly interrelated and enrich broadly the development of religious diversity in Brazil.

The Yoruba Religion and the Development of Afro-Brazilian Religions

After centuries of oppression and segregation, a movement towards the strengthening of a more traditional African religion came into being in the constituency and development of Afro-Brazilian religions. The roots of Afro-Brazilian religions can be traced to the Yoruba religion present among the various African ethnic groups from Nigeria, Benin and Togo who were forced to live under the Brazilian slave regime since 1549.[18] As was the case with all other forms of spirituality present among the enslaved ethnic groups, the Yoruba religion suffered under the influence of Roman Catholicism. For example, for several centuries the Yoruba religion remained hidden behind Roman Catholic iconography, a fact shared throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.[19]

In 1830 some sisters from the *Irmandade da Nossa Senhora da Boa Morte*,[20] who where under the governance of Roman Catholicism, abandoned the sisterhood and established the first *terreiro*[21] in Salvador, Bahia: this house of worship was known as *Casa Branca*[22] and centred exclusively around the praising of the *Orixás*[23], a highlight of the faith.[24] It is not surprising that women were the forerunners of the Yoruba restoration in a country such as Brazil, widely

labor migration to Japan', in Jeffrey Lesser (ed.), *Searching for Home Abroad: Japanese-Brazilians and Transnationalism* (Durham, NC, 2003), pp. 163–200.

18 Sidney M. Greenfield, 'The Reinterpretation of Africa: Convergence and Syncretism in Brazilian Candomblé', in Sidney M. Greenfield and André F. Droogers (eds), *Reinventing Religions: Syncretism and Transformation in Africa and the Americas* (Lanham, MD, 2001), p. 115.

19 Robert M. Levine, *Brazilian Legacies* (Armonk, NY, 1997), p. 136.

20 Sisterhood of Our Lady of the Good Death.

21 House of worship.

22 White house.

23 Spirits of nature.

24 Andrea Allen, 'Candomblé', in Carole Boyce Davies (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the African Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and, Culture*, vol. 1 (3 vols, Santa Barbara, CA, 2008), p. 257.

influenced by the Roman Catholic worldview of male domination of the sacred. On the contrary, in the Yoruba religion each believer has a special association with one of the deities and it is not uncommon that males are often possessed by female spirits and vice-versa.[25] Practices of possession and trance mediate the exchanges of offerings among believers and the sacred entities are embraced through detailed rituals presided over equally by priests and priestesses. Rita Laura Segato, who has written extensively about the Yoruba religion, explains that even the deities could be transgender:

> *Logunede*, in Bahia, is said to be six months male and six months female, and Oya is said to have been male in the past and become female presently, though still exhibiting a rather virile personality. A continuum is traced along the range of orisas/personalities, resulting that some female saints are said to be more virile than others and the same for female. Regarding some particular trait of character, a female saint can be "more virile" or "more masculine" than a masculine saint.[26]

This gender diversity within the religious symbolic world of the Yoruba religion clearly has impacted the worldview of its followers by transversing into the broader Brazilian society. Segato also adds that issues such as 'the malleability of gender' and 'the flexibility and anti-essentialism of family arrangements' are factors that contributed to the dissemination of the Yoruba religious values among new converts in neighbouring countries such as Argentina and Uruguay.[27]

The restoration of the Yoruba religion soon paved the way for the emergence of Afro-Brazilian religions such as Candomblé and Umbanda. The emergence of Candomblé can be traced to the early 1830s and the courage of the sisters of the *Irmandade da Nossa Senhora da Boa Morte*. However, Candomblé – also known as *xangôs*[28] or *batuques*[29] depending on the region of the country – is mainly the result of the late immigration of the Nago people from Africa to Brazil in the nineteenth century. The Nago people really moulded the actual profile of Candomblé, thus promoting its ongoing flourishing.[30]

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[25] Rita Laura Segato, 'Gender Politics, and Hybridism in the Transnationalization of Yorùbá Culture', in Jacob Kẹhinde Olupona and Terry Rey (eds), *Òrìṣà Devotion as World Religion: The Globalization of Yorùbá Religious Culture* (Madison, WI, 2008), p. 502.

[26] Segato, 'Gender Politics', p. 502.

[27] Rita Laura Segato, *The Factor of Gender in the Yoruba Transnational Religious World* (Série Antropologia # 289). (Brasília, DF, 2001), p. 10, and 'Frontiers and Margins: The Untold Story of the Afro-Brazilian Religious Expansion to Argentina and Uruguay', *Critique of Anthropology*, 16/4 (1996): pp. 343–59.

[28] Shango.

[29] Drums.

[30] Matt D. Childs and Toyin Falola, 'The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World:

On the other hand, evolving from a hybrid process of (re)appropriation of the spiritual concepts from different religions, Umbanda appeared in the early 1920s. As a hybrid version of African practices, Umbanda drew concepts such as reincarnation and karma[31] from Spiritism through a process that some scholars named 'syncretism,' 'hybridization' or 'creolization'. Soon Umbanda became a popular Afro-Brazilian religious feature within the Brazilian multi-religious landscape.

However, Afro-Brazilian religions also appealed to an etho-racial component, which gave meaning to oppressed sectors of society in neighbouring countries such as Argentina and Uruguay, where Afro-descendants have historically been made invisible from mainstream society.[32] Around the 1960s, both Umbanda and Candomblé – although presenting religious practices incompatible with those of Roman Catholic teachings – officially ceased to be persecuted.[33] In the subsequent decades, both religions gained a significant number of supporters amidst the population in the growing urbanizations of Brazil and throughout South America.[34]

The Dissemination of Spiritism

Spiritism, much in decline in Europe since the early twentieth century, garnered at the beginning of the twentieth century an increasing interest on the part of the white and middle class in Brazil. For them, the rationalistic doctrines of Kardec became a basis for the further development of practices and ideas already existing amidst Brazilian society, many of them clearly rooted in Afro-Brazilian religions. Particularly, the contact with spiritual entities or mediumship became a widely disseminated religious experience. As a matter of fact, some records show that among French immigrants to Brazil, episodes of Spiritist *séance* were not uncommon. However it was not until the 1870s that this faith transcended the

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Methodology and Research', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs (eds), *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (Bloomington, IN, 2004), p. 10.

[31] Stefania Capone, *Searching for Africa in Brazil: Power and Tradition in Candomblé* (Durham, NC, 2010), p. 75.

[32] Rita Laura Segato, 'Uma Vocação de Minoria: A Expansão dos Cultos Afro-Brasileiros na Argentina como Processo de Re-etnização' [A minority vocation: The expansion of Afro-Brazilian religions in Argentina as a process of re-ethnicization], *Dados – Revista de Ciências Sociais* [Data – Journal of Social Sciences], 34/2 (1991): pp. 249–78.

[33] Although the Roman Catholic Church ceased in its attempts to demonize both Umbanda and Candomblé, Neo-Pentecostal churches such as the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God began their crusade against both religions since the 1980s. R. Andrew Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits: Latin America's New Religious Economy* (Oxford, 2003), p. 104.

[34] As a contrast in this context, it is interesting to compare the virtual disappearance of African religions in the predominantly Protestant North America *vis-à-vis* the increasing of believers in the predominantly Roman Catholic Latin America. Roger Bastide, *African Civilizations in the New World* (London, 1971), pp. 152–69.

migrants' entourage.[35] Among the followers of Spiritism in Brazil two individuals contributed to the dissemination of this faith until it reached its present popularity.

