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The Failed Prophecy of Shinto Nationalism and the Rise of Japanese Brazilian Catholicism

This article deals with the main religious transition that accomplished the redefinition of Japanese Brazilian identity after the Second World War. State Shinto was the main world view of the Japanese immigrants in Brazil until the 1950s, playing a key role in the Japanese resistance of Brazilian acculturation process and in the cognitive dissonance that resulted in the Shindo Renmei movement. The Catholic Church began its proselytizing inside the Japanese community in the 1920s, initially attending to Japanese Catholics and the *nisei*. After the Second World War the Church participated in the clarification campaigns against Shindo Renmei. With the collapse of Shinto nationalism the missionary activities were especially directed towards the *nisei* and for that the incorporation of Japanese Catholic symbols proved highly effective. The combination of Japanese and Brazilian Catholic elements represented the development of a hyphenated religiosity, facilitating the trend of Catholic belonging and at the same time offering some cultural continuity.

KEYWORDS: Japanese Brazilian — Shinto State — Shindo Renmei — Japanese Catholicism — Nikkei

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THE INVENTION of *fumie* (literally, pictures to be stepped on) is credited to two shogunal commissioners of Nagasaki, Mizuno, and Takenaka, between the years 1626 and 1633. Utilized until the nineteenth century and transformed into an end-of-year ritual in Nagasaki, *fumie* were effective instruments for the identification of Christians. All suspected Christians were requested to desecrate Christian sacred images, especially images of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. Around three thousand Japanese Christians preferred martyrdom, and many were exiled as prisoners. Little more than three hundred years after its use in Japan, *fumie* were again imposed on the Japanese, a minority in Brazil, in order to identify people that believed that the Japanese had won the Second World War (*kachigumi*). Members of nationalistic movements, *kachigumi* were responsible for terrorist activities that had shaken São Paulo society after the Second World War.

At least half of the Japanese Brazilian community participated directly or contributed financially to the most important of these movements, the Shindo Renmei (League of the Subjects Way) a group that promoted the view that the Japanese had won the Second World War, and that threatened and even murdered Japanese people in the group that divulged the opposite view (*makegumi*). About thirty thousand Japanese were interrogated or arrested during that period (MORAIS 2000, 331), many having been obliged to step on the figure of the Japanese emperor and a Japanese flag as a way to show that they were not involved with the nationalistic movements and their terrorist acts. Having been educated from the end of Meiji Era through the beginning of Showa Era, the majority of the Japanese in Brazil had learned to cultivate the Japanese spirit (*yamato damashii*), to believe in the divinity of the emperor, and if necessary to die for him and for the Japanese imperialism that was to result in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (*daitōa kyōeiken*).

The use of *fumie* in Brazil indicates the inversion of values imposed on the Japanese in Brazil, aimed at the forcible abandonment of nationalistic Shinto. Before the Second World War, the spiritual formation of the Japanese was directed to Shinto ideology, and Japanese schools in Brazil were quasi-religious institutions promoting this worldview. In this sense Shindo Renmei aimed at the continuity of Japanese nationalism after the process of cognitive dissonance passed through by the community after Japan's defeat (MAEYAMA 1997). This dissonance was caused initially by linguistic isolation and abandonment by Japanese government representatives and later by the hope of return to Japan or of new immigration to the Japanese colonies that were expected after the Japanese victory.

Some studies on the Japanese in Brazil hold that the Japanese had almost no religious practices before the Second World War, apart from emperor devotion and certain improvised Buddhist funerary rites. Almost all Japanese immigrants affirmed that they left religion behind because they expected that their stay in Brazil would be short (HANDA 1987). This general view had a strong influence on immigrant self-perception and on studies of Japanese religions in Brazil. The Japanese at that time were educated by Japanese schools to understand State Shinto as being simply Japanese education, not religion. The ambiguities of that time blurred the recognition of State Shinto as religion (HARDACRE 1989, 36; SHIMAZONO 2005, 1085), and even now this is a complex issue in political and scholarly studies (SHIMAZONO 2005, 1081–85). At that time the Japanese State tried to promote the idea of religious liberty, while propagating State Shinto through education (HARDACRE 1989, 39–40; SHIMAZONO 1089–92).

Nevertheless the immigrants' formation and Shindo Renmei represented a closer continuity to State Shinto education, as received in Japan and later temporarily reinforced by the cognitive dissonance caused by the war. Following a broader definition of State Shinto, SHIMAZONO (2005, 1094) states that "The advantage of understanding State Shinto with a broad meaning with a certain organized system is that it would facilitate reexamining the history of religions in modern times within the entire historical perspectives of Japan." This reinforcement of a broader concept of State Shinto also leads to a reexamination of the Japanese Brazilian history since "State Shinto had exerted wide and great influence not only on the religion but every detail of peoples consciousness in living" (MURAKAMI 1970, cited SHIMAZONO 2005, 1083). The Japanese State was not transplanted to Brazil, but the Japanese migrant workers (*dekasegi*) in Brazil alone, educated at Japanese schools at the beginning of the twentieth century, sustained the religiosity of Imperial Shinto even after the Second World War.

Conversion to Catholicism is often seen as a posterior process of social accommodation promoted by acculturation. In this view, the majority of Japanese-Brazilians, who were positioned between Japanese and Brazilian religions, chose somewhat passively to become Catholics, implying strategies of social acceptance, for example, new ties to a Brazilian Catholic godfather (MAEYAMA 1973a and 1973b; NOGUEIRA 1991). Catholicism was not the state religion of Brazil, but at that time was considered the national religion, as a result of four centuries of monopoly in the religious market. Based on the historical archives of the Catholic Church in São Paulo and on the records of the proselytizing activities realized by the Catholic missionaries, this article will argue that this Catholic turn among Japanese Brazilians began earlier than normally stated and was not so dependent on a sharp distinction between Japanese and Brazilian religions. After the dissolution of Shindo Renmei and with the establishment of a Nikkei identity, nationalistic Shinto came to be progressively replaced by Catholicism as the main group religion. Representing an ongoing social integration since

the 1920s, this change of religious group was catalyzed by the existence of a Catholicism directed and promoted by Japanese before the Second World War, especially because of Japanese Catholic immigrants and the second generation of Japanese (*nisei*). They formed elements of the clarification campaign against Shindo Renmei and were the first to begin the religious participation expected by the Brazilian society, though combining Japanese and Brazilian Christian elements.

Issei: State Shinto Immigrants in Brazil

It is possible to observe two great Japanese immigration waves to Brazil, the first before the Second World War (around 190,000 immigrants) and the other from 1952 to 1967 (around 58,000 immigrants). The areas of concentration were the states of São Paulo (70 percent) and Paraná (12 percent). The education received by the first wave of immigrants was greatly impacted by State Shinto.¹ Since the Imperial Rescript on Education of the Meiji Emperor in 1890, State Shinto was promoted through the educational socialization of all Japanese.

