

WATANABE Masako 渡辺雅子

The Development of Japanese New Religions in Brazil and Their Propagation in a Foreign Culture

This article will examine Ōmoto, Konkōkyō, and Risshō Kōseikai as examples of New Religions among Brazilians of Japanese descent, and Sekai Kyūseikyō, Sōka Gakkai, and Reiyūkai as Japanese new religions that have expanded through propagation to Brazilians of a non-Japanese ethnic background. It will examine the spread of Japanese new religions in the new cultural environment of Brazil, which factors caused the movements to remain only among Japanese-Brazilians, and which factors caused the movements to spread to non-ethnic-Japanese communities. The article will also look at the phenomenon of many Brazilians of Japanese descent who came to work in Japan in the 1990s, and the large impact that has had on Japanese new religions with regard to organizational restructuring. It will also look at how this was a new development for the religions of the ethnic Japanese community in Brazil, and as an opportunity for propagation among Brazilians of non-Japanese ethnic background.

KEYWORDS: Brazil — Japanese immigrants — new religions — Ōmoto— Konkōkyō — Risshō Kōseikai — Sekai Kyūseikyō — Sōka Gakkai — Reiyūkai

WATANABE Masako is a Professor in the Sociology Department at Meiji Gakuin University.
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THE HISTORY of Japanese migration to Brazil began with the mass migration of 1908, and Brazil now has the largest population of people of Japanese descent of any country in the world outside Japan. It is generally true that, concomitant with migration, religion also “migrates,” but in Brazil’s case, the formal propagation of the religions of the Japanese community did not begin until after the Second World War. Before the war, it was thought that the introduction of Buddhism or Shinto in a country where Catholicism was virtually a national religion would only act to inflame anti-Japanese sentiment, so the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs only permitted the migration of Catholic missionaries, and requested a self-imposed restraint on all other missionary activity. In this respect, the Brazilian case contrasts with the case of both Hawai‘i and the United States, where temples and shrines were built for existing Buddhist sects shortly after Japanese migration began.

Nevertheless, individuals took their personal religious beliefs with them, and there were those who had immigrated to Brazil for missionary purposes, despite migrating under the guise of agricultural immigrants. As a result, by the 1930s, the development of sects such as Seichō no Ie 生長の家, Tenrikyō 天理教, Ōmoto 大本, and Honmon Butsuryūshū 本門仏立宗 became evident. Nonetheless, it can be said that the official propagation of Japanese religion in Brazil, especially Japanese new religions,¹ only began after the war. The Buddhist sects Jōdo Shinshu Honganji 浄土真宗本願寺, Shinshū Ōtani 真宗大谷, Sōtō 曹洞, Jōdo 浄土, Shingon 真言, and Nichiren 日蓮 Buddhist Sects all became evident in Brazil in the 1950s, while the new religious sects Sekai Kyūseikyō 世界救世教 and PL Kyōdan (PL 教団) appeared in the 1950s, Sōka Gakkai 創価学会 and Konkōkyō 金光教 in the 1960s, Risshō Kōseikai 立正佼成会, Reiyūkai 霊友会, Sūkyō Mahikari 崇教真光, and GLA in the 1970s, Shūyōdan Hōsekai 修養団捧誠会 in the 1980s, and Agonshū 阿含宗 and Kōfuku no Kagaku 幸福の科学 in the 1990s.

Therefore, many Japanese new religions have entered Brazil, but this article will focus on Ōmoto, Konkōkyō, Risshō Kōseikai, Sekai Kyūseikyō, Sōka Gakkai, and Reiyūkai in particular. In all cases, their propagation was initially focused on the Japanese-Brazilian population, but in some cases, propagation went beyond these ethnic Japanese communities, widely attracting non-Japanese Brazilians,

1. The term “Japanese new religions” refers to new religious movements that became established from the latter half of the nineteenth century (the end of the Edo Period/beginning of the Meiji Restoration) and on to contemporary times, and which were subsequently introduced in Brazil. In addition, established religions such as Buddhism and Shinto, which have their roots in Japan, and were also introduced to Brazil, are referred to using the general term “Japanese religions.”

while in other cases, propagation did not go beyond the Japanese community. The object of this paper is to examine the factors which influence the success or failure of a new religion in its propagation and adoption by groups outside the ethnic Japanese population.²

Perspectives

Two dimensions will be explored in an effort to trace the development of the propagation of new religions in a foreign culture and to examine the factors that have influenced their development: the classification of Japanese new religions and the issues they dealt with and were forced to resolve in their propagation in another culture. Even where the issues faced are the same, the resources used in order to deal with and resolve the problems are likely to differ, as is the way in which the problems are understood, and the way in which significance is attributed to them. As a consequence, there is a strong correlation between these two dimensions, but at this point each dimension will be analyzed and discussed in turn.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF JAPANESE NEW RELIGIONS IN BRAZIL

“Organizational form” and “form of propagation” will act as the two axes for the classification of Japanese new religions in Brazil. In this article, organizational form will be assumed to fall along a continuum, with the *oyako-gata* (parent-child model) at one extreme and the centralized authoritarian model at the other. In the parent-child model, the vertical parent-child relationship of guidance is emphasized, and the religious organization is formed by a chain of these relationships of guidance, each of which is highly individualized. As a consequence, where members who identify with different systems reside in the same geographical region, this becomes an impediment to the effective functioning of the organization. In a centralized authoritarian system, the laity in a certain geographical region are grouped together in an organizational form based on a “horizontal” pattern, and controlled by the administrative body within the headquarters. Turning to the “form of propagation” axis, a continuum with a minister-centered worship model at one extreme and a laity-focused propagation model at the other is assumed. Religions following the minister-centered worship model emphasize the importance of church/temple-based worship, in which the minister plays a central role, as the primary form of religious practice. In the laity-centered prop-

2. This article is based on fieldwork conducted by the author in Brazil between 1988 and 1999. The results were reported in WATANABE 2001 (English title: “Developmental Processes of Japanese New Religions in Brazil: Tasks and Achievements of Missionary Work in Brazilian Culture”). This book examines the groups Omoto, Konkōkyō, Rishō Kōseikai, Sekai Kyūseikyō, Sōka Gakkai, Reiyūkai, and Inarikai 稲荷会. I was not able to go into details on these groups in this current article due to lack of space; for details and further background, see WATANABE 2001.

FIGURE 1. Classification of New Religions among Japanese -Brazilians

Minister-centered worship model				Horizontal pattern in geographical region			
A				B			
Vertical axis				Centralized Authoritarian Model			
Parent-child model				Laity-focused propagation model			
C				D			
Konkōkyō	1964	400 members	10%	Ōmoto	1926	240 families	5%
Tenrikyō	1930	20,000	small	Seichō no Ie	1934	1,200,000	95%
Reiyūkai	1975	80,000	60%	Sekai Kyūseikyō	1955	310,000	97%
				PL Kyōdan	1957	300,000	90%
				Sōka Gakkai	1960	150,000	90%
				Risshō Kōseikai	1971	657 families	12%
				Sūkyō Mahikari	1974	30,000	80%

Note: Following the name of the group is the date it was introduced to Brazil, the number of members, and the proportion of non-ethnic-Japanese members.

agation model, all members act as “missionaries”, and propagation activity plays an important role as a religious practice which is a means to their own salvation.

Figure 1 combines these two axes, and the new religions that are the subject of my research, as well as those which have been the subject of previous research are listed in quadrants A, B, C, and D. In addition, the date that missionary activity commenced, the number of members (in some cases, this is expressed in terms of number of households) and the proportion of members that are of non-Japanese descent has been indicated using round numbers. It should be noted that the new religions that have both a large membership and a high proportion of members of Japanese-Brazilians are concentrated in quadrant D.

TASKS FACED BY JAPANESE NEW RELIGIONS IN BRAZIL

There are different issues for Japanese new religions to resolve in their propagation and development in a foreign culture such as Brazil, compared to those issues they might have in Japan. As shown in Table 1, these tasks can be divided into the following four categories.³ Firstly, the category of “Expansion Tasks” con-

3. NAKAMAKI Hirochika (1990, 628–29) has suggested as background to, and factors contributing to, the adoption of Japanese new religions by non-Japanese: a) Portuguese “switching,” b) the training of non-Japanese leaders, c) the adoption of Brazilian lifestyles and ways of thinking, d) support from the Japanese headquarters, and e) a sense of respect held towards Japan and the Japanese by Brazilians. According to my classification, a) relates to surmounting the language barrier (Category

TABLE 1. Tasks Faced by Japanese New Religions in Brazil

I. Expansion Tasks	II. Adaptation Tasks
1. Geographical expansion	1. Surmounting the language barrier
2. Class expansion	2. Dealing with beliefs in miracles and spirit possession
3. Generational expansion	3. Dilution of “foreignness” of teachings, ritual, and practice
4. Ethnic expansion	4. Attainment of social recognition
5. Linguistic range expansion	5. Avoidance of friction with the Catholic Church
III. Establishment Tasks	IV. Organizational Tasks
1. Understanding the Brazilian character	1. Maintenance of support from, and positive relations with, Japanese headquarters
2. Formation of laity training system	2. Broad-based organization
3. Moving away from this-worldly benefits to spiritual reformation	3. Establishment of local centers
4. Maintenance and expansion of the core doctrines	4. Qualification conferment system
	5. Appointment of local staff to organizational positions

cerns the expansion of propagation and the increase in membership. This represents a numerical summary in the form of a statistical figure, which relates to the degree to which the category II, III and IV issues have been resolved, that is, the degree to which propagation has been successful, and is therefore presented first.