On the one hand, the public declaration of faith by Dr. Adolfo Bezerra de Menezes Cavalcanti in 1886 in front of the most prominent elite of Rio de Janeiro generated larger interest in Spiritism throughout the city.[36] Bezerra de Menezes' work not only took Spiritism into the realm of mental health – an area through which thousands of Brazilians have been treated at the Spiritist hospitals in Brazil – but also restored unity among the many factions of Spiritism in the country.[37] The connection between Spiritism and mental health was first established by Kardec, although with strong critique from the scientific community in France.[38]

On the other hand, Francisco Cândido Xavier, commonly known as Chico Xavier, became a key figure in the recognition of this faith by the Brazilian government. Xavier's efforts through his appearance in TV shows in the 1960s–1970s as well as his production of more than 130 books brought Spiritism closer to millions of Brazilians. Although Xavier did not receive an education beyond elementary school, his teachings offered scientific concepts so profound that for many this was proof of his gifts in mediumship and true connection to enlightened spirits.[39]

The Incorporation of Asian Religions to the Brazilian Religious Landscape

The process of adoption of religious concepts from the belief systems of Umbanda, Camdomblé and Spiritism into the Brazilian multi-religious context is also a common feature shown by the adaptation of Buddhism. There are beliefs rooted in Brazilian society which allow certain Buddhist concepts to be accepted due to their analogy with those already established ideas. Specifically, the ancestor worship – which is traditionally present in most Japanese Buddhist movements – grew stronger within the Japanese immigrants' communities as well as among many of the Brazilian converts, who nowadays constitute the majority of believers in Brazil.[40] Strictly speaking, ancestor worship presents – beyond the ethnic Asian

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[35] Andrew Dawson, *New Era, New Religions: Religious Transformation in Contemporary Brazil* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 19–20.

[36] Robert Henry Moser, *The Carnivalesque Defunto: Death and the Dead in Modern Brazilian Literature* (Athens, OH, 2008), p. 113.

[37] David J. Hess, 'The Many Rooms of Spiritism in Brazil', *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 24/2 (Winter 1987): p. 18.

[38] Ibid., p. 17.

[39] Neil Turner, *Religious Syncretism in Brazil: Catholicism, Evangelicalism and Candomblé* (Norderstedt, 2011), p. 14.

[40] Rafael Shoji, 'Uma Perspectiva Analítica para os Convertidos ao Budismo Japonês no Brasil' [An analytic perspective for converts to Japanese Buddhism in Brazil], *Rever: Revista de Estudos da Religião* [Rever: Journal of religious studies], 2/2 (2002): p. 99.

communities – a possibility of acceptance within the popular religiosity of Brazil due to its connection to the African people as well as Indigenous religions to which the notion was not foreign.

Additionally, Spiritism in Brazil – with its concepts of reincarnation and karma – largely contributed to the popular understanding of Asian religious beliefs.[41] It should be noted, however, that the contribution of karma and reincarnation by Spiritism indicates a possibility of acceptance of the fundamentals of both Buddhist concepts from an angle very different from its orthodox formulation in Buddhism or other Japanese religions.[42] In general, Brazilian society easily accepts karma and especially the influence of spirits as sources for problem-solving in continuity with the Japanese setting. In the analysis of the history of karma there is a double-way conceptual migration. On the one side, in its route towards the Far East the concept passed from Hindu (re)interpretations to receiving a Confucian influence before finally settling within the Japanese popular religiousness as well as in the context of Japanese New Religions.[43] However, on the other side, in its migration towards the West the concept received a conceptual (re)definition through its appropriation by Allan Kardec in the development of Spiritism in France. The fact that Spiritism has become a religion that is quantitatively insignificant in Europe while having millions of followers and sympathizers in Brazil is one of these historical peculiarities that shows how religions have different ways of diffusion and acceptance. In Brazil this double-way process of conceptual migration of the notion of karma became entrenched amidst wider Brazilian society through its connections to different religious beliefs. Indeed the bridging made by Spiritism between Asian religiosity – as well as Afro-Brazilian religions – and the broader Brazilian society made it possible for Japanese religious organizations to grew their memberships considerably.

The aforementioned features allowed for a unique hybrid (re)appropriation of religious beliefs and practices from and within Asian religions in Brazil. The reverse path is also possible. In fact, the potential of assimilation can also be shown in the rise of Asian elements not only in the context of New Age but

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[41] Rafael Shoji, '"Buddhism in Syncretic Shape": Lessons of Shingon in Brazil', *Journal of Global Buddhism*, 4 (2003): p. 73.

[42] For a discussion of the process of internalizing the concept of reincarnation of a Tibetan group in Brazil, see Frank Usarski, 'Brazil', in J. Gordon Melton and Martin Baumann (eds), *Religions of the World: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*, vol. 1. (4 vols, Santa Barbara, CA, 2002), pp. 163–8.

[43] For a summary of the variations and the evolution of the concept of karma inherited from the ancestors, see Helen Hardacre, *Lay Buddhism in Contemporary Japan: Reiyūkai Kyōdan* (Princenton, NJ, 1984), pp. 127–40, and *Kurozumikyo and the New Religions of Japan* (New Jersey, NJ, 1986). For a general discussion on karma see Gananath Obeyesekere, *Imagining Karma: Ethical Transformation in Amerindian, Buddhist, and Greek Rebirth* (Berkeley, CA, 2002).

also among Afro-Brazilian religions. That assimilation has been described by some scholars as an 'orientalization of syncretism'.[44] For example, there is already one Afro-Brazilian centre called Umbanda Eastern Line, which features Hindu and Buddhist content even in cases of possession. Furthermore, in the content of the books produced by Afro-Brazilian religions, there has also been a common presence of Asian elements, predominantly Buddhist.[45] Thus, enhancing the bridging and blending of both worlds as in the case of Japanese Brazilian communities.

The Blending of the Japanese and the Brazilian Spiritual Worlds

The Japanese Brazilian spiritual world is transnational, presenting Japanese and Brazilian elements depending on the religious groups considered in the spectrum, ranging from Japanese religions practiced in Brazil to Brazilian religions disseminated in Japan. In the Japanese Brazilian case the absorption of many Japanese ideas onto the Brazilian spiritual world does not present many cultural difficulties nor cause surprises. The combinations are very eclectic and supported by different elements. Whereas in the Japanese case this unified spiritual world is filled with *kami*,[46] Buddhas and other beings, in the Brazilian case, both Christian saints and African beings share space with enlightened entities of Spiritism and Buddhism.

The reinterpretation of ancestor worship among the Japanese Brazilians as described by Takashi Maeyama[47] is of especial relevance for the analysis of this chapter. Maeyama observes that ancestor worship and the world of the dead

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[44] Marcelo Ayres Camurça, 'Espaços de hibridização, dessubstancialização da identidade religiosa e *idéias fora do lugar*' [Spaces of hybridization, de-substancialization of religious identity and misplaced ideas], *Ciencias Sociales y Religion* [Social Sciences and Religion], 5/5 (2003): p. 49.