The main factor in Brazil motivating immigration was the need for agricultural labor, especially after the interruption of slave traffic in 1850 and the liberation of slaves in 1888. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Brazilian economy was in expansion, mainly due to the relative high price of coffee in the international market. The necessity of labor for coffee farming stimulated immigration to Brazil, mainly from Europe, which began with waves of Portuguese immigration starting in 1842 and German immigration in 1852. From the 1880s on, the number of Italian immigrants quickly grew. Between 1890 and 1899, Brazil received around 690,365 Italian immigrants, the majority of which had São Paulo as their final destination. In 1900, the Italian government prohibited immigration to Brazil, suggesting that new immigrants were being treated like slaves.

In Japan, industrialization and transformations during the Meiji Era provoked an intense crisis in agriculture and scarcity of land. For the Japanese government, one of the solutions was emigration, with the intention of starting in Japanese foreign agricultural colonies able to supply Japan with agricultural products (LESSER 2000, 155). Simultaneously, the USA restricted Japanese immigration in 1907, with the "Gentlemen's Agreement," hindering the entry of Japanese to Hawaii and the continent (YANAGUIDA and ALISAL 1992, 102).

In the 1920s the Japanese agricultural crisis intensified, which contributed to the growth of rural poverty in Japan. An additional cause of this economic crisis

1. The phases of this new ideology creation were summarized in HARDACRE 1989, 21ff. State Shinto is essentially understood here as a modern reinvention of tradition that emphasized selected elements in the name of the unity of the Japanese people. It sustained political centralization, through the assumption of the emperor's divinity, and the imperialist expansionism that caught Japan in the Meiji Era. On early developments, already noting the reinvention of a religious tradition and its transmission through schools, see CHAMBERLAIN 1912.

was the earthquake in Kanto in 1923, which destroyed a large part of Tokyo and Yokohama (YANAGUIDA and ALISAL 1992). As a result, the Japanese government offered great incentives for emigration beginning in 1924. Simultaneously, the United States, a desired destination for many immigrants, definitively prohibited Japanese immigration. In Brazil, the need for immigrant labor persisted due to the continued migration of Italians from rural to urban areas. Brazil also had an interest in commerce with Japan, something which was negotiated in conjunction with the acceptance of new immigration quotas (LESSER 2000, 171). These favorable factors produced an intense wave of immigration to Brazil. Approximately 56 percent of all Japanese immigrants arrived in Brazil between 1925 and 1935, establishing themselves mainly in agricultural occupations in the state of São Paulo.

Due to these favorable conditions for Japanese immigration to Brazil, agreements were ratified between the Japanese and Brazilian governments for the regulation and reception of immigrant workers in Brazil. One of the main conditions was that immigration had to be family orientated with each family having at least three people able to work, but this restriction was frequently side-stepped by the formation of “fictitious” families, established only for immigration permission. At that time, family in Japan was strongly organized by a traditional household system (*ie*), in which the oldest son was responsible for the administration of family property and ancestor worship. As a result, often only younger sons immigrated to Brazil (MAEYAMA 1973b, 420–25). Given the fact that the agricultural crisis in Japan was one of the main reasons for immigration, the majority of immigrants were farmers.

After a while, some of the Japanese reached higher social levels by working in agriculture as small land owners, many of them colonizing new regions in the west of the state of São Paulo. The Japanese government, interested in on-going immigration, tried to recommend the cultural adaptation of immigrants. In spite of that, Japanese immigrants never intended to stay definitively in Brazil. Their hopes were still to prosper rapidly and then return to Japan. This general attitude towards a temporary stay explains much of the immigrant’s resistance with regard to cultural adaptation. Japanese immigrants generally did not concern themselves with learning Portuguese or integrating into Brazilian society—something that did happen with other nationalities. Communal effort was centered in maintaining cultural customs as they were practiced in Japan.

Because immigration to Brazil was family-oriented, normal community growth was possible. Children were raised like Japanese, especially in rural areas, and the community created their own schools, which became the main center of the community activities (LESSER 2000, 167).² The schools represented attempts

2. SAITO (1980, 82) establishes a contrast with Japanese immigration to the USA, which did not have these familial characteristics. The peak of Japanese immigration to the USA occurred earlier

to maintain and propagate the education that the immigrants themselves had received (COMISSÃO 1992, 211–15; DEMARTINI 2000). Despite the precarious conditions of the Japanese settlements, the Japanese language and the emperor worship characteristic of Shinto nationalism were tentatively taught there. In 1927 the Educational Association of Japanese in Brazil was organized by the Consul General in São Paulo (Zaihaku Nihonjin Kyōikukai). It was replaced in 1929 by the Association of Parents of Students in Japanese Schools in São Paulo (Zai São Paulo Nihonjin Gakkō Fukeikai). In some cases the Japanese community could organize public schools in association with the Brazilian government, trying to combine the Brazilian curriculum with a Japanese education. From 1936 on, the Japanese Government offered more direct financial support to these schools through the Association of Japanese Education Dissemination in Brazil (Burajiru Nihonjin Kyōiku Fukyūkai).

Japanese education was characterized by nationalism after the Meiji Period, which resulted in a ritualized interpretation of Japanese ethnicity through the emperor cult and a sense of common origin. In Brazil communal relations based on Shinto nationalism assumed great importance, given geographic separation from the traditional Japanese household (*ie*) and local corporate groups based on household alliance (*dōzoku*) in Japan (MAEYAMA 1973a, 244). Takashi Maeyama detected the presence of fictitious relationships with a ritualized interpretation of ethnicity in the image of the Japanese emperor as a tutelary *kami* for all Japanese in Brazil (MAEYAMA 1973b; MAEYAMA 1983, 185).

State Shinto was indeed the worldview of the Japanese immigrants before the war. This situation can be analyzed using Marxist theory as the effects on a superstructure when structure is eliminated through immigration. Without their social and economic support systems, Buddhism and shrine Shinto lived on more in immigrants' memories than in their social and religious organizations. In fact there was little possibility for the establishment of shrines as occurred in Asian Japanese colonies (HARDACRE 1989, 95–96) and Micronesia (SHUSTER 1982). On the other hand, the attempted continuation of the received civil religion and the social implications of State Shinto ideology in the new environment characterized the first stage of the group experience. Schools acted as the main community centers and temples of this civil religiosity, being responsible for the socialization of the children in the spirit of the existing State Shinto. As in the Japanese setting at that time (HARDACRE 1989, 108–11 and 121–24; SHIMAZONO 2005, 1089–92), many schools continued to express respect and promises of obedience before the emperor's picture. The Imperial Rescript on Education was solemnly read as a holy scripture and nationalistic rituals were tentatively organized in accordance with Japanese holidays. Self-perceptions as temporary

and, as a result, the immigrants were less influenced by the nationalist education that prevailed in the Taisho and Showa Eras in Japan. The expansion and stronger influence of State Shinto began after 1905 (HARDACRE 1989, 23).

immigrants generated an attempt to preserve the State Shinto worldview. Education was aimed to promote *yamato damashii*, although in a foreign environment (MAEYAMA 1973b, 436–38).