The second category, that of “Adaptation Tasks,” relates to how the religion adapts within Brazil’s foreign culture as it resolves conflicts within the host society, while at the same time maintaining independence as an autonomous religious movement, without becoming isolated on the one hand or “smothered” on the other. The third category of tasks, “Establishment Tasks,” relates to the stabilization of members and their attainment of qualitative satisfaction, in other words, how to retain people, particularly non-Japanese Brazilians, who may have entered the faith seeking results but who tend to be very transient in terms of their membership in religious organizations. The fourth category is that of “Organizational Tasks,” relating to the development and establishment of the

II Adaptation Tasks); b) relates to formation of a laity training system (Category III Establishment Tasks) and the setting up of a system to award qualifications (Category IV Organisational Tasks), c) relates to understanding the Brazilian character (Category III Establishment Tasks), d) relates to the maintenance of support from, and positive relations with, the Japanese headquarters (Category IV Organisational Tasks), while e) relates to the attainment of social recognition (Category II Adaptation Tasks).

religious movement itself, including not only the establishment of good relations with the headquarters in Brazil, but in Japan also.

To follow, each category will be examined in detail. When broken down, Category I, “Expansion Tasks” includes the dimensions of 1) geographical expansion, 2) class expansion, 3) generational expansion, 4) ethnic expansion, and 5) linguistic range expansion. Of these, ethnic expansion and linguistic range expansion are issues specific to the propagation of religion in a foreign culture. People of Japanese descent make up only one percent of the Brazilian population, so in order for Japanese new religions to increase their memberships, they must go beyond the boundaries of this ethnic group. The extension of linguistic range is an essential condition for the successful propagation of non-Japanese people, and even in the case of people of Brazilian-Japanese, given that this community has now reached its fifth generation, it is necessary to use Portuguese rather than Japanese. Geographical expansion refers to the expansion of a religion beyond a localized distribution to a largely national distribution. The locations in which Japanese Brazilians (Nikkei) reside are concentrated in particular regions, so if there is geographical expansion, this will lead to 4) ethnic expansion and 5) expansion of linguistic range. 2) Class expansion refers to the expansion of a religion’s membership from one that was initially predominantly lower class, to the middle-class and beyond to higher socioeconomic groups. 3) Generational expansion refers to both the expansion of kinship-based generations of Japanese-Brazilians, and “social generations” based on age group. Religions with predominantly Japanese-Brazilian membership are concerned with both kinship and social generations, while religions with non-Japanese memberships are concerned primarily with social generations. The factors worthy of most attention among the “Expansion Issues” are 4) ethnic expansion and 5) linguistic range expansion, as noted above. It is fair to say that these act as a gauge of whether or not a Japanese new religion has significantly expanded its membership.

As for Category II, “Adaptation Tasks,” 1) The surmounting of the language barrier is a necessity in order to adapt to Brazilian society. Tasks 2) to 4) consist of issues relating to the adaptation of a Japanese new religion, which brings with it traditions from a foreign culture to Brazilian culture. 2) It is important to be able to deal with strong beliefs in miracles and spirit possession, which are deeply rooted in Brazil’s religious tradition.⁴ 3) In terms of influencing the very essence of the new religion itself, if the level of transformation is such that it goes beyond the bounds of simply the “dilution” of the new religion’s “foreignness,” and transforms it into something “Brazilian” in nature, there is a risk that it will

4. Examples of such beliefs include the belief in miracles in popular Catholicism, focused around prayers to and promises by the saints and the Holy Mother, the popularity of Pentecostalism with its emphasis on charismatic experience, faith healing, and problem solving through mediums among the followers of Kardecist spiritualism, and the phenomena of spirit possession among followers of Afro-Brazilian religions, and so forth. For details see WATANABE 2001, 67–76.

become “smothered” in the local culture and lose its unique identity. However, if its “foreignness” is rigidly maintained, its propagation will at most be limited to the ethnic Japanese-Brazilian community, and it will not be accepted by Brazilian society. Furthermore, within Japanese new religions there are aspects that are very distinct in comparison to Brazilian religious traditions, but also aspects that are not considered particularly “foreign.” 4) The attainment of social recognition relates to enhancement of the image of Japanese new religions, which are burdened with a foreign culture, and the attainment of social recognition. There are two forms of social range involved in the attainment of social recognition—regional society and broader-based society—and these factors relate to the conditions for the location of centers and the expansion of a religion’s influence. Japanese new religions generally allow for a plurality of membership and are not confrontational towards other religions, but in Brazil, where Catholicism is the dominant religion, 5) avoidance of friction with the Catholic Church is essential in order to adapt to this foreign culture successfully.

Category III, “Establishment Tasks,” relates to the means by which the retention of members who have been attracted through propagation activities are achieved. In Brazil, where belief in miracles are very deeply rooted, the manifestation of miracles and the assurance of divine favor is important in order to attract members, but if the inclination weighs too heavily in this direction, then there is a risk of members becoming transient, and moving away from the religion once an issue is resolved. In this respect, suitable guidance, in addition to 1) an understanding of the character traits of Brazilian people, is necessary. 2) The formation of a laity training system consists of developing training systems based on small group activities and personal guidance, and also includes the training of members through the appointment of members of the laity to organizational positions, and asking them to fulfill the role of *sewa* 世話 (or “care”).⁵ This is not simply a matter of transferring the Japanese system of training, but requires initiatives which take into account the local cultural environment, prerequisite to which is a thorough understanding of the characteristics of Brazilian people. 3) Moving away from this-worldly benefits to spiritual reformation as opposed to beliefs in divine favor requires one to seek answers from within oneself and having the motivation to reform oneself instead of relying on divine favors. 4) The maintenance and expansion of the core of the doctrine relates to the “Adaptation Task” of 3) dilution of the “foreignness” of the doctrine. If the core of the doctrine is transformed completely, it will then become assimilated within Brazil’s religious culture, so the preservation of the core is essential. In

5. *Sewa*, in the context of the activity of new religions, refers to the special “care” shown to new members, or members that the “care-giver” has invited or has led to join the group, and concretely refers to providing guidance in spiritual matters so that such members will continue in their spiritual life. For examples of *sewa* in various religious groups, see WATANABE 2001 (for Sekai Kyūseikyō see pp. 313–14; for Sōka Gakkai see pp. 379–81; for Reiyūkai see pp. 439–41).

some cases, establishment can be promoted by developing some new significance while still preserving the core.

As for Category IV, “Organizational Tasks,” with regard to 1) maintenance of support from, and positive relations with, the Japanese headquarters consists of governance/leadership, support (in the form of human resources, financial support, information), and exchange. If the governance/leadership from headquarters does not take into consideration the local conditions, conflict with Category II “Adaptation Tasks” can result. Support from headquarters may include the purchasing of local facilities or the dispatch of personnel from Japan. Support may initially flow from Japan to Brazil, but as the Brazilian branch develops, this flow may become bilateral. Exchange may include interactions with positive effects such as group pilgrimages or training at the headquarters, or may have more negative consequences—even dire consequences—for the local branches, such as situations of conflict resulting from inter-denominational or factional disputes. Therefore, the regulation of this relationship is an important task. 2) Broad-based organization becomes a task when religious propagation is not limited to local or regional activity, but extends to national initiatives. The various branches distributed over a wide area must not be allowed to become isolated, but integrated within the organization. This is closely related to the particular organizational model of the new religion in question. The organization of branches over a wide area can be achieved with relative ease when it is an organizational model based on centralized authoritarian governance. However, in a vertical organizational model in which the parent-child guidance relationship is emphasized, even where members of the laity are located in the same area, they may belong to a different “family line,” and therefore their integration into the organization can prove more difficult. For members of the laity, 3) the establishment of local centers is not simply a matter of having a base within the context of religious propagation in a foreign culture, it also relates to the gaining of social recognition. There are cases where such local facilities are established with the support of the Japanese headquarters, and where they are established through the branches’ own efforts. In the case of 4) regarding the qualification conferment system, while the final decision lies with the Japanese headquarters, this aspect is influenced by the level of flexibility and the capacity to allocate staff as necessary in Brazil. 5) The appointment of local staff to organizational positions relates not only to Japanese sent from headquarters and Japanese-Brazilians, but also Brazilians of non-Japanese ethnicity.

