Transnational Exorcism?

The Spiritual World of Brazilian-Japanese Neo-Pentecostalism

Rafael Shoji

In 2008 a Japanese TV broadcaster announced the discovery of something dreadful: the existence in Japan of something called *macumba*, an African-Brazilian magic practice involving sacrifices and offerings at public spaces in the prefecture of Shiga. The program followed with a search for evidence and testimonials, searching for justification of the practices of “black magic” in Japanese parks. If other minorities were once the main source of the exotic in Japan, Brazilian immigrants are now also a source of otherness in the Japanese society.

In fact the sensationalism in the reports on *macumba* in Japan reflects the same negative perception and fear that many Brazilians have, something

*Rafael Shoji holds a PhD from Leibniz University of Hannover (Germany) and is a co-founder and researcher at the Center for the Study of Oriental Religions (CERAL) at the Pontifical University of Sao Paulo. He has published on Japanese religions in Brazil, Japanese-Brazilian culture, and comparative studies on Buddhism and Christianity. This research was supported by the Japan Foundation and Nanzan University.

1. *Macumba* is a generic term for “black” witchcraft in Brazil. Initially the term was not used in a negative sense. The word is derived from the name of an old African instrument, but in Brazil the term gradually came to be used for magical practices, usually for reasons of love or the attempt to harm someone, especially in offerings to African-Brazilian deities (especially *Exus*), and sometimes involving animal sacrifice.
well known and especially exploited by neo-Pentecostals in Brazil. The many converts of neo-Pentecostal movements came in search of cures and prosperity, many of them understanding that earlier contact with African-Brazilian religions or “black magic” performed by others was the source of evil.

In reality, it seems that African-Brazilian religions in general have a relative small adherence and practice in Japan. Umbanda centers are not so numerous and in some centers such as the NEC in the city of Toki (Gifu prefecture) their practices are more related to Nikkei Spiritism. Among Brazilians in Japan Macumba is for some a source of exoticism, shame, and sometimes mockery. The general perception is that of sensationalism and misunderstanding: a commentary on youtube especially mocked the clean Japanese images of macumba on TV as “preparing fried chicken.” Many Brazilians, however, are still afraid of evil spirits and practices related to African-Brazilian religions. Curiously enough, African-Brazilian spirits are essential for Brazilian neo-Pentecostal movements, since they depend on evil spirits for the justification of health problems, mental disorders, malice, and exorcism. The transplantation of Brazilian neo-Pentecostalism means, at least in its initial phase, the transplantation of the African-Brazilian spirits as their enemies.

The theme of this article is to present an overview of the Brazilian religions in Japan, focusing on the growth of Pentecostalism within the dekasegi community and later describing in more detail the neo-Pentecostal movement, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG). The main focus is the reinterpretation of the Brazilian spiritual world in Japan. In this sense, I will argue that in contrast with the Japanese-Brazilian religions we have in Japan the emergence of a “Brazilian-Japanese” religiosity.

2. Arakaki conducted an extensive research on African-Brazilian religions in Japan from 2002 to 2010, estimating the number of followers to be 450, spread among the roughly ten Umbanda centers in Japan (ARAKAKI 2012).

3. For more details see SHOJI 2008.

4. It is important to emphasize the difference between Japanese-Brazilian and Brazilian-Japanese as ideal types. Japanese-Brazilians have Japanese ancestry but are mainly Brazilians in terms of culture, language, and nationality; Brazilian-Japanese have 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 factors changes the product here, and the young Brazilian-Japanese is a new subculture and rapidly evolving within Japanese society.
The Transnational Spiritual World of the Japanese-Brazilians

The Brazilian Nikkei Spiritual world is transnational, presenting both Japanese and Brazilian elements depending on the religious groups considered in the spectrum, and ranging from Japanese religions practiced in Brazil to Brazilian religions in Japan. In the Japanese-Brazilian case, the absorption of many Japanese ideas on the Brazilian spiritual world does not present many cultural difficulties nor cause surprise. The combinations are very eclectic and supported by different elements: if in the Japanese case this unified spiritual world is filled with kamis, Buddhas, and other beings, in the Brazilian case, saints and African-Brazilian beings share space with spirits transmitted by the mediums of Spiritism.

For the purposes of this article, it is important to point out that Brazilians easily accept karma and especially the influence of spirits as sources of problems to be solved, in continuity with the Japanese setting. When analyzing the history of karma, it can be verified that there is a conceptual migration towards the Far East, from Hindu reinterpretations receiving a Confucian influence, before settling in the Japanese popular religiousness and in the new religious movements. However, what must be observed when analyzing the adaptation of karma in Brazil is that the concept of karma also had a migration towards the West 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 make religions present different ways of diffusion and acceptance.

The Japanese ancestor cult can be understood as something independent from Buddhism and their role is related with this-world benefits and the avoidance of evil. The relationship with the spiritual world frequently

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5. For a summary of the variations and the evolution of the concept of karma inherited from the ancestors, see HARDACRE 1984. For a general discussion on karma see OBEYESEKERE 2002.