[45] Norton F. Corrêa, 'Para Muitos Trabalhos a Gente Precisa Invocar Também a Linha Oriental: Observações Sobre as Representações do "Oriente" em Religiões Afro-brasileiras' [For many works one need to also invoke the eastern line: Notes on the representations of "the orient" in Afro-Brazilian religions], Paper presented in the panel (GT 16) 'Orientalização da Religião e Crise no Ocidente', 23rd Annual Meeting of the National Association of Post-Graduate Research in Social Sciences (ANPOCS), Caxambu, Brazil, 19–23 October 1999.

[46] Deities as well as spirits within the Shinto religious worldview.

[47] See the following works of Takashi Maeyama, 'Ancestor, Emperor, and Immigrant: Religion and Group Identification of the Japanese in Rural Brazil (1908–1950)', *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, 14/2 (1972): pp. 151–82, 'O Antepassado, o Imperador e o Imigrante: Religião e Identificação de Grupo dos Japoneses no Brasil Rural (1908–1950)' [The ancestor, the emperor and the immigrant: Religion and group identification of the Japanese in rural Brazil (1908-1950)], in Hiroshi Saito and Takashi Maeyama (eds), *Assimilação e Integração dos Japoneses no Brasil* [Assimilation and integration of the Japanese in Brazil] (São Paulo, SP, 1973), pp. 414–47, and *Ihō ni 'Nihon'*

as traditionally cultivated in Japan[48] were partially recovered by the Japanese immigrants in Brazil after the Second World War, especially in the process of the establishment of Japanese New Religions. The Japanese immigrants began to refer to themselves as 'living ancestors' and founded derivations of their Japanese households established in Japan, in order to honour their ancestors and to define themselves as new founders, especially inside Japanese Buddhism.[49] On the other side, the Japanese ancestor worship can be understood as something independent from Buddhism.[50] That disassociation made it possible for Japanese Brazilians to preserve this practice even in connection with other religious affiliations,[51] such as Roman Catholicism.

The role of ancestors is directly related with the rewards in this world and the avoidance of evil. The relationship with the spiritual world frequently occurs through the ancestors, who continue influencing their descendants. An unhappy or violent death as well as negligence regarding the obligations towards the ancestors will result in negative effects in the present life. Offering the results of practices or rites to the spiritual world is considered to be a reward of these effects in the present life. Therefore, by promoting the spiritual status of the ancestors, the current status of the active follower is also improved. This standard is frequently pointed out in the Japanese New Religions as a cause of the problems, whose solution varies according to each group ranging from the performance of rites to a more lay-oriented recitation of sutras or mantras. The right practice brings a relationship with the spiritual world which expresses through real benefits in the active followers' lives, who attain the solution to their problems.

In reality, the concept of karma – which is inherited from the ancestors as it is taught by several Japanese religions – shows extensive acceptance among Japanese Brazilians. The religious importance of ancestors is also acceptable for many Brazilians who adhere to Spiritisim, Umbanda and Candomblé, although not necessary leading them to the practice of ancestor worship. The *continuum* from Spiritism through Umbanda and Candomblé to Asian religions – especially Japanese Buddhism – enables further incorporation of ancestor worship into the Brazilian spiritual worldview. As a matter of fact, Spiritism already performed this role in the 'white' incorporation of the worship of the spirits and of the ancestors

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o Matsuru: Burajiru Nikkeijin no Shūkyō to Esunishitī [Enshrined 'Japan' in foreign countries: Religion and ethnicity of *Nikkei* Brazilians] (Tokyo, 1997).

48 Kunio Yanagita, *About Our Ancestors: The Japanese Family System*, translated by Fanny Hagin Mayer and Ishiwara Yasuyo (Tokyo, 1970).

49 Maeyama, 'Ancestor, Emperor, and Immigrant'.

50 Yanagita, 'About Our Ancestors'.

51 Yanagita, 'About Our Ancestors'. The work of Yanagita is key on this topic because he lived and wrote in the decades of strong immigration to Brazil. See also the work of Robert John Smith, *Ancestor Worship in Contemporary Japan* (Stanford, CA, 1974) for further analysis on the topic of the Japanese ancestor worship.

that resulted in Umbanda. Given the existence of a concept of karmic evolution in Brazilian religions and the possible influence of the spirits, an acceptance of the direct influence of the ancestors still shows plausibility and coherence. In this sense, a genetic/ethnic inheritance also becomes a spiritual inheritance for these followers, an interpretation that is frequently reinforced by scientific explanations of the influence of hereditary factors that cause physical illnesses or depressions.

This blending of Japanese religiousness with the Brazilian religious universe enabled for the incorporation and development of a hybrid spiritual world, a *continuum* which added Brazilian and Japanese meanings to a world of entities and practices that are frequently befuddled.[52] With the increasing migration to urban areas in the twentieth century, the Brazilian religious symbolic universe entered a phase of rapid transformation. In this context, the Japanese Brazilian religiousness through their search for earthly rewards or benefits constituted the basic factor for the development of several Japanese New Religions in Brazil. The search for benefits in this world is indeed one important shared characteristic of Japanese and Brazilian religiosities. The possibility of an actual proof of the power of any religion can be seen in the possibility of attaining benefits through religious practices and the interventions of the spiritual world entities. In other words, protection, health, financial or family problem-solving are understood as possibly achieved through a 'transaction' with the spiritual world. This 'transaction' does not necessarily mean a primarily materialist or magical worldview. On the contrary, it frequently includes a religious practice that searches for the creation of conditions to achieve what is needed by means of ethics and the belief in the possibility of attaining these goals. In this sense, Japanese popular religiosity is not too distant – in its main characteristics – from what Brazilians understand as an important function of religion. Most Brazilians search and hope for solutions of existing problems when practicing a religion. In many countries, some scholars frequently analyse this feature in a disdainful way, labelling it as 'magic' and 'syncretism'. However, both in Japan and in Brazil the solution to daily life problems through the intermixing of different beliefs becomes the actual verification of the attainment of benefits in this world. In both societies the benefits in real life obtained through religious practices are not only commonly featured but generally understood as something positive for the believers. This context further allowed for the transplantation of

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[52] See Shoji, 'Buddhism in Syncretic Shape', pp. 70–107. For the case of Okinawan Shamanism combined with Umbanda in Brazil see Koichi Mori, 'Vida Religiosa dos Japoneses e seus Descendentes Residentes no Brasil e Religiões de Origem Japonesa' [Religious life of the Japanese and their descendants living in Brazil and religions of Japanese origin], in Comissão De Elaboração Da História dos 80 Anos da Imigração Japonesa no Brasil [Commission for preparation of the history of the 80 years of Japanese immigration to Brazil] (ed.), *Uma Epopéia Moderna: 80 Anos da Imigração Japonesa no Brasil* [A modern epic: 80 years of Japanese immigration to Brazil] (São Paulo, SP, 1992), pp. 559–603.

several religions with strong presence in the Japanese Brazilian community, some of them widely attracting adepts and converts in Japan, as is the case of Spiritism.

Ancestor Worship Among the Japanese Brazilians in Japan

Japanese Brazilians and the Japanese New Religions

Despite the growth of Pentecostal movements being the most striking feature of the religious landscape among Japanese Brazilians in Japan,[53] there are also a growing number of other (new) religious movements. This growth can be considered 'natural' given the already strong presence of Japanese New Religions in Brazil, with the consequence of its distinct presence among Japanese Brazilian migrants in Japan. It is noteworthy to affirm that the presence of Japanese New Religions offers greater possibilities for Japanese Brazilian migrants in their process of incorporation into Japanese society.