These four categories of tasks/issues develop through a relationship of mutual influence with each other. Category II, “Adaptation Tasks,” relate to propagation, the efforts to resolve Category III “Establishment Tasks” stabilizes membership through propagation activity, and this stabilization further drives propagation. The efforts to resolve “Organizational Tasks” (Category IV) make propagation and stabilization possible, and is also a response to “Adaptation Tasks” (Cat-

egory II) and “Establishment Tasks” (Category III). Through this mutual action, Expansion issues are resolved, and this expansion in turn requires carrying out other tasks.

Of these, when considering the achievement of tasks by Japanese new religions in a foreign culture, particularly important indicators are 4) ethnic expansion and 5) linguistic range expansion of the “Expansion Task” Category, as these are indicators of the success or failure of propagation to non-Japanese. As previously mentioned, Japanese-Brazilians only make up one percent of the Brazilian population, and are also geographically restricted in their distribution, with eighty percent of Japanese-Brazilians concentrated in the states of São Paulo and Parana. Therefore, the success or failure of propagation to non-Japanese Brazilians influences other expansion tasks, and it is fair to say it is a significant factor regulating them. In this light, the following discussion will focus on the success or failure of propagation to non-Japanese Brazilians and its influence on other task categories.

Findings

THE VARIOUS PHASES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF EACH RELIGION

The characteristics of Ōmoto, Konkōkyō, and Risshō Kōseikai, whose memberships are predominantly Japanese-Brazilian, and Sekai Kyūseikyō, Sōka Gakkai and Reiyūkai, which have expanded their memberships to include non-Japanese Brazilians, are as follows. (Note that membership statistics are 1999 figures.)

Ōmoto: When prayer activities (*kitō katsudō* 祈禱活動) were popular in the 1930s, and again from the late 1950s through to the 1960s, Ōmoto (propagation commenced in 1926, membership of two hundred and forty households, five percent non-Japanese) attracted non-Japanese believers seeking this-worldly benefits. However, it was not able to stabilize this unsettled membership, and it has now become a religion with a predominantly Japanese-Brazilian membership. Furthermore, the Japanese headquarters’ policy of emphasizing rites has amplified the sense of “foreignness” of its rituals, and a shift has occurred from the earlier prayer activity to formal attendance at services. The end result was a closed “ethnic church” for those exclusively of Japanese ethnicity.

The activities of Konkōkyō (propagation commenced 1964, membership of four hundred individuals, ten percent non-Japanese) have been characterized by a struggle between Japanese-Brazilians seeking an ethnic church and non-Japanese Brazilians who are attracted to the church in search of miracles. This is due to the most influential church and the first to begin propagation, Birigüi Church, located in the inland area of São Paulo State, where the Japanese-Brazilian community is consolidated. Prayer activities involving a large number of non-Japanese Brazilians caused the alienation of Japanese-Brazilians. The segregation of the two laity groups, including the conducting of separate festivals,

resulted in an ethnic church for Japanese-Brazilians based on their needs for ceremonial occasions such as coming of age, marriages, and funerals.

Risshō Kōseikai (propagation commenced in 1971, membership of 657 households, twenty percent non-Japanese) became a “spiritual home”-type ethnic church for postwar Japanese migrants until the 1980s. In the 1990s, however, due to various factors such as the change in church leadership, issues relating to generational shifts, an impasse in further propagation of Japanese-Brazilians, and the transience of its membership owing to an increased prevalence of migrant workers from Brazil to Japan, there was a shift to propagation to non-Japanese Brazilians. This is still in its early stages, but through initiatives such as opening the church to non-Japanese Brazilians for free asthma treatment, the initiation of memorial services for asthma-suffering ancestors, the establishment of services in Portuguese, and the increase in youth group activities, the church has begun to pave the way for a new direction in its propagation to non-Japanese Brazilians.

Sekai Kyūseikyō (propagation commenced in 1955, membership of 310,000 individuals, ninety-seven percent non-Japanese) has significantly expanded due to propagation among non-Japanese Brazilians. This religion’s major feature is a ritual called *jōrei* 浄霊 (hand healing, also known as *tekazashi* 手かざし), which is compatible with Brazil’s religious culture, and is characterized by its simplicity, in that by becoming a church member anyone can benefit from it. Due to this, from the initial stages it was a religion that propagated to non-Japanese Brazilians. From the late 1970s, it became highly adept at appealing to non-Japanese Brazilians, and thus expanded its influence. Furthermore, in the 1990s, in order to intensify and maintain fund-raising efforts for the building of a “sacred site” (聖地) in Brazil,⁶ the religion has focussed on stabilizing its membership and training church members. In parallel with transforming the organization through individual guidance, it has guided members away from reliance on divine favor or practical benefits (*goriyaku shinkō* ご利益信仰), and expanded the meaning of *jōrei* to include self transformation. Going beyond the use of *jōrei* as a way to fulfill the need for miracles, Sekai Kyūseikyō has dealt successfully with the challenge of religious propagation in a foreign culture, as well as stabilizing its membership, which now includes members of the new urban middle class.

Sōka Gakkai (propagation commenced in 1960, membership of 150,000 individuals, ninety percent non-Japanese) established a branch in 1960 on the occasion of Ikeda Daisaku’s (currently Honorary President) visit to Brazil, based on a membership comprised of Japanese who had joined the Gakkai in Japan before emigrating to Brazil in the post-war years. Friction with the Japanese Brazilian

6. A huge facility on 370,000 square meters of land in the suburbs of São Paulo City, considered to be the first such model of “heaven on earth” in the West.

community has hindered the development of Sōka Gakkai. This was a result of its intense *shakubuku* 折伏 (forceful propagation) activities, whereby a sense of danger felt by Brazilian society concerning political developments in Japan,⁷ and an antagonistic relationship owing to the dual structure of Sōka Gakkai and Nichiren Shōshū. Thus it consciously created strategies to overcome problems as they arose, and changed direction as necessary. In other words, in order to avoid conflict with the Japanese-Brazilian community, it began propagating to non-Japanese and, in order to become acceptable to Brazilian society, it changed its policy from the practice of *shakubuku* to an emphasis on cultural activities. Sōka Gakkai is unique among the Japanese new religions in that it requires converts to leave other religions or denominations of which they are members, but it takes a more flexible stance with the Catholic Church. In the process of propagation to non-Japanese, it emphasizes *genshō* 現証 (“actual proof”),⁸ which, while being “foreign” in nature, is driven by clear and simple practices. Furthermore, through guidance systems such as *zadankai* 座談会 (discussion meetings), individual guidance, and home visits, as well as the appointment of members to organizational positions, and training through cultural activities, it has attempted to minimize losses in membership.

Reiyūkai (propagation commenced 1975, membership of 80,000 individuals, sixty percent non-Japanese) is an organization formed by a federation of branches, with each branch having a high degree of autonomy. Initially, it propagated predominantly to Japanese Brazilians, but from 1990 onwards, as a consequence of the impact that the phenomenon of migrant workers from Brazil to Japan had on the organization, it transformed itself by propagating to non-Japanese Brazilians. At the branches which were at the forefront in propagation to non-Japanese Brazilians, they were able to stabilize membership even though the rites were still very “foreign” in nature. This was done by explaining “foreign” elements, such as memorial services for ancestors and spiritual reformation, in a tangible way that was easy for non-Japanese Brazilians to understand, and through the practice of giving and receiving *sewa*.

The following section will examine the factors which regulate the development of Ōmoto, Konkōkyō, Rishō Kōseikai, Sekai Kyūseikyō, Sōka Gakkai, and

7. Sōka Gakkai showed its commitment to political activism in Japan by establishing the Kōmeitō (Clean Government Party) in 1964, which made a stunning political debut in the 1967 national elections. At the time, Brazil was ruled by a military government, which was very wary of the Communist Party. In 1975 Sōka Gakkai and the Communist Party (which had been conducting an anti-Sōka Gakkai campaign), signed the so-called “agreement between Sōka Gakkai and the Communist Party,” by which they agreed to mutual restraint, to avoid attacking and slandering each other, and to solve differences through discussion. At the time Sōka Gakkai and the Communist Party in Japan had been approaching each other, and the Brazilian government began to suspect that Sōka Gakkai was a front for the Communist Party. Ed. note: see Pereira p.98.

8. *Genshō* literally means “actual proof” or “actual evidence,” but it refers to the secular benefits or rewards that come from one’s faith, and are thus “evidence” of its efficacy.