6. See YANAGITA 1970 for the relation of the ancestor cult with Japanese folklore, SMITH 1974 for a more contemporary view and MULLINS 1998 for its impact on Christianity in Japan. Although Yanagita is considered by many scholars as somewhat dated, he is insightful in the context of this article because he lived and described the worldview in the decades
occurs through ancestors, who continue to influence their descendants. An unhappy or violent death, or neglecting obligations towards the ancestors, results in negative effects in present life. Offering practices or rites to the spiritual world is considered to result in a reward to those in the present life. Therefore, by improving the spiritual status of the ancestors, the current status of the active follower is also improved. This standard is frequently pointed out in the new religions as a cause of the problems, whose solution varies according to each group, starting from the performance of rites up to a more lay-oriented recitation of sutras or mantras. The right practice brings a relationship with the spiritual world which expresses real benefits in the active follower’s life, thereby attaining the solution to his problems.

The reinterpretation of the ancestor cult among Japanese-Brazilians was analyzed by Takashi Maeyama (1972; 1997). As he describes it, ancestor cults and the world of the dead as traditionally cultivated by the Japanese was partially recovered by immigrants in Brazil after the Second World War in the process of the establishment of Japanese religions from the 1950s on. In order to cultivate their ancestors and to define themselves as new founders, especially inside Japanese Buddhism, the immigrants began to refer to themselves as living ancestors, and founded derivations of their Japanese households established in Japan (Maeyama 1972).

Because of the conversion of many Japanese and their descendents to Catholicism, the role of ancestors is very weak among Japanese-Brazilians, but it is still present, and is sometimes combined with Spiritist mediumship or related with karma. In fact, the concept of one karma inherited from ancestors, which is not easily accepted by westerners in the USA and Europe, but present in several Japanese religions, shows acceptance among Japanese-Brazilians. The religious importance of ancestors is also acceptable for many Brazilians. The continuum from Spiritism through Umbanda enables the incorporation of ancestors in the spiritual worldview. Spiritism already
performed this role in the “white” incorporation of the worship of the spir-its and ancestors by the Bantu African ethnic group, resulting in Umbanda. Given the existence of a concept of karmic evolution in Brazilian religions and the possible influence of the spirits, the influence of the ancestors shows plausibility and coherence. The influence of hereditary factors that cause physical and emotional illnesses also becomes a spiritual inheritance.

This blending of Japanese religiousness with the Brazilian religious universe enabled the incorporation and development of a hybrid spiritual world, adding Brazilian and Japanese meanings to a world of deities and practices that frequently get mixed up. With the increasing migration to urban areas in the twentieth century, which uprooted many Brazilian rural immigrants, the Brazilian religious field entered a phase of rapid transformation. This enabled the transplantation of several Japanese religions, who had their roots in the Nikkei community, some of them attracting many sympathizers and converts among Brazilians. In this context, a basic factor in the development of several Japanese religious movements in Brazil was this Japanese-Brazilians religiousness through the search for worldly benefits.9

In the context of this article this blending in the search for results in this world will be described by analyzing their impact on the emergence of a Brazilian-Japanese Pentecostalism. The immigration of many Brazilians (mostly Japanese-Brazilians) to Japan as temporary workers has introduced neo-Pentecostalism (the Brazilian new religions) in a transnational fashion.

8. See for example SHOJI 2003 for the case of Shingon in Brazil and MORI 1998 for the case of Okinawan Shamanism combined with Umbanda in Brazil.

9. The search for benefits in this world is indeed one important shared characteristic of Japanese and Brazilian religions. The possibility of actual proof of a religion means that it is possible to attain benefits by religious practices and intervention of the spiritual world. Protection, health, financial, or family problem-solving are understood as being possible to achieve through a transaction with the spiritual world. This does not necessarily mean a view primarily materialist or magical; 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 objectives. Japanese popular religiosity is in this sense not distant, in its main characteristics, from what Brazilians also understand as an important function of the religion. Most Brazilians search and hope for solutions of existing problems when practicing a religion. An actual verification of the attainment of benefits in this world and the union of different creeds, frequently analyzed in a disdainful way as magic and syncretism in many countries, are also present and generally understood as something positive or neutral both in Japan and in Brazil.
Brazilian Religions in Japan

The influx of Brazilian migrants to Japan, commonly known as the *dekasegi* (“migrant worker”) phenomenon, can be seen as the latest phase of immigration between Japan and Brazil. The three main waves of migration, namely 1. from Japan to Brazil before the Second World War, 2. from Japan to Brazil after the Second World War, and 3. from Brazil to Japan from 1990 onwards, are linked not only because they represent a nearly continuous migratory flow between Japan and Brazil, but also because immigration to Japan was only allowed to people of Japanese descent (up to the third generation) and their spouses. This was possible only after the reform of immigration laws in Japan in 1990. In quantitative terms, one can observe that the number of Japanese who immigrated to Brazil over many decades (around 242,000) is smaller than the number of Nikkei and Brazilians who have migrated to Japan in the 1990s and 2000s (the total number was around 300,000 by 2005). Currently, due to the global economic crisis that intensified in 2008 and with the financial incentive program of the Japanese government for the return of the *dekasegi*, many *dekasegi* have returned to Brazil (by 2011 the number of Brazilians in Japan was around 230,000, but it is very difficult to know exactly how many *dekasegi* returned to Brazil).