At the political level the community leadership depended largely on diverse associations controlled by the Japanese Consulate General in São Paulo, which acted as an umbrella organization. Japanese immigration was in fact strongly subsidized by the Japanese government as a state policy and the Japanese government contributed to the maintenance of immigration companies and local associations (COMISSÃO 1992, 137). Relations outside the community were often stimulated only by economic activities and by that which was strictly necessary for social acquaintance. In reaction to the closed nature of the Japanese Brazilian community, Brazilian politicians criticized what they considered Japanese resistance to acculturation. Despite their recognition of the importance and economic contribution of the Japanese community many Brazilian politicians were apprehensive and feared the growing influence of Japanese imperialism in Asia.

In fact, the immigrant worldview based on Japanese nationalism was in many senses the direct opposite of the melting pot ideology that was being developed in Brazil at that time. Starting in the 1920s, aesthetic and cultural tendencies began to reconsider the importance of African and Indian native cultures for Brazil. According to writer Mário de Andrade, the ability to incorporate foreign elements, moderating and utilizing these elements in concert with the national culture, reflected the anthropophagous character of Brazilians. These ideas arose first from Modern Art Week in 1922, but were later intensified through the academic work of the anthropologist Gilberto Freyre, who highly valued Brazil's mixing of races. He established a trend and an anthropological school that still exist in Brazil.

Mestiço thinking insisted on the necessary assimilation of Japanese in the Brazilian melting pot. The resulting nationalism strongly influenced the cultural and educational program of dictator Getúlio Vargas's government. As formally enacted into law in 1938, 30 percent of the residents in every city had to be Brazilians and no single foreign nationality could represent more than 25 percent of the inhabitants. Moreover, all educational books used in schools had to be in Portuguese and school directors had to be Brazilians. These elements had as their aim a new Brazilian identity, defending a growing Brazilian nationalism based on assimilation.

As a result, although the nonexistence of a Brazilian identity had earlier been defended by many intellectuals, the ideas of Brazil as a melting pot and of the positive value of racial mixture and even syncretism became part of a popular Brazilian self-understanding, beginning in the 1930s, and these ideas were extensively diffused and supported. As in similar cases, what was initially a social theory transformed itself into an ideological orientation, clashing with the worldview of the majority of Japanese and, in conjunction with the cogni-

tive dissonance brought by the Second World War, leading to reinforcement of the received State Shinto ideology.

The Failed Prophecy of State Shinto in Brazil

Nationalist politics, which tried to stop the formation of separate ethnic identities, had definitive effects on the Japanese community. The restriction of Japanese schools was especially perceived as hostile (COMISSÃO 1992, 238–42; LESSER 2001, 230; MORAIS 2000, 49–52) and consequently many Japanese wished to return to Japan in 1939.³ The Japanese community, divided between necessary assimilation into a mixed culture and preservation of their identity, suffered a strong rupture, caught between two nationalisms during and after the Second World War.

Despite a long period of indecision during which various ships were attacked by the German navy, Brazil entered in the war only in 1942. One consequence was that the Brazilian government stipulated restrictions for all citizens from the Axis countries in Brazil. The restrictions for the Japanese consisted mainly in evacuation to determined localities,⁴ the retention of bank deposits and the prohibition of transfers, education, periodicals, and even public speeches in Japanese. These measures, especially the prohibition of the Japanese language in public, had a disastrous effect on the community, since Japanese was the immigrants' only language. Due to the economic restrictions, bank deposits remained unavailable, and, with the prohibition of the Japanese language, the children's education and instruction in the Japanese spirit were impossible. Hundreds of Japanese schools were closed and the immigrants were persecuted and put in prison if they spoke Japanese in public.⁵

Isolated by these measures, the *issei* (first generation) in Brazil reinforced a nationalist formation centered on Japan. Brazil was then perceived as an enemy country. The prohibition of Japanese schools was countered with countless secret schools. Despite the lack of possible concrete military actions, the production of some products such as mint and silk was drastically diminished by the immigrants

3. At that time, around 90 percent of the Japanese immigrants in the region of Bauru were favorable to repatriation, according to a study performed in 1939 in the region (cf. LESSER 2000, 230). MORAIS (2000, 48) also quotes research performed by the Brazilian government, indicating that 85 percent of the Japanese immigrants in São Paulo would return to Japan. The economic importance of the Nikkei in the agriculture, however, could not be ignored by the Brazilian government. According to MORAIS (2000, 217) in 1936 the Japanese community produced, for example, 46 percent of the cotton, 57 percent of the silk and 75 percent of the tea in Brazil, even though they were less than 3 percent of the population.

4. This occurred especially in the coastal cities of Santos and Rio de Janeiro from fear of espionage in favor of the enemy navy (cf. LESSER 2001, 238; MORAIS 2000, 57–62).

5. This prohibition was inclusive even for religious ceremonies. A Buddhist monk was imprisoned in 1942, for example, because he performed a Buddhist ceremony in Japanese in Valparaíso (cf. MORAIS 2000, 47).

themselves and because of the plantation destruction promoted by nationalistic groups called *Tenchugumi* (Executors of the Heaven's Punishment).⁶

With this principle of resistance the Shindo Renmei was initially created in 1942. The organization had to be consecrated in the cultivation of the Japanese spirit, orientating the Japanese community in Brazil. The main points of Shindo Renmei ideology can be analyzed in a document that spread quickly inside the colony and was known as “Kikawa Manifesto” or “Idea of Kikawa,” probably elaborated in 1944. Colonel Junji Kikawa was born in 1877 in Niigata and served in the Russo-Japanese war. He immigrated to Brazil in 1933, convincing other military personnel to follow him in the adventure, and was admired in the colony for his nationalistic ideals, his devotion to the emperor, and his loyalty to the Japanese spirit. One of the main affirmations of his manifesto was that Japanese immigrants should remain subjects of the great empire of Japan and that the sacred nature of *kokutai* (Japanese essence) was the main educational value to be transmitted to their descendants. Concerning the concrete situation of the Japanese in Brazil, the manifesto asserted that adequate education of descendants would be successfully realized only after a return to Japan or new immigration to the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, to be constructed by Imperial Japan in the Far East. Assuming a critical attitude, the manifesto condemned the abandonment of the Japanese authorities and the passivity of the Japanese Brazilian leaders, many already integrated economically in Brazil, making them responsible for the state of disorganization of the colony. Against them Shindo Renmei believed firmly in Japanese invincibility and in the millenaristic prophecy that the Empire of the Rising Sun would last forever and was fated to rule the world. Any effort to assert the opposite would be understood by Shindo Renmei as treason against the Japanese spirit and an abandonment of the ideals of emperor devotion, punishable by death.