Reiyūkai. In particular, by comparing religions which have remained within the confines of the ethnic Japanese community, and those which have expanded beyond those confines, it will examine how each factor contributes to this difference. We will also examine how new religions that have expanded to include non-Japanese Brazilian membership have resolved the various issues involved in propagating in a different culture.

The Relationship Between Organizational Model/Model of Propagation and Propagation to Non-Japanese Brazilians

This relationship will be examined from the perspective of the categorization of two axes: the horizontal axis of “organizational model” (parent-child system—centralized authoritarian system) and the vertical axis of “propagation model” (minister-centered worship—laity-focused propagation) (see FIGURE 1). Firstly, the Japanese new religions that significantly expanded their propagation to non-Japanese Brazilians—Sekai Kyūseikyō and Sōka Gakkai—fall into quadrant D (central authoritarian system/laity-focused propagation); Reiyūkai falls into quadrant C (parent-child system/laity-focused propagation), but in the 1990s it rapidly expanded its propagation to non-Japanese Brazilians, and at the same time, while not going so far as a parent-child vertical system/centralized authoritarian system, it added a horizontal organizational principle.

Turning to Japanese new religions with predominantly Japanese-Brazilian memberships, Ōmoto falls into quadrant B (central-authoritarian/minister-centered worship), while Konkōkyō falls into quadrant A (parent-child/minister-centered worship). Konkōkyō differs from Reiyūkai in that while Konkōkyō has developed only one church system in Brazil, Reiyūkai has several branch systems, which required the development of a horizontal organizational principle. Ōmoto is basically centralized-authoritarian, and for a long time the facility on the outskirts of São Paulo was its single base. Another central facility was built in São Paulo in the 1990s, but due to the lack of adequate personnel, it did not function well as a centralized authoritarian center. In the case of Risshō Kōseikai, the Japanese organizational principle is centralized-authoritarian and it takes the form of laity-focused propagation, and therefore falls into quadrant D. Until the early 1990s, however, its three branches were all located within the church in São Paulo City, and religious practice of the laity was carried out on a roster basis at the *dōjō* 道場. Additionally, the first church leader stayed permanently at the temple and single-handedly took care of all guidance, making it appear to be a parent-child/minister-centered worship model (quadrant A). In recent years, following the succession of the church leader, one branch has been established outside the church, and there is a gradual movement towards the original quadrant D, as the laity are increasingly becoming involved in propagation rather than just religious practice within the church *dōjō*.

Since Japanese-Brazilians only make up a little less than one percent of the population, propagation among non-Japanese Brazilians affects the expansion of the church's influence. A large gap has developed between the influence of Japanese new religions that have expanded through their propagation to non-Japanese Brazilians and those that have predominantly Japanese-Brazilian memberships. All the new religions that have propagated to non-Japanese Brazilians follow laity-centered propagation models which make propagation activity an important prerequisite to salvation. Centralized authoritarian systems are efficient at propagation owing to the fact that Brazil is twenty-three times the size of Japan (the state of São Paulo alone is the same size as Japan), and there is a need to strengthen the horizontal regional relationships. In addition, the centralized authoritarian system makes possible the appropriate allocation of personnel and base facilities. However, as was demonstrated in the case of Ōmoto, religions that follow a minister-centered worship model generally do not propagate to non-Japanese Brazilians, and therefore centralized authoritarian systems are not successful in their propagation to non-Japanese. In this way, the religious and organizational forms inherited from Japanese religious organizations have a significant effect on the development of these religions in Brazil. Nevertheless, there are new religions that have taken substantially different forms, such as Risshō Kōseikai.

Issues for Japanese New Religions in Brazil

In their propagation and development in a foreign culture such as that of Brazil, Japanese new religions must face and resolve different issues than those they face when propagating within Japan. In this situation, the fact that there is an ethnic Japanese community in Brazil, a condition that does not exist in many other countries, must be considered. Here we will examine the issues resolved by Japanese new religions that have expanded to non-Japanese Brazilians, and the responses that were inadequate in the case of new religions whose propagation was limited to the Japanese community. Using the examples of Japanese new religions considered so far, the religions will be examined in terms of the previously discussed “Expansion Tasks,” “Adaptation Tasks,” “Establishment Tasks,” and “Organizational Tasks” (see Table 1).

I. Expansion Tasks

“Expansion Tasks” include 1) geographical expansion, 2) class expansion, 3) generational expansion, 4) ethnic expansion, and 5) linguistic range expansion, which manifest themselves as outcomes according to whether or not Category II to IV issues are resolved. In relation to propagation in a foreign culture, of these, 4) ethnic expansion and 5) linguistic range expansion are especially important tasks, and strongly correlate with the other tasks.

The religions that have expanded in terms of the five aspects above are Sekai Kyūseikyō, Sōka Gakkai, and Reiyūkai, which have extended their propagation to non-Japanese Brazilians. In terms of their geographical distribution, Sekai Kyūseikyō centers are distributed nationally, with approximately a third distributed in São Paulo State (concentrated especially in São Paulo City), a third in Rio de Janeiro State, and the remaining third in other regions. In the case of Sōka Gakkai, its facilities are based mainly in São Paulo, but it also has centers distributed nationally. Reiyūkai is centered in São Paulo and Paraná States, where the majority of Japanese-Brazilians reside, with centers located in South Mato Grosso State (midwest Brazil), northeast Brazil and southern Brazil, which dates from the 1990s when Reiyūkai extended its propagation to non-Japanese Brazilians. The religions with predominantly Japanese-Brazilian memberships are centered in São Paulo State, with only a small number of members residing in other regions. The majority of Japanese-Brazilians reside in São Paulo and Parana States, so geographical expansion closely relates to whether or not the religion propagates to non-Japanese. In terms of 2) social class expansion, Japanese-Brazilians usually belong to the middle class, and in the case of non-Japanese members, Sekai Kyūseikyō members tend to be middle class (new urban middle class), Sōka Gakkai members tend to be from the higher end of the working class, while Reiyūkai members tend to be lower to middle class.⁹

II. Adaptation Tasks

“Adaptation Tasks” relate to how to adapt within Brazil while resolving conflicts within the host society and culture, maintaining independence as an autonomous religious movement, and without becoming isolated on the one hand and assimilated on the other. “Adaptation Tasks” include 1) surmounting the language barrier, 2) dealing with beliefs in miracles and spirit-possession, 3) the dilution of the “foreignness” of teachings, rituals, and practices, 4) the attainment of social recognition, and 5) the avoidance of friction with the Catholic Church.

SURMOUNTING THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

The transition from Japanese to Portuguese as a means of surmounting the language barrier is not only important in terms of propagation to non-Japanese Brazilians, it is also important in dealing with second and third generation Japanese Brazilians. In the case of Sekai Kyūseikyō, the membership of which is predominantly non-Japanese, the full-time missionaries from Japan were young, and were therefore able to master Portuguese. Furthermore, the Japanese membership were pre-war migrants, many of whom could speak Portuguese to some extent. In the case of Sōka Gakkai, postwar migrants formed the base for the estab-

9. These generalizations are based on my surveys taken among new religions in Brazil.

lishment of the Brazilian branch, but through the “Great *Shakubuku* campaign” of 1965–1966, prewar migrants were also recruited through *shakubuku*, and the human-resource base of the organization was further enhanced by this bilingual group of second-generation Japanese. In the case of Reiyūkai, pre-war migrants were the object of missionary activity, and within this group there were people who could speak Portuguese to some extent. The language barrier was largely overcome by the 1990s, making the active propagation to non-Japanese possible.

All new religions that were limited to a predominantly Japanese Brazilian membership are minister-centered worship religions. Ōmoto has a long history of propagation, and there were personnel in the past who could speak Portuguese, but owing to the fact that Japanese could be used as the main language of communication, the missionaries sent from Japan to live permanently in Brazil in the latter half of the 1970s spoke poor Portuguese, and it was not until the 1990s that Portuguese came to be used. Konkōkyō became established in regions where Japanese communities were strong and where Japanese was widely used for communication, and the succeeding church leader who immigrated to Brazil in the latter half of the 1970s in his mid-30s did not have a good command of Portuguese. The leader of Risshō Kōseikai in Brazil was a middle-aged woman who migrated to Brazil alone to take up the position. As post-war migrants were the focus of propagation, Japanese was the language of communication, and so she could barely speak Portuguese at all. Finally, in the 1990s, the church leadership changed significantly, bilingual personnel were employed, and Portuguese began to be used. In this way, whether or not the language barrier is overcome influences the success or failure of the recruitment of non-Japanese, and therefore significantly regulates the level of adaptation to Brazilian society.