Anthropological studies conducted in the 1990s reinforced the tendency of *dekasegi* in Japan to emphasize the Brazilian identity of the group rather than the revalorization of the Japanese ethnic heritage which was observed with more intensity among the Nikkei in Brazil (Tsuda 2003; Linger 2001; Roth 2002). The majority of *dekasegi* saw immigration as temporary, although nowadays that perception has changed due to the formation of families in Japan along with economic factors both in Japan and Brazil. The *dekasegi* movement is already nearly twenty years old and it is slowly being replaced either by a more permanent immigration process or by the return to Brazil. The return is occurring particularly as a result of the shrinking of the automobile and electronics industries due to the global economic crisis and also because of the consequences of the 2011 Tohoku earthquake. For those who choose to stay, the trend seems to be permanent settlement with

10. The peak occurred in the late 1990s, with demand for temporary workers in Japan and the era of high inflation and economic crisis in Brazil.
the purchase of homes financed long term, declining remittances to Brazil, the education of children and adolescents in the Japanese school system and the establishment of more definitive community structures. The possibility for permanent immigration rather than the prospect of temporary employment is made possible because Brazilian immigrants are mostly legal in the country. In fact, about 80,000 Brazilians already had a permanent visa in Japan already in 2008.

A quantitative survey of churches and temples with services in Portuguese conducted between 2007 and 2008 reveals a significant number of evangelical groups among Brazilians in Japan (chart 1). In Japan, they seem to be the majority among places having religious services in Portuguese. The data in the charts reinforces the perception that the mainstream tendency among the dekasegi is religious conversion to the Pentecostal movement, by far the major trend among Evangelicals in the Brazilian community. Another tendency, as noted by other authors, is the existence of missions for the Nikkei in New Japanese Religions, which promotes a tendency of assimilation and a recovery of the ancestor cult (Matsue 2006).

The Emergence of Brazilian-Japanese Pentecostalism

There are two main streams within Brazilian-Japanese Pentecostalism: 1. the churches initiated by the dekasegi themselves in Japan, and 2. the neo-Pentecostal movements.

The former is represented by churches that emerged locally with dekasegi pastors, especially among mixed-race Brazilians and Brazilians without Japanese ancestry, some of them later establishing connections with Pentecostal churches in Brazil. Some examples of these independent churches are Missão Apoio (Support Mission) and Igreja Missionária do Deus Vivo (Missionary Church of the Living God). Among the churches founded in

11. As reported by Higuchi (2006), Brazilians who migrated more recently have temporary employment contracts with contractors, which often means ever-changing workplaces and shift work. In keeping with a system of offering “just-in-time,” to provide manpower in times of fluctuating demand and a shortage of workers, this system puts the dekasegi in a very fragile situation with the economic crisis. Still, legal immigration offers formal employment, the possibility of funding for qualifications, social assistance, language proficiency, and study in Japanese schools for children.
Chart 1: Comparison in terms of the proportional numbers of places of worship for Brazilians in Portuguese. Survey conducted in 2007 and 2008 with data provided by institutions in printed publications or websites, complemented by Brazilian newspapers and magazines in Japan.

Japan by the dekasegi, there are also many connected with the different Assemblies of God in Brazil. Since Catholicism has difficulties identifying itself as a “Brazilian religion,” and has limited services in Portuguese, Pentecostal groups spread efficiently through the ethnic social networks, with the churches optimized for the existing demand and with dekasegi themselves as pastors. Pentecostalism has played a social role that has not been offered by other institutions in Japan, using networks of assistance and proposing evangelical conversion as a way of dealing with the situations of crisis that the Brazilian immigrants suffer in Japan. These churches that originated among the dekasegi are now expanding back in Brazil through missions and former dekasegi (SHOJI 2008).

The second stream is represented by Brazilian neo-Pentecostal movements such as the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (Universal Church of
the Kingdom of God, uckg) and the Igreja Internacional da Graça (International Church of Grace). In Brazil, the theology of prosperity and exorcism are the main characteristics that distinguish the activity of neo-Pentecostal churches from other groups (Oro 2003, 2006; Chesnut 2003).

The concept of neo-Pentecostalism in Brazil is related with the new expansion of native Pentecostal movements. In Brazil, the strong trend of urbanization and modernization that has occurred since the 1960s has produced changes that resulted in a reorganization of the religious market in Brazil. Several new religious groups have established themselves in the process of migration and rapid social change, often occupying a place of worship that was typical of rural Catholicism. After the end of a period of persecution, Umbanda and Candomblé became present and visible in this growing diversification of the Brazilian religious field. Emigration was a driving force towards the establishment of new Pentecostal networks and the emergence of neo-Pentecostalism in the 1980s. According to the World Christian Database, Brazil today has the largest Pentecostal population, with 24 million people, compared with around 6 million Pentecostals in the United States.