Diverse ultra-nationalistic associations appeared at that time, but Shindo Renmei achieved success bringing diverse trends together under its roof, replacing the General Japanese Consulate. The increasing role of Shindo Renmei inside the Japanese Brazilian community was indeed propitiated by the vacuum of leadership established with the departure of Japanese authorities after Brazil cut diplomatic relations and declared war on Japan in 1942. Above all, the closing of the General Japanese consulate provoked a perception of “subject abandoned,” as related by the majority of *issei*. With the prohibition of Japanese-language media and the absence of representative leaders recognized as references inside the colony, some former military members that had immigrated to Brazil felt a moral duty to guide the community.

6. It was believed that these products would help the Allies in the production of chemical weapons and parachutes (cf. MORAIS 2000, 66).



PHOTOS 1, 2. Kikawa in Shinto robes and military uniform.

The identification of many Japanese Brazilians with the Empire of the Rising Sun and the acceptance of Shindo Renmei leadership were the beginning of an internal division with serious consequences. As the end of the war, it was clear that Japan had been defeated, yet the majority of immigrants did not believe in this news even after the surrender in August of 1945. The Japanese Brazilian community was then divided between the defeatists (*makegumi*), who believed that Japan had lost the war and the victorists (*kachigumi*), who believed that Japan had won the war. A few Nikkei (the majority *nisei*) who understood Portuguese and who were more acculturated in Brazil were convinced that Japan had been defeated and ruined. For the majority of Japanese, these *makegumi* were traitors to the Japanese spirit. They believed not only that Japan had won the war, but also that a rescue of the Japanese immigrants in Brazil would occur shortly, with the arrival of Japanese ships off the Brazilian coast. Many immigrants sold their properties and traveled to Brazilian coastal cities after receiving false news of the arrival of these ships, a belief continuously spread in the community through pamphlets and by public lectures promoted in many cities.

The immigrants' belief in the Japanese victory was further fostered by false information promoted by fanatical *kachigumi* acting inside the community, many of them belonging to Shindo Renmei, the only source of group organiza-

tion and information. In that period, reports, radio transmissions, magazines, and even money were falsified in order to give evidence that Japan ruled the whole world. In the meantime, Shindo Renmei also began to act as a terrorist organization, planning the murder of the *makegumi*, who they considered to be traitors. However, it is difficult to determine the degree to which this stance was supported by the movement's followers and contributors.

It is believed that the organization had at its peak one hundred thousand contributors and sixty thousand sympathizers, from an analysis of the organization's files apprehended by the Brazilian police (MORAIS 2000, 103). Between 1946 and 1947 Shindo Renmei operated using terrorist methods, murdering twenty-three *makegumi*, injuring approximately one hundred and fifty people that had promoted clarifying campaigns, and sending innumerable threats and bombs to those believed to be *makegumi*. These attacks were sometimes planned and performed with nationalist ritualism and caused chaos and confusion in various cities in the state of São Paulo.⁷ The Japanese community emerged in a more profound state of disorientation. Although these events were restricted to the Japanese colony, some conflict with Brazilians also occurred. In order to pacify the community, the Brazilian government reacted violently and pursued Shindo Renmei to extinction. With the help of the Japanese government, campaigns seeking to disseminate information about the real situation were initiated, but they failed because it was impossible to build a communication channel that could be heard by the *kachigumi*. Japanese immigration to Brazil was nearly prohibited in 1947 because it was argued that it would be impossible to assimilate the Japanese in Brazil (COMISSÃO 1992, 306–308; MORAIS 2000, 294–98). The repressive consequences cannot be denied: records in police files from that time indicate that 31,380 persons were imprisoned, due to their connections with Shindo Renmei (MORAIS 2000, 331).

Shindo Renmei was frequently described as a terrorist and criminal movement, generally seen in terms of exoticism as a result of the disinformation that emerged after the war. However, the ascension of Shindo Renmei can be better understood as a result of cognitive dissonance provoked by the conflict between postwar reality and the State Shinto worldview, which defended the divinity of emperor and Japan's invincibility (see MAEYAMA 1997 for an interpretation oriented by ethnicity).

Proposed initially in 1956 by LEON FESTINGER, HENRY RIECKEN, and STANLEY SCHACHTER, the theory of cognitive dissonance assumes that, given some conditions and two conflicting cognitive states, there is a strong tendency to reinterpret

7. This ritualism was inspired in the Japanese military and nationalist ideology at that time, frequently following the same pattern. Initially a message was sent, communicating the impending execution by treason. An opportunity of *harakiri* (ritualistic suicide) was offered for the *makegumi*. If the *makegumi* did not choose this option, the supposed traitor was killed. Afterward, the assassin often surrendered to the Brazilian police.

the previous belief or to invent new facts in order to diminish the cognitive dissonance. Dissonant elements are eliminated or minimized by the group, and proselytization can even be intensified. These theoretical conditions, especially the social support, the high level of commitment and the failed prophecy (FESTINGER RIECKEN, and SCHACHTER, 2000, 31–32), are all observed in the case of the Shindo Renmei.

Within this theoretical framework Shindo Renmei can be understood as a new religious movement that had as its objective the restoration of the State Shinto inside the microcosm represented by the Japanese immigrants in Brazil, propagating a new belief in Japanese victory as the reinforcement of successive failed prophecies. In agreement with the cognitive dissonance theory, doubtful elements were amplified by Shindo Renmei leaders and used as new core beliefs. The dissonant elements were represented by Brazilians and the minority of Japanese defeatists, who promoted doubt within the ethnic community through clarification campaigns. Of course, Shindo Renmei leaders expected Brazilians to propagate this vision because they were Japanese enemies. However, the dissonant element represented by the *issei makegumi* was intolerable, because they were Japanese subjects and exerted their influence inside the Nikkei community. As in other cases of cognitive dissonance, dissonant elements should be eliminated or minimized by Shindo Renmei. In this sense, nothing could be more effective than the elimination of *makegumi* through the improvised *tokkōtai* (attack squad, a term used by the Japanese army in the Second World War and borrowed by Shindo Renmei).

The situation returned to normal only after police repression and the dissemination of trustworthy information regarding the real situation in Japan within the Japanese community. The increasing realization of the real situation of Japan after the war obligated the majority of Japanese to formalize their settlement in Brazil, which had consequences for the ambiguous attitude that defined the majority of *issei*. After the 1950s a new Nikkei identity was promoted, a task that would be mainly undertaken by the new generation. Many *nisei*, although respecting Japan, already recognized Brazil as their native land.⁸ Some of them were already successful economically, speaking Portuguese fluently and actively participating in Brazilian society.