DEALING WITH BELIEFS IN MIRACLES AND SPIRIT-POSSESSION

Brazil’s religious culture is made up of three religious sources: the religion of the aboriginal Índio people, African tribal religion, and Portuguese Catholicism, to which has been added such influences as Kardecist spiritualism from nineteenth-century France and twentieth-century Protestant (mainly Pentecostal) religion. Therefore, generally speaking, the Brazilian religious environment can be categorized as Catholic (official Catholic, popular Catholicism), Protestant, and Spiritualist (Kardecism, Afro-Brazilian religion).¹⁰ The response to beliefs in miracles and spirit-possession, which are characteristic of Brazil’s religion, will now be examined. Though Japanese new religions do not use the term “miracle,” they do not negate this-worldly benefits entirely.¹¹ In this context, and in

10. On the Catholics see ARAI 1982 and 1994, and BARRETT, KURIAN, AND JOHNSON 1982; on the Protestants see YAMADA 2004 and FUJITA 1994; on Kardecism see FUJITA 1982, MORI 1997, and BARRETT et al. 1986; on Afro-Brazilian religion see FUJITA 1991 and FURUYA 1985 and 1992.

11. Shimazono has identified Japanese new religions that have succeeded in foreign cultures as having the following teachings and beliefs that demonstrate adaptation to propagation in a foreign

respect to Sekai Kyūseikyō in particular, the practice of *jōrei* resembles the *passé* practice (a practice of purification using both hands) in Kardecism,¹² and so was not culturally unfamiliar to Brazilians. As a consequence of the efficacy of *jōrei*, Sekai Kyūseikyō can deal effectively with the belief in miracles. In respect to other Buddhist sects, Sōka Gakkai is not as “familiar” as Sekai Kyūseikyō, but does emphasize the turn of events for the better and *genshō*, brought about by chanting the *daimoku* to the glory of the [Lotus] Sutra (*Namu myōhō rengekyō* 南無妙法蓮華經). In Reiyūkai it is believed that through the reading of the sutras, guidance (*michibiki* 導き), and the gathering of *kaimyō* 戒名 (posthumous Buddhist names), ancestors who have not yet entered Nirvana will do so, and this will constitute a pious act. It should be noted that both Ōmoto and Konkōkyō, which currently have predominantly Japanese Brazilian memberships, counteracted beliefs in miracles and spirit possession for some time through a practice called *toritsugi* 取次 (mediation), by using *harai* 祓い (exorcism or purification), or prayers against *macumba* (black magic), catering for an unspecified number of non-Japanese Brazilians. However, these practices in Ōmoto and Konkōkyō were simply considered to be shamanistic and a Japanese form of spiritualism, and this became only a temporary response that did not resolve the issue of a stable membership.

Compared to established Buddhist sects, new religions regard people’s actual day-to-day problems more seriously, and furthermore, each religion has its own religious rituals, which, irrespective of the level of familiarity or foreignness they may have, have each been adapted to Brazil’s religious culture. However, it should be noted that the response of religions depends on whether they take the form of a minister-centered religion, where a specially qualified person takes a central role, or follow a laity-focused propagation model.

TEACHINGS, RITUAL AND PRACTICE: THE DILUTION OF “FOREIGNNESS”

In the case of Sekai Kyūseikyō, which has extended itself to non-Japanese members, there is a marked dilution of “foreignness.” The doctrine is similar to French Kardecist spiritualism; the practice of *jōrei* is similar to *passé*; in terms of rituals, the monthly festivals are simplified forms of Japanese rites; and apart from the *amatsunorito* 天津祝詞 (a Shinto ritual prayer), all rites are conducted in Portuguese, while hymns are similar to Christian ones.¹³ In the case of Sōka

culture: clear and simple “magical” practices, ethics relevant to everyday life, rational sermons, and an active response to the multifaceted nature of religion (SHIMAZONO 1992, 203–10).

12. The *passé* practice is a method of purification whereby a medium treats someone who is suffering physically by applying a flow of good energy. In contrast to the use of only one hand for *jōrei*, both hands are used in *passé*.

13. For Sekai Kyūseikyō, *amatsunorito* is “sacred language” (*kotodama* 言霊) and cannot be translated. Therefore the prayers were transcribed with their Japanese readings in roman letters, and members taught to recite the proper pronunciation. On the other hand, they also chanted

Gakkai, though the sutras and *daimoku* have not been translated, they have been rendered into roman script so that non-Japanese can also read and recite them. Furthermore, the religious teachings have been made highly relevant to daily life, rather than simply religion for religion's sake. Religious ceremonies take the form of "events," in an effort to dilute the sense of "foreignness." In the case of Reiyūkai, the *daimoku* has been left unchanged, but the sutras have been translated into Portuguese. Branches which have been especially successful in attracting non-Japanese members have explained the content of memorials for ancestors and the sutras in ways that relate to everyday life. The significance and meaning of Buddhist altar accouterments, which is culturally very alien, has also been framed in a way that Brazilians understand.

In the case of Ōmoto, by contrast, which has a membership that is predominantly Japanese-Brazilian, from the 1970s the rites were restored to their original Japanese form in order to rectify perceived disorder in the rites, and in this way their "foreignness" was amplified. Though courses in Portuguese on the doctrine came to be offered, these consisted of merely the translation of the commentary that had been prepared in Japan. In the case of Konkōkyō, some degree of adaptation (dilution of "foreignness") is apparent in the monthly ceremonies, such as the substitution of candles for *tamagushi* 玉串 (a branch of the *sasaki* tree with cotton or paper ribbons tied to it). In addition, there are Portuguese translations of the *norito* 祝詞 (prayers), but there are no interpretations of doctrines adapted to the Brazilian cultural environment. In the case of Risshō Kōseikai, the sutras were translated into Portuguese, but this was more for the purpose of attracting second generation Japanese-Brazilians than non-Japanese Brazilians. Currently, sutras rendered only in romanized script are used, and there is some consideration being given to the adaptation of rites used in church services, though this is yet to be translated into action.

In this way, there is a divergence in the extent to which new religions that have substantial non-Japanese members, and those that have primarily Japanese-Brazilian members, have "adapted" to local cultural conditions. However, it should be noted that in the case of elements such as *amatsunorito* and *daimoku*, if they are viewed simply as incantations or for their magical value, being considered "foreign" is not an issue, as long as they are effective.

THE ATTAINMENT OF SOCIAL RECOGNITION

There are three levels of social recognition, that of Brazilian society, Japanese-

the Christian "Lord's Prayer," along with *amatsunorito*, for thirty-one years, from 1963 to 1991. After the completion of the Sacred Site in 1995, they began chanting a Portuguese translation of a prayer composed by the founder (*zengen sanji* 善言讃詞) as "the prayer of Kyūsei[kyō] followers." However, it is difficult to understand the meaning of the original *zengen sanji* from the translation of the "prayer of the followers" which, in both content and rhythm, is very similar to the "Lord's Prayer."

Brazilian society, and regional society. Sekai Kyūseikyō's cultural initiatives introducing Japanese culture to the Brazilian community, such as *ikebana* and pottery classes, are well known. Sōka Gakkai's cultural initiatives include cultural festivals and exhibitions, and are again targeted at the Brazilian community. It has raised its profile within the Japanese Brazilian community through its contribution to the "human-letters" event on the occasion of the eightieth anniversary celebration of Japanese immigration to Brazil. These kinds of cultural activities are effective to a degree in gaining prestige. The charitable initiatives of Sekai Kyūseikyō and Sōka Gakkai also target the Brazilian community. Reiyūkai also attempted to gain the recognition of Japanese-Brazilian society through cultural seminars in its initial stages of propagation. Its charitable initiatives usually target the Japanese-Brazilian community.

The level of social recognition for Ōmoto is low, with a sister city relationship between Jandira City, São Paulo State, the location of its South American head office, and Kameoka City, the location of its Japanese head office, being the only real achievement of note. It does donate a proportion of proceeds from a used-clothing bazaar to Japanese-Brazilian organizations but this is not sufficient to significantly raise its profile. Konkōkyō has gained recognition from the Japanese-Brazilian community, as demonstrated by attempts to prevent scheduling conflicts between Japanese society and Konkōkyō events, and the fact that the head of the church is also an official of the Japanese Society in Birigüi City, São Paulo State. Risshō Kōseikai used to have a low profile, making only some donations to Japanese-Brazilian organizations. However, since the 1990s it has shifted its focus from the Japanese-Brazilian community to the wider Brazilian community, and has raised its profile to some extent through its free asthma treatment initiatives.

In terms of their social profiles, Sekai Kyūseikyō and Sōka Gakkai stand out above the rest. Sekai Kyūseikyō gained its high profile against a background of the expansion of its membership to non-Japanese Brazilians, whereas Sōka Gakkai's profile is a result of a conscious strategy to eradicate its image as presenting a danger to Brazilian society.