The neo-Pentecostal churches (among the best known are the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, God is Love, and International Church of God’s Grace) were other religious suppliers that benefited from this process, with an intense and systematic use of the media, often actively proselytizing this-worldly benefits or cures, and in some cases spreading the demonization of African-Brazilian religions (especially the uckg). Offering a space for “religious services” and clearly targeting a market of those seeking mundane benefits, these neo-Pentecostal movements seem to fill a need for individual expression for the poorest sectors of Brazilian society, even with the repression of the public sphere and political interests outside the group (Pierucci and Prandi 1996). As an important difference from other Pentecostal groups, neo-Pentecostal groups such as the uckg represent a

12. The uckg was founded in 1977 by Pastor Edir Macedo in the north of Rio de Janeiro. Edir Macedo practiced Catholicism and African-Brazilian religions before converting to Pentecostalism. He founded the uckg with the pastor Romildo Ribeiro Soares (R. R. Soares), who later left the Universal Church and founded the International Church of God’s Grace. According to its website, the Universal Church is today present in around 180 countries. Today uckg has around 13,000 temples in Brazil and their own political party (Partido Republicano Brasileiro, the Brazilian Republican Party). It also owns Rede Record, the second largest television network, that includes a 24-hour news channel.
1. UCKG temple in Nagoya.

2. Advertisement at the Tsukiji subway station.
model inspired by multinational media rather than self-organized cells or communities.

The neo-Pentecostal churches in Brazil have invested heavily in their operations among the dekasegi in Japan, but with a global structure and a clear reference to Brazil, they seek to expand their operations in Asia through their proselytizing among Brazilians in Japan. The popular leaders Edir Macedo and R. R. Soares, respectively leaders of uckg and the International Church of God's Grace, make frequent visits to Japan and meet thousands of believers.

Although there are some studies on the transnationalization of Brazilian neo-Pentecostalism, especially the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (ORO 2004; FRESTON 1999; 2001), the expansion of Brazilian neo-Pentecostalism is still unknown in Asia. In Japan, since they have strong support from Brazil, the neo-Pentecostal movements are less fragile and not so dependent on the economic situation of Japan, in comparison with the churches that emerged among the dekasegi. These neo-Pentecostal churches have sought to play a similar role in Japan to that in Brazil, where a controversial relationship with money and tithes of high value are expected in exchange for material reward, cures, or miracles, frequently accompanied by the expulsion of spirits or African-Brazilian deities.

In 1995 uckg started its operations in Japan, initially in Gunma and Saitama prefectures. As of January 2012, uckg has eighteen churches in Japan and a tv station (TV Record Japão), including the production of content especially directed to the dekasegi, a newspaper (*Jornal do Brasil*, Brazil Times) and a magazine also with news especially produced for the dekasegi. The central church is in Hamamatsu (Shizuoka prefecture). Besides Shizuoka (three churches), the main provinces of concentration are Aichi prefecture (three churches) and Kanagawa and Gifu prefectures (two churches in each prefecture). There was a small number of Japanese con-

13. If the uckg shows global aspirations in its name and in the title of its newsletter in Brazil (the title of the journal, *Folha Universal*, can be roughly translated as “Universal News”), in Japan the Brazil Times tries to be the main channel of information for the ethnic community. Besides its religious propaganda, Brazilian news and cultural themes are emphasized for the dekasegi. The Brazil Times is distributed free in almost all stores with a circulation of 45,000 copies in 2008. As of 2012, perhaps because of the return of many dekasegi, distribution was down to 30,000.
verts and around May 2011, and Hideaki Terauchi was consecrated as the first Japanese pastor of the UCKG.

The Reinterpretation of UCKG in Japan

As in other international contexts, neo-Pentecostalism in Japan also shows customization for its plausibility among dekasegi. Indeed, the charismatic products from the theology of prosperity in the Japanese context have a greater plausibility for those wishing to return to Brazil. This trend represents a contradiction in the very meaning of the churches’ presence in Japan, and therefore the reformulation of these products for the dekasegi is one of the main challenges of neo-Pentecostal churches in the Japanese context.

The Plausibility of the Theology of Prosperity

The theology of prosperity has at first sight a very rational appeal for dekasegi in the context of a rational choice in the religious market. After all, the dekasegi were initially in Japan in order to save as much money as possible to invest in properties or businesses back in Brazil. However, the expectation of enrichment promised by the theology of prosperity goes against the reality of work and the limitations of Brazilians in Japan as temporary blue collar workers.