8. Some few *nisei* even participated in the Constitutionalist Revolution of 1932, defending the State of São Paulo against the Vargas dictatorship, and a few also participated with the Brazilian troops that fought in Italy during the Second World War. Many *nisei* expressed at that time their option for Brazil and a critical stance toward the Japanese nationalism of their parents. Their student periodicals published in Portuguese caused several incidents and internal disputes among the Japanese Brazilian community from those years (COMISSÃO 1992, 170–87).



PHOTOS 3, 4. Memorial near the Historical Japanese Cemetery, in the periphery of Álvares Machado (a small municipality around 580km from São Paulo city). In Japanese it is possible to read “忠魂碑” (monument for loyal souls) at the front and “昭和二十四七月十日愛國聯合日本人會” (Showa 24 [1949], Meeting of the union of Japanese patriots) at the back. The Portuguese inscription, on the front only, gives a more universal meaning to the memorial: “Monumento pela Paz dos Soldados Falecidos de todas as Nações [sic] da II Guerra Mundial” (Peace Memorial for soldiers of all nations who died in the Second World War).

Japanese Catholics and the Nisei: The Rise of Nikkei Christianity

Nationalistic Shinto did not make sense in the Brazilian context and a new religiosity would emerge after the decision of permanent settlement. In a survey taken in 1958, around 44.5 percent of the Nikkei responded that they were Buddhists, while 42.8 percent were already self-identifying as Catholics. An even greater trend toward Catholicism was detected in the urban environment, with 50.3 percent Catholics as compared to 36.5 percent in rural areas. The tendency was clearly stronger in the second and third generations, with 58.7 percent and 70 percent, respectively, declaring themselves Catholic. Of course, Catholic baptism did not exclude simultaneous participation in Japanese rituals, especially funeral ceremonies.

The religiosity of Brazilian Nikkei in the postwar period has been described in terms of accommodation and *strategies* of integration (MAEYAMA 1973a, 251). On this view, conversion to Catholicism would be more of a social strategy than a real internalization of the Catholic faith. This perspective is cited in many academic works, emphasizing a correlation between religion, kinship, and social

class, by virtue of a dichotomy between “Japanese” and “Brazilian” religions. Japanese religions were Shinto, Buddhism, and the new Japanese religions, characterized by their exclusive use of the Japanese language and being frequented only by Nikkei, particularly by eldest sons. The eldest son was responsible for the *ie* leadership and administration of the family patrimony, above all in rural areas. They also had to speak Japanese and acknowledge to a greater extent the rules of Japanese culture. The veneration of ancestors, understood as a family activity and not as an individual choice, was also an obligation for the eldest son and would be the substitute for the former emperor cult (MAEYAMA 1973b, 446). Maeyama related the Japanese religions with “old middle class,” which was identified with the continuity of the pioneer immigrants’ activities (mainly in agriculture and small family business) that are generally independent from educational formation and cultural integration in Brazilian life.

In comparison with the more traditional eldest sons, other descendants would often be encouraged to identify more definitively with Brazilian culture. They often immigrated to urban areas in search of a better education. Instead of the *ie* patrimony that the eldest sons inherited, other descendants frequently received opportunities for higher education. Nikkei families valued education above all, and many of these descendants were able to study in a university, something that often demanded great sacrifice and support from the whole family.

Through this division of labor among descendants, the younger sons had more contact with Catholicism, which was seen as an important element in Brazilian national identity. A Catholic baptism would be thus an important strategic factor in creating Brazilian contacts and avoiding social prejudices directed at non-Catholics. Being only a Buddhist was to be classified as a pagan, thus making inclusion into the Brazilian society difficult. As an example of the importance of Catholic baptism, Maeyama emphasizes the role of the godfather and the mass that was included in graduation ceremonies (MAEYAMA 1973a, 250). Japanese parents saw baptism as an accommodation to Brazilian society and presented little resistance, and the sons sought it as a means to improve participation and cultural integration in Brazil. Maeyama argued that these younger descendants frequently belonged to a “new middle class”: many of them were able to study at Brazilian universities and to establish themselves in the emerging middle class of a Brazilian society increasingly typified by the urban environment. Nikkei in this new middle class would be more often associated with liberal professions such as physicians, lawyers, and engineers, which led to economic ascension.

The correlations that Maeyama defended in the 1970s are insightful since Catholicism represented a higher level of freedom with respect to ethnic belonging, and indeed the new generations progressively achieved Brazilian urban middle class status. This process was although preceded by the expansion of Catholicism itself due to its taking on Nikkei features, a claim that weakens the

generalization of passive accommodation within Catholicism and an exclusive relationship between Japaneseness and Catholicism. Maeyama himself seems to reconsider this position in more recent works (MAEYAMA 2004, 17–18). In fact, Japanese Catholic immigrants and missionaries proselytizing from the 1920s on had a crucial role in the Japanese conversion and in the *nisei* baptism. Many of these tendencies could be verified before the war (especially in the case of *nisei*), planting the seeds for an exponential growth of Christianity among the Japanese Brazilians.

This Nikkei Catholicism had an essential role in favoring the integration and acculturation of the Japanese immigrants, in promoting clarification campaigns in opposition to Shindo Renmei, and in serving as an intermediary between the Japanese ethnic group and Brazilian society. Within Nikkei Catholicism, it was possible to realize a rupture with the old worldview, but at the same time to adopt elements that made possible a relative continuity with Japanese culture. After the war, as will be described, Nikkei Catholicism and other Nikkei Christian communities preserved features of some cultural continuity with the Japanese culture, frequently associated only with Buddhism and other Japanese religions.

In order to consider the formation of Nikkei Catholicism before the war it is important to review its principal sources and to analyze the pertinent social networks. Japanese immigration, since its beginning, had diverse elements that favored Catholicism, although a more massive tendency to Christian adherence among Nikkei occurred only after the Second World War. Japanese intellectuals at the beginning of the period of immigration already defended conversion to Catholicism, preaching the abandonment of Japanese nationality and integration and acculturation in Brazil (LESSER 2000, 188). Since the beginning the Japanese government prevented the immigration and proselytizing activities of any non-Catholic missionaries, trying to avoid conflicts with the Brazilian government (MAEYAMA 2004, 182; COMISSÃO 1992, 563–64). In some cases Catholic missionary activities had already begun in the port of Kobe: before embarking, some immigrant groups had already received their first information about Brazil and the Portuguese language from the Japanese Catholic Church. The adoption of Catholic teachings was understood as part of the integration process in Brazil (ONICHI 2005, 80). A minority group among the Japanese immigrants would additionally play an important role in the Japanese Brazilian religious transition: the descendants of *kakure kirishitan*. Although being initially only about one hundred and seventy families (about eight hundred people out of a total of forty thousand Japanese in 1925), they motivated the work of Catholic missionaries and the arrival of Japanese priests. The missionary work was initially directed to the pastoral care of these Japanese Catholics, but soon directed its efforts to the social assistance and proselytizing of Japanese immigrants, promoting a Nikkei Christianity for the Japanese in Brazil.