THE AVOIDANCE OF FRICTION WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Catholic Church is virtually the national religion in Brazil, so any tension with the Church poses a problem if a religion is to be successful there. In the case of Japanese new religions, generally speaking membership in more than one church is permitted, so "friction" is avoided. The one exception to this rule is Sōka Gakkai, and it avoids friction with the Catholic Church as much possible by being careful not to criticize it as "slandorous teaching" (*hōbō 誹法*).

As has been discussed, in terms of "Adaptation Tasks," these new religions that have extended their membership to non-Japanese initially overcame the language

barrier; dealt with belief in miracles; diluted the foreign nature of teachings, rituals, and practices; and substantially altered these in order to make them more familiar to non-Japanese Brazilians. All Japanese new religions have consciously avoided friction with the Catholic Church, but in terms of attaining social recognition, Sekai Kyūseikyō and Sōka Gakkai, which from their early stages extended their membership to non-Japanese, have been successful in gaining recognition from the Brazilian community beyond the Japanese-Brazilian communities.

III. Establishment Tasks

As was seen in the case of Ōmoto and Konkōkyō, it is not unusual for non-Japanese to drift away from the church without becoming established members. This situation appears to indicate that it is not sufficient to resolve only adaptation issues. In this context, the next section will examine how non-Japanese Brazilian members can be firmly established, and what initiatives were taken from the “Establishment Tasks.” The “Establishment Tasks” consist of 1) understanding the Brazilian character, 2) the formation of a laity training system, 3) moving away from this-worldly benefits to spiritual reformation, and 4) the maintenance and expansion of the core teachings. These are closely interrelated and lead to the stabilization of membership, and each will be analyzed and discussed below.

UNDERSTANDING THE BRAZILIAN CHARACTER

An understanding of Brazilian cultural characteristics is important for the recruitment and retention of non-Japanese members. The Japanese new religions that have successfully recruited and retained non-Japanese Brazilian members have captured what could be called the Brazilian “character;” that is, their mind set and values. The following is a description of the Brazilian character as reported by many Japanese missionaries. First, Brazilians dislike people who are overbearing, and if ordered to do something will refuse to do it. Second, they like to see results immediately and are lacking in the dedication and patience to persevere with a task over an extended period. Third, where a problem occurs, they seek resolution by having someone pray for them. Thus, they are religiously very passive, and are used to asking someone else to act for them rather than engaging in religious practice themselves. Fourth, they tend not to seek the source of a problem within themselves, and if told that something is their fault, they will always become defensive.¹⁴

Based on these characteristics, Japanese missionaries have developed know-

14. For general statements on the “Brazilian character,” see DE HOLANDA 1956 and NAKAGAWA 1995a, 1995b, and 1997. These generalizations by Japanese missionaries may strike native Brazilians as extreme and exaggerated, but they are not meant in a denigrating way, and are observations from the perspective of Japanese religious culture, values, and behavior. For example, the first point about

how for recruiting and retaining Brazilian members. In relation to the first characteristic, rather than unilaterally giving instructions to the individual, they carefully listen to what the individual has to say, try to make the person consider why the situation or problem may have developed, provide suggestions as to ways of dealing with the problem, and allow the individual to decide for themselves how to proceed. The way of dealing with the second characteristic, that is, how to motivate individuals to persevere, will be covered in 2) training systems. In relation to the third characteristic, Japanese new religions have introduced the alien concept of “practicing (religion) oneself.” Motivating people to practice religion actively, rather than passively, also relates to 2) training systems. The new religions that have extended their membership to non-Japanese Brazilians all have clear and simple practices that must be undertaken to achieve salvation. Sekai Kyūseikyō has *jōrei*, Sōka Gakkai has *shōdai* 唱題 and *gongyō* 勤行,¹⁵ while Reiyūkai has recitation of the sutras and *kaimyō-atsume* 戒名集め (the gathering of posthumous Buddhist names). As a consequence, in spite of the culturally alien nature of these practices, these religions have been able to extend their influence to non-Japanese Brazilians. In relation to the fourth characteristic, in Japanese new religions there is the concept of karma, and one’s level of happiness is decided depending on the connection with one’s own past life or one’s ancestors, or the way one lives in the present life. In this way, the cause of things is to be sought within oneself. However, this is not fatalism, because these religions recognize the ability to break the connections with past evil deeds, and for that purpose one must perform good deeds, and reform one’s spirit. This aspect will be further discussed in 3) moving away from beliefs in this-worldly benefits to the strengthening of a belief in spiritual reformation.

With this understanding of the Brazilian character as a foundation, the Japa-

disliking people who are overbearing, and averse to being ordered around, contrasts with the common belief among Japanese new religions that it is a virtue to listen and follow senior members of your organization. The second point reflects the emphasis among many new religions to promote persistence in cultivating practice. The third point reflects the fact that many new religions emphasize the importance of self-reliance and practice rather than relying on salvation (even miraculous help) from an “other power.” The fourth point reflects the Japanese tendency for self-reflection in the face of criticism. Many of these tendencies are emphasized in Japan from the time one is a child, and reflects some basic cultural differences.

For a more detailed discussion on the attempts by Japanese new religions to propagate among Brazilians of non-ethnic Japanese origin by being more aware of such cultural differences, see WATANABE 2001: with reference to Sekai Kyūseikyō see pp. 308–27; with reference to Sōka Gakkai see pp. 377–84; and with reference to Reiyūkai see pp. 426–49, and also WATANABE 1998.

15. *Jōrei* is a way to remove the spiritual impurities that are the basic cause of human suffering, by placing one hand (palm forward) in front of the person in need. This action promotes the “purification” of that person, and reduces the suffering caused by various problems.

Shōdai refers to the intense chanting of the *daimoku*, the phrase *namu myōhō rengekyō*, “homage to the Lotus Sutra.” *Gongyō* refers to reciting two crucial passages from the Lotus Sutra, a section of the second chapter on “Expedient Means” (*Hōbenbon* 方便品) and a section from the sixteenth chapter on “The Lifespan of the Thus Come One” (*Nyorai juryōbon* 如来寿量品).

nese new religions, which have expanded their memberships to non-Japanese Brazilians have also explored strategies to retain this membership. In contrast, in the case of the new religions with predominantly Japanese-Brazilian membership, even where non-Japanese Brazilians have some temporary association with the religion, they eventually drift away. This has led to non-Japanese Brazilians being criticized by the religious organizations in question as having no sense of gratitude for any assistance received, and being unreliable and untrustworthy. In the case of religions based on minister-centered worship models, even where non-Japanese Brazilians visit a church for a period, this tends to remain a passive interaction whereby they request that prayers be said on their behalf to assist them with problems.

FORMATION OF LAITY TRAINING SYSTEM

In order to motivate the non-Japanese members—who have a tendency to be transient members—to continue their religious practice, it is necessary to persuade members of the rationale for practice, and after this guidance, to provide appropriate *sewa* (“care”). To this end, there are concrete forms of *sewa* or *sewa* systems, in which both small group activities and individual guidance are combined. Sekai Kyūseikyō has *sewanin* 世話人 (literally, “people who care”) system, Jōrei Center initiatives, individual guidance; the Sōka Gakkai has home visits, discussion meetings, individual guidance, and the so-called “encouragement” systems; and Reiyūkai has *tsudo*i (gatherings), mini-*tsudo*i (mini-gatherings) and individual guidance. In these small group initiatives, it is not a matter of directions being dictated from above, but instead a sense of participation is encouraged. These new religions follow laity-centered propagation models, and according to an individual’s success in attracting members, they are appointed to organizational roles or promoted. *Sewa* of members is emphasized in particular for those in senior positions. Japanese new religions have discovered the importance of *sewa* in training personnel for propagation to non-Japanese Brazilian members. The function of *sewa* is not only to establish new or transient members, but most importantly, to train the people doing the *sewa*.

MOVING AWAY FROM THIS-WORLDLY BENEFITS TO SPIRITUAL REFORMATION

Progressing from simple beliefs in this-worldly benefits to spiritual reformation/self-transformation depends upon the extent to which one accepts the belief system. Spiritual reformation is a task of a higher order undertaken by members who are to some extent established in the religion. The member receives personal counseling based on the specific issues they are facing. The idea that the cause of troubles lies not with another person or in society, but in oneself, is taught in various ways: the cancellation of karma through the theory of purification in the case of Sekai Kyūseikyō, *inga-ōhō* 因果応報 (causation and karma)

and changing one's karma (*shukumei tenkan* 宿命転換) in Sōka Gakkai, and the resolution of fate through spiritual reformation (*konjō-naoshi* 根性直し) in Reiyūkai. In all cases, the cause is sought within oneself, and effort is put into spiritual betterment. Spiritual training does not only consist of mental training but also relates to life ethics, and leads to a change of specific actions, with the resolution of issues being a crucial outcome.