In fact, often the goal for the dekasegi is to pay off eventual debts and accumulate capital to start a business in Brazil. Those who want to stay in Japan are expected to continue as employees. They will gain stability but very rarely have dreams of their own business in Japan or to be rich in the same manner promised to the followers of the UCKG in Brazil. Even with businesses within the ethnic community, the consumer market is relatively limited and very fierce competition exists with the Japanese themselves, since they also own ethnic stores for Brazilians. Besides, the economic downturn is challenging all possibilities of rapid enrichment, just as the Brazilian community is beginning a more definitive settlement phase, in which the family and the education of the second generation has assumed the priority of the community, rather than money. The theology of prosperity focused on enrichment appears very fragile in terms of plausibility for Brazilians settling in Japan.
The logic of tithes for the neo-Pentecostal churches also appears to be different in the case of *dekasegi*. In practice, the *dekasegi* have a monthly income based on hours of work, and a healthy economy is the key to achieving their goals of accumulating capital, after a calculated period of time in order to go back to Brazil. Large donations are often requested by the pastors but it seems that the response is significantly lower than in Brazil. In the groups of “business entrepreneurs” or “cults for financial success” in which I participated in the UCKG in Nagoya, even with less money (such as 1,000 yen), few people intended to donate. The preaching stated that the donations were a sacrifice and a test of God to be rewarded with future wealth, but this was not especially successful in my ethnographic observation. The magical practices developed for those searching for success in the establishment of a business, such as the use of sanctified objects as bringing prosperity and enrichment, were partially accepted. Voluntary donations were few compared with Brazil, although there were a considerable number of participants.

In this context, in my research visits to the UCKG groups promising financial success in Japan, I also observed a relative lack of testimony regarding prosperity. Even the use of recorded statements from Brazil or examples from Japanese entrepreneurs provoked no enthusiastic reactions. In one case explored at length by one pastor the example of the founder of Yamaha, who had the “crazy idea to put a motor on a bicycle,” and referring to the history of Yamaha Motors just after the Second World War, argued that “the children of darkness [non-Christians] are luckier than the children of light [UCKG devotees]” due to the latter’s lack of boldness. In other cases, testimonies of the UCKG in Brazil were selected and shown via video, in which poverty and family problems disappeared after significant donations to the UCKG, resulting in a hugely successful business shortly thereafter.

As these descriptions had very little to do with the real life of Brazilians in Japan, the UCKG presents little positive reinforcement regarding real testimonies of enrichment in Japan, and most converts were able to just give statements of buying homes or cars, which is rarely interpreted as something extraordinary because many are adhering to long-term loans or renovating old houses.

This trend is challenging for the UCKG, because the theology of prosperity attracts Brazilians who do not tend to stay devotees in Japan and will not
contribute financially to the church. According to data from a website survey conducted by the UCKG in Japan in January of 2008, which included 117 participants, about 75 percent intended to return to Brazil and only about 25 percent intended to remain permanently in Japan. Although such research had no statistical methodology, it is an indicator that those who want to return to Brazil were a majority among those who belong to UCKG in Japan at that time.

In summary, the enhancement promised by prosperity theology shows greater plausibility for those wishing to return to Brazil, which may reflect a rational choice that is consistent with the main objective of *dekasgo*, as opposed to those who intend to remain permanently in Japan constituting the church community. Given the difficulties for the *dekasgo* in terms of successful businesses in the Japanese environment, the message of prosperity theology means to return to Brazil and the abandonment of the churches in Japan. Moreover, in these cases, the tendency to donate a lot of money is something that goes against the objectives of *dekasgo*, precisely because they seek to save as much as possible while in Japan.

*The Therapy of Family as Spiritual Healing*

Even if the possibility of enrichment in Japan is difficult, considering Brazilian standards poverty was not something that affected the *dekasgo* until 2008. Instead, an important problem was that many families were divided by language, generations, cities and the long journeys to work. With the trend toward permanent settlement of Brazilian families in Japan, especially among young people who have immigrated, a balance between prosperity and family had to be achieved.

The focus on extra hours of work even on weekends and the constant changes of workplace brought several problems—youth crime, family disintegration, and low priority placed on the education of children. After some years the *dekasgo* community was forced to reconsider its priorities, retrieving values from Brazilian culture, and the one that seems to be the most important in terms of social cohesion is the family. With the temporary stay becoming permanent, the creation of a harmonious family in Japan alongside with integration and the education of children became key concerns.

Due to this, neo-Pentecostal churches now present themselves as the solution to family and health problems, and emotional stress. One slogan that
stands out in its magazines and publications in Japan is “No success justifies failure with the family.” The advantage of having a group practice and dissemination based on several reports of their own converts is that the groups naturally find a way that allows for expansion, since the groups develop not only in the sense of existing social networks, but also in the contextualization of their theology because of the continuous and public dissemination of the new converts and miracles. The public testimonies themselves influence the pastors’ messages, and the theology grows from the grassroots. Even if a more general orientation exists, the most common cases and motivations are exactly those most publicized, and they attract more people. The group therefore grows toward the most numerically relevant audience, finding optimization within the religious market on offer, preferring to give more emphasis to what has market appeal.

Family therapy days are centered on prayers and blessing by the pastor for the members of the family, including those in Brazil. One of these practices involves the Pentecostal blessing of a panel containing family photos. The uckg in Japan has been based more on healing and dissemination of Brazilian family values, seeking to emphasize themes such as marriage, curing mental illness, and happiness in love, while through the media seeking to be the channel for Brazilian news.

*The Relocation of the Spiritual Combat: The Exorcism of African-Brazilian Spirits in Japan*

The *descarrego* sessions in the uckg normally happen on Fridays. This is a day commonly used by practitioners of African-Brazilian religions in performing Umbanda religious services or other associated magical practices as *macumba*. In Brazil the *descarrego* sessions are on Fridays, marking a holy battle against the spirits, and in Japan these sessions are also conducted on Fridays.