The evangelization work in Brazil was initiated in 1919 by the Redemptorist priest Lourenço Huebauer on the Sapucaia Farm in the municipality of Pindamonhangaba. Happening to live near a Japanese settlement, he started to visit and to distribute religious material for Japanese Catholics. A famous missionary among the Nikkei in the city of São Paulo was the Italian priest Guido Del Toro, who worked for the baptism and Catholic education of the Japanese in the urban setting (see YOKOYAMA 2002). Father Guido Del Toro was the priest of St. Gonçalo Church, located in the center of São Paulo near a Japanese ethnic quarter then in formation around Conde de Sarzedas Street. Being Jesuit and knowing the history of Catholicism in Japan, he was especially moved upon seeing innumerable Japanese children entering the church, brought by a Brazilian friend, and he considered their presence to be more than a coincidence. The Chapel of St. Gonçalo was constructed in São Paulo in 1757, in homage to St. Gonçalo Garcia (canonized in 1862), the only Portuguese among twenty-six martyrs crucified in Nagasaki in 1597. He understood this event as a signal of his new mission in Brazil. Working for Japanese evangelization, by serving as a priest and establishing colleges, was a task that would inspire him for the rest of his active life. He was initially dedicated to providing a Catholic education to the Japanese. The collective baptisms promoted by him in the 1920s and 1930s were major social events in the São Paulo of that time, considered by many as landmarks in the encounter between Japanese and Brazilians, although they were criticized by some Japanese as baptisms motivated only by social interest. Given that Japanese Catholics were almost absent in the urban areas, and that these baptisms were accompanied by major celebrations, important figures from the Brazilian elite were called upon to be godfathers.

Another important missionary initiative was the arrival of priests with Japanese-language proficiency. Some European Catholic priests, especially German Franciscans coming from Sapporo, has already begun missionary work in the 1920s among the Japanese immigrants and their descendants, frequently combined with social assistance. In 1923 the priest Domingos Nakamura came to Brazil from the Nagasaki Diocese, following a request to the Vatican by the first bishop of Botucatu. Father Nakamura was the first Japanese missionary to go abroad. In Brazil he was especially dedicated to pastoral visits and to the construction of churches in remote places where the majority of Japanese lived. In contrast with the urban environment, these rural areas were located in the countryside of São Paulo and Paraná and were economically attractive for the acquisition of land by the Japanese, but less suitable for their integration with Brazilian society.

Father Domingos Nakamura was born in 1865 at the Island of Fukue (Goto archipelago) and was a descendant of a *kakure kirishitan* family. In contrast with Father Guido Del Toro, who worked in the urban environment, he personally knew many Japanese Catholic families from his earlier work in the prefecture of Kagoshima, something that would help him in founding Catholic communities



PHOTO 5. Catholic burial service in 1936 at Barra Mansa Farm (municipality of Avanhadava, interior of São Paulo).

in the new settlements where these families lived. Until his death in 1941, Msgr. Nakamura traveled continuously throughout a vast region of the territory of São Paulo and Paraná, attending Japanese Catholics and giving lectures to non-Catholics. Traveling by horse through remote regions with a portable altar, he is considered by many Nikkei as the Apostle of the Japanese community in Brazil. Some see him as a saint, and his beatification process has been initiated by the Japanese Brazilian community (ONICHI 2005).

A social network analysis of the earlier phases of these Christian communities shows the interpenetration of Japanese and Brazilian social networks and how Nikkei Catholicism emerged from these. Despite the differentiated reality of each community and the orientation of later priests, Fathers Guido Del Toro and Nakamura were the pioneers in the foundation of Nikkei Catholic communities.

Nikkei Catholicism had already been in progress in the urban area since the 1920s, with the work of Father Guido Del Toro and the formation of the Japanese Catholic Commission for social assistance in the 1940s. A trend toward Catholic adherence was furthered by collective baptisms, supported by the Brazilian elite, sometimes resulting in nominal conversion (especially for the *issei*) but occasionally resulting in a higher level of commitment, especially for the *nisei* or for the so called *jun-issei* (Japanese that immigrated as children to Brazil).

In the countryside, where around 90 percent of the Japanese lived (see COMISSÃO 1992, 561), another development began because of Father Nakamura. The analysis of Nikkei Catholicism formation in rural areas will be detailed here with statistics and social network visualization from the baptism records of Father Nakamura in Brazil.⁹ The data analyzed represent 3651 people from

9. The baptism records used here were initially compiled by Lia Cazumi Yokoyama (YOKOYAMA 2002), later complemented and rearranged for the current analysis.

1923 through 1941, including parents and godfathers. These records of Father Nakamura show that the children's baptisms in his travels started among *kakure kirishitan* families. His pastoral activity for the Japanese Catholics naturally became a missionary entrepreneurship, with many *nisei* baptisms inside the Japanese community, initially a few with Japanese Catholics as godfathers. The baptisms of children were the priority and about eighty percent of the baptized were ten years of age or younger. In the majority of cases, Nikkei served as godfathers (about 57.3 percent of the baptisms had Nikkei godfathers, although only about 25.3 percent of the children had Catholic parents).

The importance of Japanese Catholics baptized in Japan can be highlighted through the visualization of social network dynamics as temporal series, generated chronologically from the baptisms realized and here plotted using the software PAJEK (PAJEK 2007; see FIGURES 1, 2, and 3). Each point represents the baptized parents or godparents; the gray scale represents ethnicity and each arrow displays a parental or god-parental relationship. Points in white represent Brazilian godfathers and in light gray the Nikkei baptized in Brazil or their parents. Japanese parents baptized in Japan and Nikkei godfathers are represented in dark gray. Through the evolution of this social network it can be seen that the community of Japanese initially had an important role as godparents and Brazilians only later assumed this role within this community. Each of these figures had significantly more connections in the lower part of the diagram, representing the higher social cohesion propitiated by the Japanese Catholic community.

This analysis shows that in the earlier phases of the immigration, the existing Catholic Japanese who immigrated to Brazilian rural environment served as an intermediate community between Catholicism and the non-Catholic Japanese. With missionaries already supporting Japanese Catholic symbolism in Brazil, Catholic participation was made easier from the point of view of cultural continuity.¹⁰ As the sociologist Rodney Stark observes, "Social movements grow more quickly when they spread throughout preexisting social networks" (STARK 2006 [1996], 69). Although many Japanese had Brazilian godfathers (represented in the above cluster by light gray and white points), this often resulted from the absence of Japanese Catholics in the region.