Indeed, the religions more sought by Japanese Brazilian migrants – beyond Christianity – are those closer to Japanese culture. In other words, many Japanese Brazilians reinterpret their relationship with ancestors through ethnic roots and are led to a greater degree of integration into the Japanese society. New Religions in Japan, unlike the tendency of Japanese New Religions in Brazil, preserved in a much greater degree the praxis of ancestor worship. Many Japanese Brazilians migrants, some of them non-practicing Roman Catholics in Brazil, interpret this emphasis as a spiritual bond for the recovery of both the importance of ancestors as well as their ethnic heritage. This constitutes a difference with Japanese Roman Catholics, who have struggled over time with their spiritual roots in relation to ancestor worship until their current acceptance. The case is different for Japanese Christians that belong to some Protestant missions who in the past have often maintained '… [a] very negative view of ancestral rites'.[54] However, this cannot be generalized for modern times. Mark Mullins pointed out that some Indigenous Japanese Christian movements – such as Christ Heart Church or Living Christ One Ear of Wheat Church, among others – developed in their early stages of formation a Christian form of ancestor worship, especially after their founders have died.[55] Furthermore, for the past century many of the Christian churches with roots in Europe and North America have adapted their post-funerary rituals

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[53] See Rafael Shoji, 'Religiões entre Brasileiros no Japão: Conversão ao Pentecostalismo e Redefinição Étnica' [Religions among Brazilians in Japan: Conversion to pentecostalism and ethnic redefining], *Rever: Revista de Estudos da Religião* [Rever: Journal of religious studies], 8/2 (2008): pp. 46–85. See also Chapter 1 of this book.

[54] Naoko Komuro, 'Christianity and Ancestor Worship in Japan', *Studies in World Christianity*, 9/1 (2003): p. 66.

[55] Mark Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements* (Honolulu, HI, 1998), pp. 139–40.

to accommodate Indigenous ancestral rituals.[56] Among the migrants, the number of believers is still relatively low within the Japanese Brazilian community as a whole. It is foreseeable that – aided by the establishment of more definitive *dekassegui* presence in Japan as well as the strengthening of the relationship with Japanese religions in general – this trend could be consolidated in the future.

In the case of the Japanese New Religions, especially *Sekai Kyūseikyō* – also called the Church of World Messianity – an interpretation of the problems encountered by Japanese Brazilian migrants is rooted in ancestor worship, as many of the Japanese descendants in Brazil have neglected the memory and respect for the generations of parents and grandparents who migrated during the twentieth century.[57] In these cases we note a revival of ancestor worship among Japanese Brazilians who adhere to this interpretation in Japan, both as a way to overcoming the problems they face in daily life as well as a means to make sense of their experience as migrants. Ceremonies in honour of the ancestors – and in the case of *Sekai Kyūseikyō* also the practice of *Jōhrei* – aim to reconnect the damaged link between the immigration of Japanese to Brazil and the (return) migration of Japanese Brazilians to Japan.

While this reinterpretation of Japanese heritage constitutes an important phenomenon to be analysed among the Japanese Brazilian migrants in Japan, the extent of the impact of the ancestor worship in their lives is still uncertain, especially within the context of traditional Buddhism. The topic becomes important especially in comparison with the recreation of ancestor worship around the institution of the *ie*[58] in Brazil. The issue is especially sensitive at the time of funeral rituals in the case of mixed-race Japanese Brazilians, especially since few Buddhist temples have clear definitions regarding this issue, probably due to the small number of faithful.[59] This adds new sources of stress to Japanese Brazilian migrants who then turn to other religions, especially Spiritism, for an answer to this dilemma.

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[56] Ibid., p. 144.

[57] Regina Matsue, 'Overseas Japanese New Religion: The Expansion of Sekai Kyuseikyo in Brazil and Australia', *Yakara – Studies in Ethnology*, 33/1 (2003): pp. 20–34, and 'Religious Activities Among the Japanese-Brazilians "Dual Diaspora" in Japan', in P. Pratap Kumar (ed.), *Religious Pluralism in the Diaspora,* International Studies in Religion and Society, 4 (Leiden, 2006), pp. 121–46. See also Chapter 7 of this book.

[58] Household.

[59] This is also true for other Japanese descendants who have migrated to Japan such as Japanese Peruvians who also struggle at the time of death and bereavement. Ayumi Takenaka, 'Transnational Community and Its Ethnic Consequences: The Return Migration and the Transformation of Ethnicity of Japanese Peruvians', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 42/9 (June 1999): pp. 1459–74.

Reinterpretation of Spiritism and Umbanda in Japan

The connection between Spiritism and Umbanda is a historical fact both in Brazil as well as among Japanese Brazilian migrants in Japan. In both religions, there is a (re)interpretation of ancestor worship, although often related to the notions of karma and reincarnation.

The number of spiritual centres and houses of worship of Umbanda is relatively small in Japan. For example, there are meetings for study and spiritual practice in cities such as Ichikawa in Chiba prefecture, Gotenba and Hamamatsu in Shizuoka prefecture, Angel and Toyota in Aichi prefecture and Toki in Gifu prefecture. It should be noted that despite professing the same faith, these centres have different strategies of adaptation to the Japanese society in each particular case.[60] Umbanda mainly attracts Brazilians without Japanese descent although some Japanese nationals are also interested in Afro-Brazilian religions. For example, *Centro Espírita de Umbanda Vó Dita*[61] is a worship house in Angel City, Aichi prefecture, which also attracts a significant but proportionally small number of Japanese national followers. According to interviews conducted by Shoji, there is an average participation ranging from 25 to 40 people in the ceremonies of this house of worship, of whom about 40 per cent are Japanese nationals. While elements like mantras, mandalas and chakras are often cited, the biggest attraction of the participants is the ritual incorporation of entities such as Father Benedict of Aruanda and Caboclo Cobra Coral.

Spiritism in Japan

Compared to Umbanda, Spiritism in Japan has largely disseminated and its presence has been established throughout the industrial belt in the Kanto region and the Tokai area as well as Toyama prefecture in the Hokuriku region.[62] Following

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[60] See Ushi Arakaki, 'Umbanda: Temporality and Identity in the Life of the Brazilian Nikkeijin Transnational Migrants'. Paper presented at the Conference 'Migration and Identities: Conflict and the New Horizon', Osaka, Nakanoshima Center, Osaka University and University of São Paulo, 24 October 2008 and 'Toransunashonaru Jidai no Umbanda' ['Umbanda in transnational times'], in Hiroshi Shoji (ed.), *Kokuritsu Minzoku Gakuhakubutsukan Chōsa Hōkoku* [About the regional and national immigration changes] (Senri Ethnological Reports #83) (Osaka, 2009), pp. 89–104. See also Chapter 8 in this book.

[61] Granny Ditta Umbanda Spiritist Centre.