The exorcism of African-Brazilian deities is widely practiced among the neo-Pentecostals at uckg, especially at the main temple in Hamamatsu, and they remain the main target of neo-Pentecostal exorcism in Japan.

14. Literal translation: “unload.” It means to “unload” evil spirits that have a bad influence in the life of the faithful.

15. See Almeida (2009) for ethnographic descriptions of these exorcism sessions in Brazil.
Devil and its evil African-Brazilian spirits in the uckg are very important in the Brazilian neo-Pentecostal worldview and for the practice of exorcism. In this sense it seems to me (strangely enough) that the neo-Pentecostal religions are doing more than the African-Brazilian religions to preserve these deities in the collective memory among Brazilians in Japan.

This even includes the purification and exorcism of Japanese places that could be used by African-Brazilian deities. The exorcism rituals of the possessed in the temple are made concurrently with the purification of Japanese places. On the thirteenth Friday of 2012 a special series of descarrego sessions began in all uckg temples in Japan because on this day the “the channel of evil is open and many perform evil witchcraft and macumba, as one pastor explained to me. In Hamamatsu these sessions were held for seven weeks. Three sessions were performed on the Friday the thirteenth, the main one beginning at eight pm. Upon arriving, I realized that many assistant pastors had already left the church, each with several pieces of rope. They went to seven places, in seven groups of two persons each. The places to be exorcized from evil spirits were: 1. a beach (the sea), 2. a river, 3. a waterfall, 4. a crossroads, 5. a train line, 6. a street without an exit (dead end); and 7. cemeteries. While the exorcism session happened in the temple, the assistant pastors would make a “strong prayer” in these places, beating the ropes on the floor in order to prevent the actions of spirits and calling them to be exorcised, so they would have no more influence on the life of the church converts.

Indeed, in this special session all participants received a paper upon which they would write their names eight times, one to be left at the altar, and the other seven to be given to the assistant pastors to go to the places listed above, since there the evil forces would be called to be exorcized. The desmanche ritual was unlike others that I participated in (especially in Nagoya), since this time the number of possessed was high and many were in a highly emotional state with signs of possession such as alteration of voice and uncontrolled body. I also noticed many more references to Afro-Brazilian deities. One entity that proved especially present in possession (five times) was the Tranca-ruas. I think the Tranca-ruas was mani-

16. Approximate translation: “erase,” “undo.” This ritual is another name given to the ritual of descarrego. The general meaning of the ritual is to undo witchcraft or a curse.

17. Tranca-ruas (a word composed in literal translation from “lock” and “street”), is an
fested because the pastor quoted his activity more often at the beginning of the session, emphasizing that he is an entity that closes the way to happiness, prosperity, and health. When the assistant pastors came back from the places listed above they claimed to have felt the evil spirits being burned through their strong prayers and the use of the ropes. Some of them were afraid because of the noise produced, but they claimed to continue on with this spiritual combat in any case, even if the police are called.

The association with the exorcism of places in Japan is directly related to the role that these places have for African-Brazilian religions, and where they realize their rituals. The neo-Pentecostals are trying to symbolically conquer the Japanese places that would be used by Umbanda practitioners in Brazil. Moreover, prayer sessions were also held at a mountain near Hamamatsu before a pilgrimage of the pastor to Mount Sinai. In the case of mountains, the role of these places are still not clear, but I would not exclude the possibility of confrontation with Japanese religions in the future.

Disembodied Spirits and Ancestral Curse

In Japan there are some indications that neo-Pentecostalism might choose as the sources of evil some elements that represent more continuity with local thought. Within the testimonies in the uckg sometimes the sources of evil are disembodied spirits or an ancestral curse that somehow persecutes the faithful. The statements are ambiguous, since the affirmation that deceased spirits or ancestral curses are the source of evil stays in the intersection area between Brazilian Spiritism and a more Japanese worldview. Sometimes a more general trend against “oriental religions” appears in the neo-Pentecostal sermons. For example, on a research visit that I made to the International Church of Grace in Kariya, just outside Nagoya, the Pentecostal pastor made his exhortation “against the evil eye, envy, black magic, oriental magic.” So far, however, there seems to be no definite reinterpretation in this direction. The choice of this path could create innumerable conflicts within Japanese society, which the neo-Pentecostals seem quite anxious to avoid so far. As a controversial practice against other groups, exorcism

African-Brazilian entity that belongs to the Exu class, long since long considered a demoniac entity. This entity is especially understood as having the power to “open” or “close” the direction of people’s lives.
therefore seems highly unfruitful, considering the beliefs of the majority Japanese society.