10. Even before the Second World War, the uprising of Nikkei Christian communities was not restricted to Catholicism but occurred also among Protestant groups. Some groups were even introduced to the Brazilian environment by the Japanese. One example is the Free Methodist Church, a derivation of the Episcopal Methodist Church funded by Rev. Benjamim Titus Roberts at the end of the nineteenth century in the USA. The Free Methodist Church arrived Japan in 1895 and it was brought to Brazil by Massayoshi (Daniel) Nishizumi, who divulgated his faith from 1936 through 1946 among the Japanese in Brazil. Now the Free Methodist Church has seventeen churches and twenty-five pastors just in his Nikkei Council. Although with a majority of Brazilians, these denominations often preserve Japanese Brazilian identification in their names or as sub denominations, as, for example, with the Japanese Brazilian God Assembly, the Nikkei Baptist Church and the Japanese Lutheran Church.

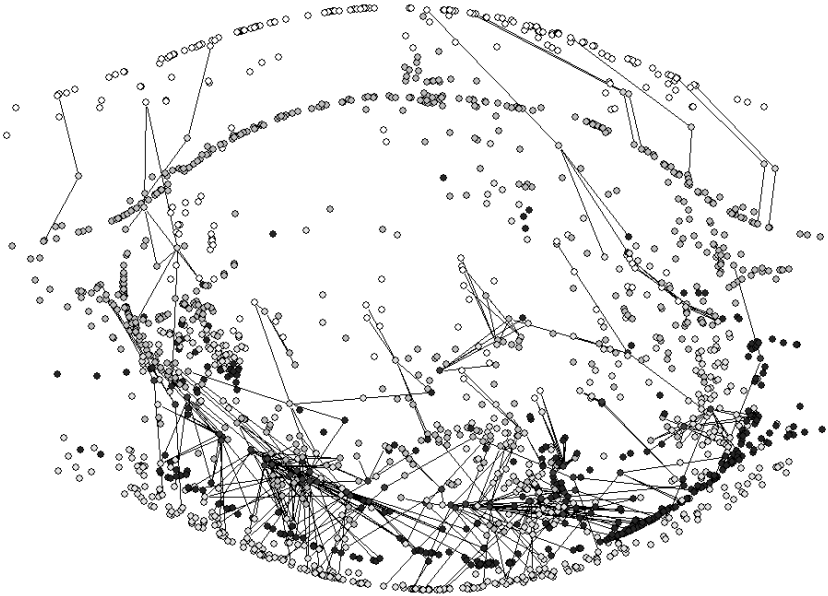


FIGURE 1. Social network composed by the parents and godparents in the baptism records of Father Nakamura, 1925.

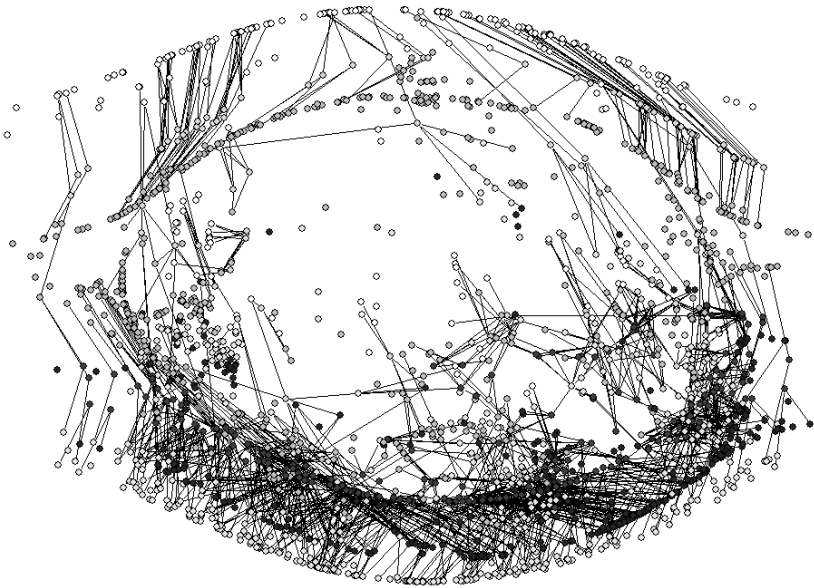


FIGURE 2. Social network composed by the parents and godparents in the baptism records of Father Nakamura, 1930.

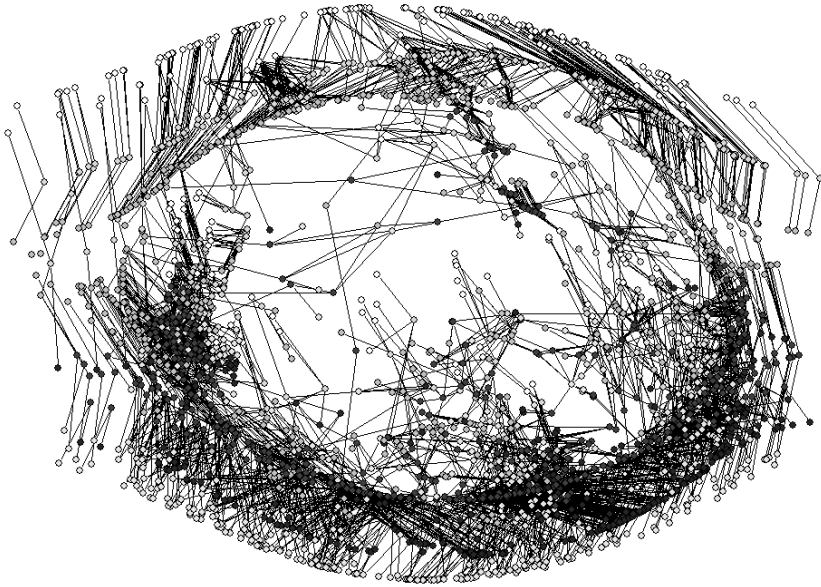


FIGURE 3. Social network composed by the parents and godparents in the baptism records of Father Nakamura, 1940.

The growing number of Japanese Catholics, associated with the proselytizing of missionaries and social assistance inside the Japanese community, created conditions for an exponential growth in the number of Nikkei Catholics after the war,¹¹ especially with the dissolution of Shindo Renmei and the acceptance of the *makegumi* reality.¹²

The majority of *makegumi* was Catholic and more integrated into Brazilian society. The slow process of acknowledging the Japanese defeat and the impossibility of returning to Japan represented both the abandonment of nationalistic Shinto and an invitation to group religious change, propitiated by Nikkei Catholicism as the spiritual hyphenated identity. Acknowledging the *makegumi* condition led directly to permanent establishment in Brazil and an invitation to Catholicism as the monopoly religion of Brazil. In this process the majority of Japanese Brazilians turned to be nominal Catholics, something natural and even expected since most Brazilians (and also other Latin-Americans) had the same religious behavior, resulted from four centuries of no religious competi-

11. For reflections about the exponential growing of religious groups, sometimes perceived as historically abrupt but easier explained by mathematical suppositions concerning social networks, see STARK 2006 [1996].