MAINTENANCE AND EXPANSION OF THE CORE TEACHINGS

In the case of Sekai Kyūseikyō, motivation for spiritual reformation has resulted in an expansion of the meaning of *jōrei*, its most important religious resource. The original meaning of *jōrei* as an act to remove the “cloud” from the soul, has expanded to include the replenishment of energy, and realizing spiritual change. Sōka Gakkai uses religious teachings to provide the rationale for necessary spiritual reform. Reiyūkai has made the interpretation of the sutras more flexible, and by connecting them with spiritual transformation, it has made the doctrine more compatible with Brazilian culture, and thus increased its effectiveness while retaining its essence.

These religions have achieved the stabilization of their non-Japanese Brazilian membership by understanding Brazilian character, utilizing various religious resources, and engaging members through a multi-layered interrelationship of religious practice, small group reports or exchanges of experiences, and individual guidance. This only becomes possible after the Brazilian character is fully understood.¹⁶

IV. Organizational Tasks

Category II “Adaptation Tasks” relate to Brazilian society and culture, while Category III “Stabilization Tasks” relate to individual members, but their successful resolution is connected to Category IV “Organizational Tasks.” The “Organiza-

16. Here the discussion has focused on the stabilization of non-Japanese Brazilian membership, but this does not mean that Japanese new religions with predominantly Japanese-Brazilian members are not engaging in initiatives to establish and train their members. In the case of predominantly Japanese-Brazilian members, an ethnic church is sought, and the tasks involved in establishment and training differ from those involved for non-Japanese Brazilian members. In the case of a new religion with predominantly Japanese-Brazilian members, training is performed with the minister in a central role, using the opportunities that church visits and service to the church provide. However, when there is little dissemination outside the church, and the membership does not expand as members age, the task of generational expansion (that is, the problem of transmission of the faith to the next generation) becomes acute. Activities that focus on young people are conducted, but these initiatives have little effect because unfamiliar Japanese-style training know-how is used. In other words, despite their ethnic background as people of Japanese descent, the second and third generations are in fact (culturally) “Brazilians.” These religions are now at the stage where they are seeking strategies that take into account the Brazilian character in order to resolve these establishment and training issues for young people of Japanese descent.

tional Tasks” are 1) maintenance of support from, and positive relations with, Japanese headquarters, 2) broad-based organization, 3) the establishment of local centers, 4) setting up qualification conferment system, and 5) the appointment of local staff to organizational positions.

MAINTENANCE OF SUPPORT FROM,
AND POSITIVE RELATIONS WITH, JAPANESE HEADQUARTERS

While a Japanese new religion may be active in Brazil, it cannot ignore its relationship with the Japanese headquarters. The relationship with the headquarters consists of governance/leadership, support, and exchange. In terms of the governance/leadership relationship, the objects of worship, such as the *honzon* 本尊 (the principal image of Buddha), are from Japan (for example, Sekai Kyūseikyō's *ohikari* おひかり is provided from Japan),¹⁷ and the authorization for awarding qualifications is also carried out by the Japanese headquarters. In this way, the Japanese headquarters retains religious authority.

Support from Japanese headquarters consists of financial support, human resources, and information, and there are various ways that these are provided. In terms of the provision of personnel from Japan, initially Sekai Kyūseikyō twice dispatched groups of young missionaries, and since then, Brazilian youths have undergone their training in Japan. Sōka Gakkai has sent personnel with a record for achievement in recruitment to Brazil. Reiyūkai has sent personnel to be appointed as branch management and staff, and additionally it has sent personnel from Japan for the training of members at each branch. Ōmoto dispatched a special missionary to be stationed in Brazil (though there was a period when this was suspended), but recently it has begun to dispatch personnel for shorter periods. Konkōkyō has sent successors to the church leadership. Risshō Kōseikai only sent the first church leader, but recently has begun to dispatch young missionaries. In terms of economic dependance, Sekai Kyūseikyō's level of reliance on its Japanese headquarters is the lowest, while Reiyūkai's is the highest.¹⁸ Even where there is a self-supporting accounting system, the con-

17. The *ohikari* is a calligraphic rendering of the character for “light” (*hikari* 光) written by the founder, Okada Mokichi. When someone joins the group, they receive a locket on a pendant with a copy of this calligraphy. Wearing this locket is believed to allow one to perform purification (*jōrei*).

18. This conclusion is based on fieldwork I up to 1999 (WATANABE 2001 refers only to data up to 1998). Fieldwork by other researchers between 2000 and 2004 have led to different conclusions. I believe the differences in results are due to the following factors. The Sekai Kyūseikyō in Japan split into three groups in 1984, followed by a period of conflict. The three groups settled their differences in 1997, and established a single organization in 2000 (Shūkyōhōjin Sekai Kyūseikyō 宗教法人世界救世教), under which the three groups (Izunome Kyōdan いづのめ教団, Tōhō no Hikari 東方之光, and Sunohikari Kyōdan 主之光教団) maintained separate identities. The Head (Honbuchō) of the Brazil Kyūseikyō, Watanabe Tetsuo, was also an Assistant Head (Fuku-honbuchō) of one of the three groups, but in 2000 became Superintendent (Kanchō) of the Shūkyōhōjin Sekai Kyūseikyō, as well

struction of local centers and facilities often depends on investment from the respective headquarters in Japan.

In terms of its relationship with the Japanese headquarters, Sekai Kyūseikyō experienced a sense of crisis in its relationship with its headquarters when factional disputes in Japan also affected the Brazilian branch.¹⁹ In the case of Sōka Gakkai, the relationship with its headquarters itself is healthy, but sectarian issues have also affected the Brazilian branch. The Konkōkyō's church leader came from a church with a heterodox doctrine, and therefore it took some time before a good relationship was built with its headquarters.

BROAD-BASED ORGANIZATION

The task of broad-based organization closely relates to the increase in membership, and a centralized authoritarian model is effective to achieve this. Both Sekai Kyūseikyō and Sōka Gakkai, which sought to be broad-based organization, were centralized authoritarian organizations. Even in the case of Reiyūkai, which is based on a parent-child model, centers have been established as "sub-branches" of branches in locations where members are concentrated, and in so doing, a horizontal system has to some extent been appended to the vertical system. The centralized authoritarian system is effective not only because it is able to bring together regions within its organization, but also because it makes it possible to allocate personnel as required over a wide area. However, where the "mother organization" is centralized-authoritarian, if membership does not increase through recruitment and remains small, the effectiveness of the centralized authoritarian model cannot be realized. This is evident in the case of Ōmoto and Risshō Kōseikai.

ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCAL CENTERS

Sekai Kyūseikyō owns a large building in which its mission headquarters and foundation are located, and it has churches and missions in various regions. In 1995 (as mentioned before) it built a large-scale sacred site. Sōka Gakkai extended its headquarters on the occasion of Ikeda's visit to Brazil, and in 1990, built a Natural Culture Center on a large site. Since its separation from Nichiren Shōshū, it has built a number of assembly halls in various locations. In the case of Reiyūkai, the Japanese headquarters built its center and then donated it to the Brazilian branch. Recently, Ōmoto has used a combination of funding from

as Chairman of the Board of his group (Izunome Kyōdan). I believe this strengthened the influence of the Japanese headquarters in Brazil.

19. In the case of Sekai Kyūseikyō, there were two periods of crisis affecting relationships with the headquarters in Japan: the split in 1972–1974 over centralization and conflict between factions, and the split into two groups due to the split in Japan into three groups in 1984. These splits were due to the "parent-child (*oyako*) model" of organization; since various branches of the organization were active in propagation in Brazil, splits in the original groups in Japan were quickly reflected in Brazil.

headquarters and local funds to build the *Aizendō* 愛善堂 (“Love and Virtue Cultural Hall”) on the site where the South American headquarters is located in Jandira City. In recent years, the Japanese headquarters for Risshō Kōseikai has built a church which is somewhat larger than those built previously. Konkōkyō makes additions to its facilities on the occasion of every commemoration festival. In this way, it is common for the building of facilities for Japanese new religions in Brazil to be supported by funding from their respective headquarters in Japan. The rare exception to this rule is Sekai Kyūseikyō’s sacred site, which was built by local members. Church facilities are not only required for propagation and training but, as visible landmarks, they also help to raise the social profile of these religions in their propagation in a foreign culture.