In fact, one can not underestimate the potential controversy that exists in relation to neo-Pentecostalism in Brazil, especially around the UCKG. Nevertheless after some controversy in its expansion in other countries, the UCKG seems determined to be noncontroversial in Japan. Until now the UCKG has attracted little attention in Japan, since its emphasis on high donations is targeted only to dekasegi and the growth of the church is restricted to the ethnic community. The UCKG has attracted very few Japanese members, and they seem to receive little attention regarding the way it operates. In some private conversations with UCKG pastors, Japanese religions are criticized as animistic and as deifications of nature, but the broad dissemination of this idea is cautiously avoided. Sometimes the commentaries on Japan assume the form of millenarism: the massive earthquakes and tsunami of 11 March 2011 were biblical signals of destruction and a signal that the end of the world is near. I even received in a session a letter signed by the pastor, claiming that the end of the world was near, and therefore of the necessity of conversion. On the contrary, the pastors pray for the economy of Japan, even bringing the Japanese national flag on a pilgrimage to the biblical Mount Sinai.

However, the caution of the UCKG does not hinder the necessity of some reinterpretation because of the question of the plausibility of Brazilian spirits in this new context. On the days when I attended the descarrego sessions in the UCKG in Nagoya, the most common reference was to the more generic terms such as rituais de magia negra (rituals of black magic), espíritos desencarnados (disembodied spirits), and especially encosto. Another expression often used in Brazil and cited many times is that everything seems amarrado (tied) in the sense that however much the adepts try to have success, the future seems doomed to failure due to powerful negative spiritual forces, which need to be broken.

The descarrego ritual follows a regular pattern. After the general descrip-

18. Encostos (roughly translated as “touch”, used as a proper name) means spirits of deceased persons who curse the living and bring about evil results. They can be evil spiritual deities or disembodied spirits without a clear destination after death. The term encosto refers to the perception of the living person that a negative force (the disembodied spirit) stays in touch with them as a curse.
tion of evil spirits and the Devil, and the presentation of the consequences of their actions in the lives of the spectators, the pastor urges that the Devil himself will be humbled, and that the chains and the curse will be broken in Jesus’ name. The descarrego itself then reaches its apex with the passage of the faithful through a tunnel composed of pastors and assistants (obreiros) who, by a laying on of hands and invoking the name of Jesus, send away the bad energies through the power of the Holy Fire. Sometimes the uckg members form a line to be individually exorcized by the main pastor.

In one of the descarrego sessions, a major theme was the Devil in Japan. The pastor of the uckg was a newcomer to Japan, but his perception described in the sermon seems almost unanimous among other uckg pastors in Japan. They emphasize that one major difference with the Devil’s work in Japan is that in this country he is more focused on the mind. The characterization is convenient if we consider that possession with clear signs of an uncontrollable body is more common in the uckg in Brazil. The fact that the Devil works predominantly in the mind justifies the difference of the external behavior of the possessed in Japan.

The pastor, however, developed his sermon preaching that the activity of the Devil in the mind leads to madness, depression, and suicide. Social isolation, often a consequence of the immigration process, means that a considerable portion of the immigrant community have mental disorders, family problems, and abuse alcohol and other drugs. Moreover, as the pastors tend to stress for the immigrant community, Japan is a country with many suicides. The Japanese are seen as a people to be admired in terms of material well-being, but are seen as lacking in happiness and bliss, often the victims of psychological problems, depression, and suicide. The predominant activity of the Devil in Japan would be one of the main factors.

As a pattern already established in the neo-Pentecostal sermons, evil and disembodied spirits also have a significant share of the blame in mental distress. The pastors warn that paranormal phenomena such as hearing voices or seeing figures is much more common among Brazilians in Japan. The actions of these disembodied spirits is indicated as the cause of mental pain in Japan.

In recent years, another emerging pattern in the explanation of evil has also been highlighted, and this is the interpretation of evil as an ancestral curse. Here the possibility of suffering may be mental or physical. In fact,
since many health problems (physical or mental) are attributed to hereditary causes, the adepts of uckg just extend this interpretation to the spiritual world. Although this type of testimonial appears more frequently in Japan, it is also sometimes discussed in evangelical circles in Brazil, often raising theological interpretations and popular disputes. The transnational Nikkei present a natural continuity with the idea of ancestors, which reinforces this interpretation. The religions that composes the Spiritist continuum implies the possibility of this transnational spiritual world extension. This transnational spiritual world affects people in this world and generates responses ranging from some features of the ancestor cult (among the dekasegi, especially those belonging to Japanese new religious movements) to the exorcism of an ancestral curse (Brazilian neo-Pentecostalism). Among the uckg members the idea of an ancestral curse may be strengthened since these testimonies are creating a pattern repeated on many occasions, encouraging a more institutional embodiment of this enemy to be exorcised.

*Final Reflections: “Acclimation” and the Transplantation Policy of Brazilian Neo-Pentecostalism*

In this article I have focussed on the neo-Pentecostal group uckg, indicating a new Pentecostal movement in Japan and the emergence of transnational spiritual worlds. As described, the participation of Brazilian Pentecostalism has strongly increased among the dekasegi.