[62] At the beginning of the migration in the 1990s, Japanese Brazilian populations were originally concentrated around the industrial areas of the prefectures of Aichi, Shizuoka, Gunma and Nagano. Currently, it is possible to find Japanese Brazilians in every city and rural area of the country, and a growing number of them working and living in Tokyo where there is a visible absence of factories. The Kanto region of Japan involves Tokyo Metropolitan Area and the surrounding prefectures of Chiba, Ibaraki, Saitama, Gunma, Kanagawa and Tochigi. The Tokai area, a subregion of the Chūbu region, includes the prefectures of Shizuoka, Aichi,

is a table with the location of the Spiritist centres and study groups in Japan – organized by cities and prefectures.

Table 9.1 Spiritist centres and study groups in Japan

Centre	City	Prefecture
Grupo Espírita Laços Eternos	Inaza-shi	Aichi
Grupo Estudo da Prece	Kariya	Aichi
Grupo Espírita Kariya	Kariya	Aichi
Centro Espírita Luzes de Maria (CELM)	Nagoya	Aichi
Grupo Espírita Alegria de Viver	Nagoya	Aichi
Casa Espírita Cristã Fraternidade	Nakano	Aichi
Casa Espírita Cristã Fraternidade	Toyohashi	Aichi
Núcleo Espírita Dr. Andre Luiz e Emmanuel	Toyohashi	Aichi
Comunhão Espírita Cristã Francisco Cândido Xavier	Ichikawa	Chiba
Núcleo Espírita Cristão (NEC)	Toki	Gifu
Núcleo de Estudos Espíritas Francisco de Assis (NEJA)	Oizumi	Gunma
Grupo Espírita Caminhos da Luz (GECL)	Joso	Ibaraki
Grupo de Apoio Luz Fraterna (GALF)	Hiratsuka	Kanagawa
Grupo de Estudos Espírita Amigos da Luz	Suzuka	Mie
Grupo de Estudos do ESDE de Suzuka	Suzuka	Mie
Associação de Divulgadores do Espiritismo do Japão (ADEJ)	Ina	Nagano
Núcleo Espírita Joanna de Ângelis-JAPÃO (NEJA)	Okaya	Nagano
Grupo de Estudos Espíritas de Fukaya (GEEF)	Fukaya	Saitama
Grupo de Estudo Espiritual Dr. Richard Dwannes Stan	Tonami	Toyama

Source: Authors' elaboration based on information taken from Comunhão Espírita Cristã Francisco Cândido Xavier. See Comunhão Espírita Cristã Francisco Cândido Xavier [Spiritist Christian community Francisco Cândido Xavier], http://www.spiritism.jp/br/index.php/grupos-espiritas, accessed 10 February 2012.

The centres and study groups mentioned above are not centralized in one organization across the country. On the contrary, each of them is an independent institution that keeps fraternal ties with other Spiritist institutions both in Japan as well as in Brazil. We now turn to the case of two Spiritist centres in Japan in order to explore how their understanding of the ancestors relates to the teachings of Spiritism.

Gifu and Mie. The Hokuriku region includes the prefectures of Toyama, Ishikawa, Niigata and Fukui.

Christian Spiritist Centre of Japan and Umbanda Christian Center

The Christian Spiritist Centre of Japan[63] is located in the city of Toki, Gifu prefecture, in central Japan. This centre is an affiliated of *Núcleo Espírita Cristão*[64] in Brazil. The centre also houses the Umbanda Christian Center,[65] which is one of the major Umbanda spiritual centres in Japan.

About 250 people are associated with NEC-J and NUC combined. NEC-J is attended by a majority of Japanese Brazilians at about 130 participants on a given Sunday. A common notion present in most of the interviews conducted among some of the participants was the fact that, upon migration, Japanese Brazilians left behind their relatives – both grandparents and parents – who emigrated to Brazil during the twentieth century. This situation not only caused feelings of guilt in many Japanese Brazilian migrants but it was also interpreted as a source of negative energy and of suffering for the ancestors' spirits. Not by chance members of this group keep in touch with *Sekai Kyūseikyō*, which also offers an interpretation of the current situation between Japanese Brazilian migrants in Japan and their ancestors left behind in Brazil.

The relation of believers to their ancestors is a continuation of Japanese popular religions' feature of ancestor worship. Although Spiritism seemingly expressed similar views on the influence of ancestors upon their descendants, in the end those views posed a different bias. For example, many of the interviewees identified and associated the high rate of abortions and suicides in Japan with the country's past history. Of special mentioned was the well-known feature of ritual suicide in the name of honour[66] performed by samurais and feudal lords as a cause for spirits to still being 'stuck in this world'. Although there seems to be a definitive stance on these issues by the Spiritist centre – since this is also an Umbanda centre – it is noteworthy to mention the emergence of an spontaneous but steady link between local Japanese spirits and Japanese Brazilians' ancestors. The logic of this association is quite similar to the relation of indigenous spirits who are transmuted into *caboclos* in the spirits' world *continuum* given by mediumistic Afro-Brazilian religions.

Although NEC-J and NUC share the same leadership, they do not have the same day of worship. Apart from the intermixing of members of both centres, there is also a presence of individuals who hold membership to other religions, including to evangelical churches. NEC-J especially displayed a sophisticated combination of religious beliefs through the incorporation of Eastern concepts as well as the acknowledgement of the presence of local Japanese spirits. With the strong influence of the study of chakras and energy points, the mediums of the

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63 In Portuguese known as *Núcleo Espírita Cristão – Japão*. Hereinafter cited as NEC-J for its acronym in Portuguese.

64 Christian Spiritist Center.

65 In Portuguese known as *Núcleo Umbanda Cristão*. Hereinafter cited as NUC for its acronym in Portuguese.

66 Known in Japanese as *seppuku* or *harakiri*.

centre are mentored by the spirit of Doctor Nakamura, a Japanese orthopaedic who would be 'disembodied' in Okinawa during the Second World War. On the other hand, Shinryo Kyūtetsu Daioshō, a patriarch of Zen Buddhism, is considered one of the masterminds behind the centre. Those spirits – especially Doctor Nakamura – are spiritual entities that allow for the intermixing with the local spiritual realm as well as in assisting the work of the Spiritist centre on the Japanese soil. However, there is still a strong reference to main spirits from Brazil such as Doctor Romano.[67] Doctor Romano is incorporated in spiritual therapies and treatments that are performed on Sunday ceremonies at NEC-J.

Christian Spiritist Community Francisco Cândido Xavier

The Christian Spiritist Community Francisco Cândido Xavier was founded in Tokyo in 1991 by a community of Spiritism followers leaded by Mr Tomoh Sumi[68] – a Japanese national – and his former Brazilian spouse who trained as a medium during the late 1980s while they resided in Mozambique. At the moment of the establishment of the community in 1991, they gathered at Mr Sumi's house until the year 2000, when the community secured a rental space in Ichikawa city, Chiba prefecture. Currently Mr Sumi is the vice-president of the centre. Every Sunday a group of about 30–40 individuals gather for study and ceremonies at the centre. Although the majority of the attendants are Japanese Brazilians, there are also Peruvians, Argentineans, Bolivians and Japanese nationals who became members of the centre. Ceremonies usually are held in Portuguese, however when there are Japanese nationals, either Mr Sumi or other members of the centre proceed to translate.