12. A relative degree of integration and cultural opening was found especially among the new generations and in urban areas (COMISSÃO 1992, 170–88, LONE 2002).

tion (for one overview of Catholicism in Latin America as a monopolistic religion see CHESNUT 2003, 9 and 17–38). The remaining social networks of the *kachigumi* became the first followers of Buddhism and other new Japanese religions that arrived in Brazil at the late 1950s and 1960s (MAEYAMA 1979). Many of these new religious movements were brought by new immigration waves that arrived after the war.

Catholicism was also imposing itself because of initiatives that had an important missionary impact, such as social assistance for Japanese immigrants (NOGUEIRA 1991), including those persecuted by the Brazilian government during and after the Second World War (MAEYAMA 2004, 237–62). This assistance was organized and accomplished primarily by Nikkei Catholics in the city of São Paulo. Nikkei Catholics received financial support from the ethnic community and from Catholic authorities (including a donation from the Vatican). At the same time, they had relative freedom to communicate in Japanese and support the immigrants. Adherence to Catholicism was the rational choice, especially for many of the new generation who aimed at social integration, studies at Brazilian universities, and economic ascension.

In the countryside in the 1950s, Catholic groups promoted by Japanese Brazilians and supported by local parishes would continue the work of Father Nakamura. The “Morning Star Catholic Circle” (port. *Círculo Católico Estrela da Manhã*, normally abbreviated as *Círculo*) was established in the city of Presidente Prudente in 1953, as a Marian lay association especially dedicated to the evangelization of the *nisei*. The *Círculo* spread quickly in cities in the interior of the state of São Paulo, with a peak of seventy associations in the mid-1960s. Although with few followers among the new Nikkei generations, currently the *Círculo* can be still found in the cities of Curitiba, Londrina, Cornélio Procópio and Maringá (Paraná); and in Presidente Prudente, Mogi das Cruzes, Álvares Machado, Mogi Mirim, and Biritiba (São Paulo).

With a similar objective the Japanese Brazilian Pastoral (port. *Pastoral Nipo-Brasileira*, also known as PANIB) began its activities in 1967, divulging the



PHOTO 6. Monsignor Nakamura Bust, also known as “Apostle of the Japanese Immigrants in Brazil,” at Monsignor Nakamura Museum in Álvares Machado (São Paulo state).



PHOTO 7. Grave with Buddhist and Christian elements at the municipal cemetery in Álvares Machado.

Nikkei reinterpretation of Catholicism with the impulse of the Second Vatican Council. Elements of Japanese Catholicism can be observed in parallel with Brazilian Catholicism at *Círculo* and *PANIB*. In the *Círculo*, Our Lady Morning Star remains an important object of devotion even for some communities, and the conversion of the Japanese people is requested through prayer in the meetings. St. Francisco Xavier and the twenty-six martyrs of Nagasaki (especially St. Paul Miki) were celebrated as in Japanese Catholicism, and devotions to St. Maximilian Kolbe and Our Lady of Japan have a role alongside such popular Brazilian devotions as that to Our Lady Aparecida (Port. *No-ssa Se-nho-ra Aparecida*, Patroness of Brazil, considered a manifestation of the Virgin Mary and a traditional object of veneration in Brazilian popular Catholicism). The pilgrimages often feature sites related to Monsignor Nakamura and Our Lady Aparecida. This Nikkei intra-Catholic combination between Japanese and Brazilian elements represented the development of a hyphenated religiosity, facilitating

the trend of Catholic belonging and at the same time offering a degree of cultural continuity.

A combination of Japanese and Brazilian Catholic elements is also found among Nikkei Buddhists and Catholicism often recalls the role of Shinto in the Japanese environment. Catholic baptism is no impediment for obtaining Buddhist funerary ceremonies, and family altars and graves combine Buddhist and Catholic elements. In some Buddhist groups, new religious vocabulary and rituals resemble those of Brazilian Catholic culture. At the Buddhist Church Nambei

Yugazam Jyomiyoji, for example, a Shingon temple in Brazil with Shugundo roots, Our Lady Aparecida is venerated alongside Fudo Myo and other Shingon deities. Although the group is composed almost entirely of aged Japanese immigrants, it realizes three pilgrimages or so each year to the city of Aparecida do Norte, an important traditional point for devotion to Our Lady Aparecida.

Final Reflections

In some Buddhist temples in Brazil one can find an old picture of the Showa Emperor, who is respectfully but discretely revered. It is also possible to find echoes of a former nationalism in some Nikkei groups, and there is even a Yasukuni shrine in the city of Marília, in the state of São Paulo. These and similar symbols represent the very few people inside the Japanese Brazilian community that even today sustain a more or less explicit Japanese nationalism resulting from primary education.

The nationalistic Shinto created by the military ruling government, stimulated by Japanese imperialism, could not survive anywhere after the surrender in 1945. Outside Japan, it is however reasonable to suppose that an immigrant community would have a higher degree of cognitive dissonance to resolve than was the case in Japan. As suggested by the cognitive dissonance framework, after the failed prophecy of the Japanese empire, the preconditions of group worldview reinforcement were stronger in Brazil than in Japan. In Japan the abrupt banishment of the nationalistic Shinto worldview was preceded by the experience of war bombings and even the use of nuclear weapons. Reliable information legitimated by the Japanese was available in their own language in the Occupation Period. In Brazil these elements were not present and Shindo Renmei and other similar organizations represented a continuous diffusion of the patriotic faith that was promoted especially by those *issei* who tried to reorganize the community around the received State Shinto worldview.

At the present time, most Japanese Brazilians are baptized Catholic, and Catholicism often assumes an important role through syncretism, ritual division, or individual combinations. Beginning in the 1920s and growing exponentially after the Second World War, this change of main group religion represented the abandonment of a racial and imperialist religiosity to a religion that promoted Brazilian integration and social acceptance. In this sense Japanese Catholics and missionaries were important elements even before the Second World War, reinventing Japanese Catholicism in the Brazilian environment and, at the same time, serving as an interface between the non-Catholic Japanese and Brazilians. They offered a foundation for more systematic work after the war, as realized with organized social assistance, Catholic schools, and Japanese Brazilian evangelization groups. By the same token, evangelical and pentecostal groups that described themselves as Nikkei represented a trend of acculturation that emphasized a certain degree of cultural continuity. Nowadays Nikkei Christianity has

little strength, given the high degree of integration of the third and fourth generations, but its creation offered for many Japanese Brazilians a hyphenated religious identity that facilitated their integration and replaced the received nationalistic Shinto, while at the same time promoting a distinct and new Nikkei identity.

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