SETTING QUALIFICATION CONFERRAL SYSTEM

The new religions all require the authorization of their respective headquarters in Japan in order to award qualifications. Turning firstly to the new religions that have extended their memberships to non-Japanese Brazilians, when the appointment of qualified people became necessary from the 1980s onward when Sekai Kyūseikyō’s membership increased, a certification official came to Brazil so that interviews could be conducted. Sōka Gakkai has been conducting examinations on religious teachings since it began propagating in Brazil in 1964. In Reiyūkai’s case, a member of the administration committee came to Brazil and interviewed the candidates. Turning to new religions with predominantly Japanese-Brazilian members, in Ōmoto’s case, missionary candidates are nominated in Brazil, and they are approved by a selection committee at the Japan headquarters before they are appointed by the church leader. In Konkōkyō’s case, membership qualifications are not defined precisely, and to attain the qualification required to become a minister who can conduct *toritsugi* 取次, an individual must study at the Minister Training Institute at the Japan headquarters. In the case of Risshō Kōseikai, a *honzon*, an image of the eternal Buddha (the focus of their devotion), should be given to those who are appointed as area leaders. Even though this focus of devotion is only given through a ritual ceremony, this has not occurred in Brazil since 1987. For the *honzon* ceremony to take place, the executive level of the organization needs to be involved in the planning process, so the *honzon* cannot be received unless there is a visit made to Japan. In this way, the new religions which have extended their membership and influence to non-Japanese Brazilians have a system whereby the appointment of leadership positions takes place at the Japanese headquarters, but the authorization for qualifications is possible in Brazil. In contrast, in the case of new religions with predominantly Japanese-Brazilian members, with the exception of Ōmoto, there are difficulties inherent in the authorization of qualifications in Brazil.

APPOINTMENT OF LOCAL STAFF TO ORGANIZATIONAL POSITIONS

Qualifications are required in order to take up an official role in the organization. This section will provide a general overview of the appointment of local staff to organizational positions. In the case of Sekai Kyūseikyō, until 1997 all the key administrative positions were filled by Japanese people dispatched by the Japan headquarters, although recently one non-Japanese Brazilian has been appointed. The positions of parish leaders, church leaders, heads of missions, and assembly hall leaders within the organization are linked to qualifications for ministers, trainee ministers, and assistant ministers, and already a substantial percentage are filled by non-Japanese Brazilians. Additionally, future candidates for management roles who have been sent to Japan to undergo training are also appointed as necessary. However, it should be noted that there is not a great emphasis placed on the distinction between whether a local person is of Japanese descent or not. In contrast, in the case of Sōka Gakkai, the further down the hierarchy of the organization, the higher the proportion of non-Japanese staff, but administrative positions are held by mainland Japanese and Japanese-Brazilians, and the core administrative positions are dominated by Japanese-Brazilians. From the 1990s, however, as a consequence of the increased prevalence of migrant workers back to Japan, the appointment of non-Japanese Brazilians to organizational roles vacated by Japanese-Brazilians has been promoted. In the case of Reiyūkai, the people who have occupied the roles of Chair and members of the youth division executive board are increasingly being lost as a result of the growing numbers of Japanese descendants migrating to Japan for work. In the last few years, the advancement of non-Japanese Brazilians into executive committee roles through branch-based elections has been marked; in the case of the youth division executive board, non-Japanese Brazilians now occupy eighty percent of the roles. The change of emphasis to the recruitment of non-Japanese Brazilian members as a consequence of the migrant worker phenomenon (known in Portuguese as *dekassegui*, from the Japanese *dekaseki* 出稼ぎ) has also led to the increase in the proportion of qualified non-Japanese Brazilians taking up positions of branch manager, deputy branch manager, and *hōzashu* 法座主 (a person who gives Buddhist sermons).

Turning to new religions with predominantly Japanese-Brazilian members, Ōmoto has only one non-Japanese Brazilian in an organizational position. Konkōkyō's laity association chairmanship is comprised of both a Japanese-Brazilian and a non-Japanese Brazilian, a deliberate policy that segregates the members into those of Japanese descent and non-Japanese descent. In the case of Risshō Kōseikai, there are no non-Japanese in the positions of chapter head (*shibuchō* 支部長) or area leader (*shunin* 主任), but when the new church was completed in 1998, non-Japanese were appointed to the positions of public relations manager and youth division manager on a trial basis. In this way, there is

a difference in the degree to which non-Japanese Brazilians are appointed to organizational positions depending on whether the new religion has expanded its membership to non-Japanese Brazilians or not. Similarly, even where the religion has extended its membership to non-Japanese Brazilians, there are differences in this respect. In the case of Sekai Kyūseikyō and Sōka Gakkai, while the former has appointed a substantial number of non-Japanese Brazilians to its core administrative positions, the latter has only Japanese-Brazilians occupying these positions.

A Tentative Conclusion

Having compared Japanese new religions from the perspectives discussed above, it becomes clear that the new religions that have extended their membership to non-Japanese Brazilians follow laity-focused propagation models, and have clear and readily understood religious practices. Sekai Kyūseikyō has the obvious advantage with practices such as *jōrei*, which is culturally not very “alien.” However, if a practice leads to salvation and is considered to be effective, Brazilians will participate in it despite its “foreignness.”

The aspect of Japanese new religions which differs most markedly from Brazil’s religious culture is the idea that individuals must practice religion actively rather than asking others do it on their behalf, and it is in respect to this requirement that the laity-focused Japanese new religions remain unyielding. An additional aspect which differs is the notion that one must seek the source of a problem within oneself through the process of spiritual reform, rather than seeking it in others or in society. Based on an understanding of the Brazilian “character,” in order to encourage members to actively practice their faith, engage in *sewa* and so on, these new religions have motivated members through attentive individual guidance suited to the specific individual, as well as small-group work that encourages self-motivation. The lifestyle that once formed the basis of Brazilian society is rapidly changing, as can be seen in the statistics showing the growing proportion of the population living in the cities: 37 percent in 1950, 46 percent in 1960, 57 percent in 1970, 67 percent in 1980, 75 percent in 1990, and 80 percent in 2000. In this process of rapid change and modernization, Japanese new religions have allowed for the resolution of real problems in everyday life by helping members attain ways of living that are adapted to an urbanized, industrialized society. In contrast, religions based on a minister-centered worship model may temporarily attract non-Japanese Brazilians through their prayer activities, but once the individual’s problem is resolved, they tend to drift away from the church, and as a result, they still have not shed their passive reliance on prayers.

Lastly, it needs to be noted that from the mid-1980s, Japanese-Brazilians began to migrate to Japan to work. In 1990, as a result of a revision of the Immi-

gration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, it became legal for Japanese-Brazilians and their spouses to work in Japan, and subsequently the number of migrant workers going to Japan has increased markedly. In 2005, there were 300,000 Brazilians in Japan. This means an “outflow” of more than 20 percent of the Japanese-Brazilian population. If we include the people who previously worked in Japan, this means that, even at a conservative estimate, 30 percent of Japanese-Brazilians have worked in Japan.²⁰ Additionally, it means that workers are leaving Brazil in the prime of their working lives. Currently, long stays and repeat visits are becoming prevalent, and permanent migration has become more common. The effect of this kind of mass movement of the population on Brazilian society is immeasurable, and it has also had a substantial effect on Japanese new religions. It has come to the point where Japanese new religions with predominantly Japanese-Brazilian members need to turn their attention to the recruitment of non-Japanese Brazilian members, and this has been a force influencing the direction of Japanese new religions since the 1990s.

Reiyūkai received a serious blow to its administrative organization as a result of the growing phenomenon of migrant workers, and has changed its policy to emphasize the recruitment of non-Japanese Brazilians. Owing to the growth in migrant workers, Risshō Kōseikai has also lost the generation that should have been succeeding the current generation in the church, and is now in the early stages of propagating to non-Japanese Brazilians. Sōka Gakkai, which has a substantial non-Japanese membership but has predominantly ethnic Japanese in key administrative positions, has also received a blow to its organization, and has started appointing non-Japanese Brazilians to these positions in the organization. At the request of local people Konkōkyō, which has a strong relationship with Japanese-Brazilian regional communities, became involved as a mediating agent for the recruitment of people wishing to migrate to Japan to work. This led to it being reprimanded by headquarters, and it experienced a crisis which was nearly lethal to the organization. In the case of Ōmoto, in addition to the decrease in membership of its youth division, it has also held information sessions at the request of Ōmoto members in Japan for the purpose of recruiting migrant workers, and has thus also been caught up in the wave of the migrant worker phenomenon. Of the new religions dealt with in this paper, the religion which has been affected least by the migrant worker phenomenon is Sekai Kyūseikyō, which had already appointed a substantial number of non-Japanese Brazilians to organizational positions. In any case, the phenomenon of migrant workers from the 1990s has caused Japanese new religions to reconsider propagation to non-Japanese Brazilians, and has ushered in an age in which they must deal with this new reality.

20. Estimate based on statistics from the Japanese immigration authorities concerning shifts in the numbers of alien registrations, number of people entering Japan from Brazil, and number of people leaving Japan.

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