Mr Sumi explained that before the economic crisis in 2008 and the Tohoku earthquake in 2011 the number of participants could reach beyond 60 individuals. However, he recognizes a reality currently common among Japanese Brazilians: the phenomenon of more and more migrants returning to Brazil. This was corroborated by other informants who also felt sad for this sudden departure of fellow believers. While Japan's economy descended from the second to the third position in the world, the Brazilian economy rose to reach sixth position in the world, narrowing the economic gap between both countries. This translates into the daily lives of Japanese Brazilian migrants in Japan. At the peak of migration in the 1990s Japanese Brazilian migrants could earn as much as five or ten times a better salary in Japan,[69] but after the economic crisis in 2008 and the Tohoku

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[67] Doctor Romano was a German physician whose real name was Adolf Friedrick Fritz. He was formerly known as Doctor Fritz in Spiritist circles in Brazil and was responsible for founding the Hospital Fabiano de Cristo in São Paulo. See Shoji, 'Religiões entre Brasileiros', p. 82.

[68] Mr Sumi is one of Córdova Quero's informants. As petitioned by Mr Sumi, we use his real name throughout this chapter.

[69] Takeyuki Tsuda, 'Crossing Ethnic Boundaries: Japanese Brazilian Return Migrants and the Ethnic Challenge of Japan's Newest Immigrant Minority', in Nelson H.H. Graburn,

earthquake, that situation has dropped considerably.[70] Not only is it possible for these migrants to face unemployment, but when a job is secured either by themselves or through an *empreteira*,[71] the salary they earn nowadays is barely enough to make a living amidst the current Japanese economic downturn.

Fluctuations in the size of migrant populations have also have repercussions in the religious institutions where they practise their beliefs. This is the case with Japanese Brazilians who attend the community of Francisco Cândido Xavier in Ichikawa city. Furthermore, some of those who remained in Japan after the Tohoku earthquake in 2011 moved to other parts of the country in search for a job. This implies that some members who want to attend the Sunday ceremonies at the centre need to travel long distances. However, the drastic drop in membership at the centre due to either returning to Brazil or moving to other parts of Japan has not prevented the remaining community to continue their efforts in teaching the beliefs of Spiritism as well as helping those in need. At the moment members of the community maintain a pen-pals programme with detainees in the prisons in Japan.[72] Volunteers who write to inmates also post books and magazines to them. They also have three groups of about 10–15 members each who once a month deliver food and clothes to homeless people at a parks in Ginza, Tokyo station and Ueno, all of them in Tokyo. Mr Sumi estimates that there are about 2,000 to 3,000 homeless in Tokyo. The community serves about 400 homeless between the groups combined.

As it is the case with other Spiritist centre, the community of Francisco Cândido Xavier believes in reincarnation and the role of ancestors. Although the leaders of the community do not promote ancestor worship, they recognize the guidance of the ancestors' spirits but without the 'hierarchy' which is usually attached to the ancestors as 'elders' of the community. According to Mr Sumi, the reason for this is because through reincarnation the spirits of the ancestors 'may be already present in one's family or in the lives of those who are born in our surroundings' whether they be 'a son', 'a brother' or the like. In other words, for the community, the spirits are not tied to a 'specific place', they 'do not have nationality'. There are no 'Brazilian' or 'Japanese' spirits, but simply spirits who communicate with the faithful in their language, whether it is Portuguese, Spanish, Japanese or the like. Therefore, it is possible for a Japanese Brazilian migrant in Japan to communicate with the

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John Ertl and R. Kenji Tierney (eds), *Multiculturalism in the New Japan: Crossing the Boundaries Within* (New York, NY, 2008), p. 188.

70 Jane Yamashiro and Hugo Córdova Quero, 'Negotiating Unequal Transpacific Capital Transfers: Japanese Brazilians and Japanese Americans in Japan', in Camilla Fojas and Rudy Guevarra (eds), *Transnational Crossroads: Remapping the Americas and the Pacific* (Lincoln, NE, 2012), p. 407.

71 Broker company.

72 There are about 23 prisons across the prefectures where the Spiritist centres are located.

spirit of an ancestor who died in Brazil because the spirit's world 'does not have boundaries'. Furthermore, Japanese nationals can be guided by spirits of ancestors who lived and died in Brazil and who would communicate with them in Japanese. In fact, Mr Sumi already translated into Japanese Kardec's book, *The Gospel According to Spiritism*.[73] Nonetheless, there are no Japanese Spiritist centres. The existing Spiritist centres were formed as a result of the migration of Japanese Brazilians.

From the beliefs described in the paragraph above we can observe the transnational role of the spirits who guide and counsel the faithful in their daily lives. However, those spirits are neither 'good' nor 'bad'. Instead, Mr Sumi stated that they are entities in 'constant evolution towards their final form'. In that sense, every reincarnation is a necessary step for the 'purification' of those entities to continue 'solving their problems' within the spirits' world. Moreover, according to Mr Sumi, one of the most important challenges for Spiritism in Japanese society is that of suicides. Someone who committed suicide can reincarnate, however their life in the new incarnation would be of suffering because of the tragedy of ending their life before the due time. As Spiritism does not believe in hell, the suffering comes during the reincarnation in the human body. It would take longer for a human being to purge the *macula* of suicide in the next life as well as in the spirits' world. What the leaders of Francisco Cândido Xavier believe is that with education and counselling people can be prevented from committing suicide, thus enhancing their possibilities to advance in their process of perfection in the spirits' world. Mr Sumi affirmed that education is basic 'to love others, the neighbours', 'to be honest' and 'to do good actions' here and now to guarantee advancement in the spirits' world.

A (Re)interpretation of the Transnational *continuum* within the Religious Symbolic Universe

Ethnic Religions and Transnationalism

A highlight of the previous sections is the role that ethnicity and religion play in connecting individuals with the spiritual world. Therefore, we consider it important to briefly (re)evaluate the issue of ethnic religiosity from the viewpoint of classical Religious Studies. According to Philippe Poutignat and Jocelyne Streiff-Fenart, one form of ethnic identity construction occurs through a fictitious kinship, often associated with myths of a common origin.[74] In other words, the ethnic

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[73] Allan Kardec, *The Gospel According to Spiritism*, translation by J.A. Duncan (Newport, RI, 1987).

[74] Philippe Pontignat and Jocelyne Streiff-Fenart, *Teorias da Etnicidade: Seguido de Grupos Étnicos e suas Fronteiras de Fredrik Barth* [Theories of race: Following of ethnic groups and their boundaries by Fredrik Barth] (São Paulo, SP, 1997), pp. 160–66.

group's unity is established in an immemorial time with the consequence that the preservation of the ethnic identity is achieved through religious socialization. This differentiated group identity is constantly revitalized through rituals and rites of passage, ceremonies often understood as a social obligation by the follower. Similarly, an analytical perspective for the comprehension of ethnic religiosity is given in the identity theory developed by Hans Mol.[75] This approach considers ethnic religiosity as the effort to preserve identity, something that occurs as much in individuals as in groups, which is an important characteristic for biological and social organizations. Religion is therefore studied as the sacralization of identity as a system of meaning. Therefore, the ethnic religion is cultivated as preservation of differentiated groups' unity.