The Brazilian neo-Pentecostal worldview in particular depends on the existence of an enemy to combat and to justify evil, which is often personified as having African-Brazilian features. This whole spiritual combat is being transplanted to the Japanese landscape. The possibility of this combination of Japanese and Brazilian elements within the Japanese-Brazilians happens because of some common features. Instead of the spirits present in the Brazilian spiritual world, which include but are not limited to the African-Brazilian religious worldview, in Japan this spiritual world tends to assume more Nikkei features, presenting a more natural continuity with the Japanese context, even if it is still far from being sufficient to attract a significant number of Japanese converts.

The case of Brazilian-Japanese neo-Pentecostalism belongs to the dispute between Pentecostal churches (centered on the figure of the Holy Spirit) and
those that reinforce or seek a friendly relationship with the spiritual world (belief in spirits that normally do not include the Holy Spirit, present in the diverse forms of nature and native religions, including Shamanism, but also in many new religious movements). Considering the East Asian context it is interesting to consider this pattern, and in particular, in comparison with native Christian movements and with the Korean churches in Japan, it will be important to observe the evolution of Brazilian Pentecostalism within Christianity in Japan.19

This pattern was analyzed considering the context of the different religions of Japanese-Brazilians, themselves the fruit of an earlier transnationalization and the emergence of globalization. The “transnationalization” of spirits is based on the spirits as a universal category, from a phenomenological perspective. From this standpoint I suggest that we need to review concepts such as acculturation, inculturation, indigenization, and transculturalism in the case of Brazilian neo-Pentecostalism and Shamanism. This is especially true if we accept a new understanding of Shamanism and the concepts of nature and culture as proposed by anthropologists such as Viveiros de Castro.20 Nature is often underestimated in the transplantation of religions. The religions associated with native and shamanistic religions, even if these religions are the enemies to be confronted, should not be viewed as primarily transcultural (between cultures).21 The spiritual worlds of Shamanism and

19. See especially Mullins, with an analyses based on Hayashi Minoru, “Apparently, only a Christian ‘shamanism’ can compete with the shamanism of the New Religions” (1998, 181), but on the other hand he correctly remarks later on the same page that “Pentecostal Christianity may ‘fit’ the current social climate better than the intellectual expressions of Christianity associated with Western churches. This fact alone, however, hardly assures church growth in the Japanese context. The decline of indigenous Pentecostal movements has shown us that much.” Brazilian Pentecostal churches are today ethnic churches and there is no indication of eminent change.

20. See Viveiros de Castro (1998). Based on Amerindian perspectivism he argues that in the native religions based on nature and possession in the American continent (and more generally in Shamanism) there is a multinaturalism due to the fact that the same spirit occupies several bodies. Here I am especially interested in the extension of a spiritual world, based on a particular geographical and natural landscape, to other natural landscapes.

21. This is most likely because of Western tradition that is based historically on monotheism, that assumes one nature and many cultures, that the role of nature was often underestimated in any studies of transplantation. These factors are often ignored in the research based on acculturation even if disciplines such as the geography of religion were detached from the importance of space and nature for religion (see for example Park 1994).
natural religions depend not primarily on acculturation, but they depend especially on the acclimation in other geographical landscapes.

The globalization of Brazilian neo-Pentecostalism signifies the meeting of Pentecostal culture with a supernatural world composed by many Shamanistic and native religions. Brazilian neo-Pentecostalism does not deny the different spiritual worlds associated with different geographical places and their effects on the natural world through possession and the effect of evil. Normally it actually combats these various spirits using an almost global culture based on primacy of the Holy Spirit and exorcism.

If in modern science and the social sciences we traditionally have one nature and different cultures, promoting multiculturalism as the public policy in many western societies, in the case of Pentecostalism it seems more reasonable to assume the existence of a global Pentecostal culture clashing with different Shamanistic religions. These religions are supported by local natural landscapes and animated spirits, which manifest themselves through different forms, including possession and magical practices, understood by Pentecostals as the source of demonic forces and curses, especially in the case of Latin America and Africa. The case of the transnationalization of Pentecostalism, based on the evil represented by local spirits, needs to extended be through transnaturalism. The emerging global Pentecostal view brings new natural landscapes to the spiritual combat, reinterpreting animism and possession as enemies.

Pentecostalism thus emphasizes both cultural continuity and natural rupture, establishing essential common patterns but also tension necessary to the success of a new religious movement. Pentecostalism may then face barriers associated with ethnocentrism, especially if the native religion is based on a very particular nature or if it is a national religion. If multiculturalism is a policy that resulted from the vision of a unique nature and different cultures within Western societies, promoting ideologically the friendly coexistence of many cultures, many Pentecostal groups interpret the submission of all natural spirits to the Holy Spirit as a unique culture based on the creation of enemies in a pluralism of environments. If Pentecostalism is to be understood as a type of “shamanistic” Christian movement, it could

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22. Viveiros de Castro suggests Shamanism as a magical and cosmic policy based on multinaturalism, but in the case of Pentecostalism the natural world so understood is interpreted in a negative fashion.
not interpret the spiritual world in another way. The desert as the symbol of the abstract principle of decoupling nature beyond time and space, which simultaneously symbolizes monotheism, limits and seeks to subdue all nature spirits to God. In Pentecostalism, these natural deities are reinterpreted as the evil to be defeated by the Holy Spirit.

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