Cognizant of the characteristic emphasized in the studies aforementioned, it should be acknowledged that those characteristics limit the possibility of both the conversion of non-ethnic, local individuals as well as the popularization of the religious doctrines outside the demarcation of the ethnic group. Therefore, any ethnic religion – although dynamic and in a constant process of social redefinition in contemporary societies – has traditionally been understood as the sacralization of symbols that resulted in the process of differentiated identification. In this manner, myths and rites are preserved for the next generation in order to remember a 'common origin'. In these analytical perspectives, the history of a migrant religious group is determined by the boundaries of the ethnic group, depending on the social interaction and socialization of the new generations. For outsiders who try to belong to the religious group, behaviour and understanding compatible with the ethnic group are frequently required, considering that for the majority of the followers the religious and ethnic elements are not differentiated.

Notwithstanding, drawing exclusively from the perspective of an ethnic religion enclosed within the boundaries of the ethnic group may prove to be at the least illusory if we take into the equation globalization and transnational groups. The main point in terms of conceptual contribution, such as assimilationism-based studies and multiculturalism, have relatively little to contribute when it comes to mixed-race populations, as is the reality of Latin America, including those of Japanese descent in Brazil.

The situation is complicated in a transnational context, because the poles of reference alternate and are complementary. It is noteworthy to mention that anthropological studies conducted for the last 20 years reinforced the tendency of Japanese Brazilian migrants in Japan to emphasize the 'Brazilian identity' of the group rather than the revalorization of the 'Japanese ethnic heritage' which

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[75] Hans Mol (ed.), *Identity and Religion: International, Cross-Cultural Approaches* (London, 1978), and 'The Identity Model of Religion: How It Compares with Nine Other Theories of Religion and How It Might Apply to Japan', *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 6/1–2 (1979): pp. 11–38.

was observed with more intensity among the Japanese descendants in Brazil.[76] Although the majority of Japanese Brazilian migrants saw immigration as a temporary phenomenon, nowadays that perception has changed due to formation of families in Japan along with economic factors both in Japan and Brazil. The Japanese Brazilian migration flow spans more than two decades and it is slowly being replaced either by a more permanent immigration process or by the return to Brazil. The return is especially occurring as a result of the shrinking of the automobile and electronics industries caused by the global economic crisis due to the Lehman Brothers' bankruptcy and also because of the consequences of the 2011 Tohoku earthquake. For those who choose to stay, the trend seems to be a definitive settlement with the purchase of homes financed in the long term, declining remittances to Brazil, the education of children and adolescents in the Japanese school and the establishment of more definitive community structures. The possibility for permanent immigration, rather than the prospect of temporary employment, is made possible especially by the fact that Brazilian immigrants are mostly legal in the country: in fact, prior to the global economic crisis (the Lehman Brothers' bankruptcy in 2008), about 78,523 Japanese Brazilians had permanent visas in Japan.[77]

At this juncture in the history of the Japanese Brazilian migration to Japan it is equally important to emphasize the difference between the terms 'Japanese Brazilian' and 'Brazilian Japanese' as *ideal types*. While Japanese Brazilians have a Japanese ancestry, they are mainly Brazilians in terms of culture, language and nationality. On the contrary, 'Brazilian Japanese' have a Japanese Brazilian ancestry but have Japanese language and culture as their native social environment. Although there are similarities in structure and existing combinations, certainly the order of the terms changes the definition of identities and the religious practices. The young 'Brazilian Japanese' are for instance rapidly evolving as a new ethnic category within the Japanese society with the consequence of their unique approach to the religion, spirituality and beliefs of their ancestors. While among this new ethnic category racial *mestiçagem* is a reality, this also holds true for others aspects, including religion.

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[76] Some of these studies are Daniel Touro Linger, *No One Home: Brazilians Selves Remade in Japan* (Stanford, CA, 2001), Joshua Hotaka Roth, *Brokered Homeland: Japanese Brazilian Migrants in Japan* (Ithaca, NY, 2002) and Takeyuki Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland: Japanese Brazilian Return Migration in Transnational Perspective* (New York, NY, 2003), among many others.

[77] 'Mais Brasileiros com Visto Permanente no Japão' [More Brazilians with a permanent visa in Japan], *Jornal Tudo Bem* [Alright newspaper] (Tokyo), 27 January 2008. The data comes from the Department of Immigration, Ministry of Justice of Japan for the year 2006.

Mestiçagem and 'Religious Nativization'

It is necessary to provide some understanding regarding the concept of *mestiçagem* in relation to theoretical categories that focus on the particular situation of Japanese Brazilian migrants and their religious experiences within their mixed racial and cultural heritage. In this sense, *mestiçagem* makes evident the 'nativization' of the supernatural and transnational *continuum* of the symbolic universe. The term 'nativization' – borrowed from linguistics – conveys the process by which some variety of speech that was not one's native language is learned by people in that community as their first language by means of substitution.[78] In fact, according to Marcel Danesi and Andrea Rochi, '… nativization is [a] characteristic of immigrant communities'.[79] Lexical loan and hybridity are two common features of this process of nativization. There are some linguistic studies on the mixed language spoken by Japanese immigrants and the Japanese descendants in Brazil – especially the cases of what scholars name as '*variante Nipo-brasileira*'[80] or in what is known as *koronia-go*[81] – from the perspective of the interaction between two communities and their grammatical simplification and the lexical loan.[82] For example, Cecília Kimie Jo indicates the incorporation of Portuguese words in products of essential need as '*meesa*' from the Portuguese term '*mesa*'.[83] Unlike Japanese in Japan, who incorporated many English words, in the case of the Japanese Brazilians, it was Portuguese equivalencies that were incorporated. By the same token, a

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[78] Hans Henrich Hock and Brian D. Joseph, *Language History, Language Change, and Language Relationship: An Introduction to Historical and Comparative Linguistics* (Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs [TiLSM] # 218) (Berlin, 2009), p. 247.

[79] Marcel Danesi and Andrea Rocci, *Global Linguistics: An Introduction* (Berlin, 2009), p. 163.

[80] Japanese Brazilian variation. Takano refers to this as a 'linguistic code … developed within the core of the host society which brings the traces of the language of origin and the local language'. Yuko Takano, 'As Faces do Bilingüismo Nipo-Brasiliense: Um Olhar Sob Perspectiva da Tensão Diglóssica' [Faces of Japanese Brazilian bilingualism: A view on the perspective of the diglossic tension]. Paper presented at 'Palavra e Cultura na América Latina: Heranças e Desafios' [Word and culture in Latin America: Legacies and challenges], the X International Conference of Humanities Brazil-Chile, 17–19 August 2007.

[81] Colony language or colony dialect.

[82] Megumi Kuyama, 'O Uso da Língua Japonesa na Comunidade Nipo-Brasileira: O Empréstimo Lexical no Japonês Falado Pelos Imigrantes' [The use of Japanese language in the Japanese Brazilian community: The lexical loan in the Japanese spoken by immigrants] (São Paulo, SP, 1999), unpublished doctoral dissertation.

[83] Both terms meaning 'table'. See Cecília Kimie Jo, 'A Língua Japonesa dos Nipo-Brasileiros' [The Japanese language of Japanese Brazilians], in Centro de Estudos Japoneses [Japanese Studies Centre] (ed.), *Anais do V Encontro Nacional de Professores Universitários de Língua, Literatura e Cultura Japonesa* [Proceedings of the fifth national meeting of university professors of language, literature and culture] (São Paulo, SP, 1994), p. 40.

similar process is currently occurring with the Portuguese spoken in Japan, where many terms such as '*zangyo*'[84] or '*arubaito*'[85] are used instead of the Portuguese words.

A similar process follows in the case of religions, especially considering the new generations of Japanese Brazilian descendants and the language shift currently occurring in Japan. We believe that the logic of religious hybridism represents an important field for a comparative analysis of the religious experiences among Japanese Brazilian migrants, although at the same time involves difficulties for theorization. Therefore, many assumptions such as 'conversion' and even the 'boundaries of ethnic religions' must be (re)evaluated. These multiple sources of religiosity represent a hybrid process of interaction and juxtaposition of religions which can be described as 'religious nativization'.[86]

The term 'religious nativization' is intended to describe neither 'transplantation', 'assimilation' nor 'acculturation': instead, the focus resides on the long-term combination and transmission of religious contents through socialization. Formally defined, 'religious nativization' is a process of transmission across societies and generations which transform a transnational religiosity into stable religious concepts to be acquired in the first socialization of (future) new generations. We find that the concept of 'religious nativization' is especially important in the history of religions in order to describe which religious concepts or transnational spiritual worlds will endure the test of the generation change and the ethnic interaction.

Our stance is that 'religious nativization' is more connected with the history of religions in the context of stable concepts and their transmission across societies and generations. Buddhism in China was for instance the product of a 'religious nativization' of Indian Buddhism, although according to Christopher P. Atwood the Mongolian case shows even a more intentional 'nativization'.[87] 'Religious nativization' is therefore related to the theology of religions; which has traditionally featured a prominent yet not exclusive role of Christianity.[88] The

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[84] Extra-hours.

[85] Work, which is itself the Japanese version of the German word '*Arbeit*' [to work].

[86] Rafael Shoji, 'The Failed Prophecy of Shinto Nationalism and the Rise of Japanese Brazilian Catholicism', *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 35/1 (2008): pp. 13–38.

[87] Christopher P. Atwood, 'Buddhism and Popular Ritual in Mongolian Religion: A Reexamination of the Fire Cult', *History of Religions*, 36/2 (November 1996): p. 137.

[88] See for example the works of Paul David Devanandan, 'The Christian Attitude and Approach to Non-Christian Religions', *International Review of Mission*, 41/2 (April 1952): pp. 177–84, *Christian Issues in Southern Asia* (New York, NY, 1963); Raymond Pannikar, *The Unknown Christ Of Hinduism: Towards An Ecumenical Christophany* (Maryknoll, NY, 1981), *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (Mahwah, NJ, 1991); Madathilparampil Mammen Thomas, *Risking Christ for Christ's Sake: Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Pluralism* (Geneva, 1987), 'A Christ-Centered Humanist Approach to Other Religions in the Indian Pluralistic Context', in Gavin D'Costa (ed.), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY, 1990), pp. 49–62; Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian*

case of Spiritism migrating to Brazil and its legacy taken to Japan by Japanese Brazilian migrants is a new and exciting case of 'religious nativization' as well as a contribution to de-centering the prominent role of Christianity in the field of theology of religions. Further research would benefit from exploring in-depth the role of Japanese Brazilian religions as a new case of 'religious nativization'.

However, related to our case study, 'religious nativization' within the context of Spritism – similar to Christianity and New Japanese Religions – is a key aspect given the growing number of Japanese Brazilians who profess those faiths. While 'religious nativization' becomes effective and stable only through new generations and the first socialization of children, it is evident that the process is defined by the ways in which the local social context affects the contents (re)passed by both Japanese Brazilian migrants as well as the Japanese national converts. The consequences of that process affect not only the lives of individuals but also their communities as well as their connections to the spiritual realm. In other words, the experience of *mestiçagem* – both ethnic and religious – that Japanese Brazilian migrants experience in their home country, influences upon migration the *continuum* in the Japanese symbolic religious universe, thus adding new ideas and experiences to the spiritual realm. Through that process of transnational migration of Japanese Brazilians, ethno-national religious experiences implied in their lives produce a *continuum* in the communication between the Brazilian and the Japanese religious symbolic universes, thus giving birth to dynamics of transnational religions with its quota of supernaturalism within the spectrum of 'religious nativization'.

For instance, terms such as 'spirit' or 'possession' are sufficiently generic to enable the incorporation and amalgamation of different elements, a combinatorial religiosity found both in Japanese and Brazilian religions. This is clear in the case of religions as Umbanda and Spiritism in Japan, although it can also be noted in New Japanese Religions' reinterpretation of ancestors and the Japanese Brazilian experience as well as the hybrid Roman Catholic spirituality that the migrants introduce to the context of Japanese Roman Catholicism. These possibilities give birth to a transnational spiritual world which mirrors previous experiences in Brazil related to the (re)interpretation of the Japanese religions by the local Brazilian

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spiritualities at the time of Japanese migration. At present, with the immigration of Japanese Brazilians to Japan, the same process is adding one more layer to the occurrence of this transnational religiosity. As the valorization of the *continuum* of the symbolic universe varies according to the new geographical place and historical conditions, further research should take into account the new pathways of migration taken by Japanese descendants, for example, multiple migrations (triangulation) whose point of origin is Brazil, landing in Japan to then continue the migration either to Australia or Canada.[89] As religious spiritualities such as Spiritism travel along with the faithful, it is evident that those new migration pathways would not only continue influencing but also enhance the transnational *continuum* within the religious symbolic universe.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored the reframing of Brazilian Spiritism in light of the encounter with Japanese religious practices, especially in its current feature in Japan. Drawing from the experience of Spiritism and ancestor worship in Brazil, the analysis took us to explore the role that Spiritism plays amidst the lives of Japanese Brazilian migrants and their contribution to the *continuum* of the symbolic religious universe in Japan. The communication of religious symbolic universes is guaranteed by the migration experience of Japanese Brazilians in Japan as well as the formation of a transnational community with a transnational spiritual world. Spiritism joins Umbanda, *Sekai Kyūseikyō* and, to some extent, Neo-Pentecostal churches in fostering a connection through ethnicity and religion to the spiritual world that give cohesion to the Japanese Brazilian transnational community.

By communicating the spirits' world across borders, Spiritism becomes a transnational faith which gives sense to a void that occurs in the uprooting process of migration. This transcendental communication in the *continuum* of religious symbolic universes through the experience of the migration as seen in the case of Japanese Brazilian migrants in Japan would certainly require further research and analysis in order to reveal the manifold issues surrounding transnational faiths. In other words, the migration of Japanese to Brazil, the (re)migration of Japanese Brazilians to Japan and the emergence of a new ethnic category in the case of *Brazilian Japanese* implies fractures in relations with the ancestors' world, which in turn requires a vehicle for meaning-making and (re)connection to ethnic roots. by achieving this communication, Spiritism fosters 'religious nativization' and offers valuable resources for the (re) valorization of ancestors' spirits that emerges among Japanese Brazilian migrants in Japan, thus contributing to the *continuum* of the symbolic religious universe in Japan.

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[89] Mélanie Perroud, 'Migration Retour ou Migration Détour? Diversité des Parcours Migratoires des Brésiliens d'ascendance Japonaise' [Return migration or detour migration? Diversity of migratory routes of Brazilians of Japanese ancestry], *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* [European journal of international migration], 23/1 (2007): p. 59.

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