# Accompanied Self: Debating Pentecostal Individual and Japanese Relational Selves in Transnational Japan

Suma Ikeuchi

**Abstract**   While the notion of the individual figures prominently in the debate about Christian personhood, the concept of relational selves has shaped the existing literature on Japanese selfhood. I take this seeming divergence between "individual Christian" and "interdependent Japanese" as the point of departure to probe how Japanese-Brazilian Pentecostal migrants in contemporary Japan understand and experience their sense of self. The article is based on 14 months of fieldwork in Toyota, Japan, which consisted of participant observation, interviews, and surveys among Brazilian and Japanese residents there. The discourses about the category of religion serve as a major source of data to tease out cultural understandings about "the authentic self." I will argue that Pentecostal personhood does not fit within either the "individual" or the "relational." The concept of "accompanied self" will then be proposed to accurately capture the kind of self that many migrant converts strive to embody.  [Pentecostal Christianity, Nikkei Brazilian, category of religion, Japan]

## Christianity, Religion, and the Self: An Uneasy Alliance

"Are you Christian?"[1] During the first months of my fieldwork among Pentecostal Brazilian migrants in Japan, I typically responded to this common inquiry by saying that my family was Buddhist. The answer, which I thought was factual enough,[2] nonetheless elicited skeptical reactions from many of my interlocutors. Some told me: "Japanese people always say that. But I am asking about *you*, not about your family." They would often add that faith does not pertain to "family" or "tradition" but rather hinges on "personal and individual relationship with God." My response, which located the unit of identification in the "family," thus induced an expression of counterperspective from my born-again informants: that authentic self-identification comes from the person "individualized" by the relationship with divinity.

A non-born-again fieldworker among born-again Christians often works at "a psychic intersection between born-again and un-born-again languages and worlds" (Harding 2000, xi). In my case, I had not just one but two such crossroads. The twist is that most of my informants were descendants of Japanese immigrants in Brazil who had "return" migrated to their ancestral homeland, Japan, and converted to Brazilian Pentecostalism there. Consequently, they constantly grappled with the shifting meanings of being Japanese, Brazilian, and Pentecostal as transnational migrants, sometimes by using my "Japaneseness" as a contrastive marker. The core questions of this article emerged from

these multiple borderlands—between born-again and un-born-again, between Japanese and Brazilian—that formed my analytical field sites.

What constitutes Pentecostal personhood? Is it as individualistic as some converts seem to indicate? Does it radically diverge from Japanese selfhood, which researchers have often characterized as contextual and relational (Kitayama et al. 1997)? This article examines these questions in light of the debate on the relationship between Christianity and individuality that has been revitalized by the growth of the anthropology of Christianity (Robbins 2014). The notion of the individual, the hallmark of "Western" personhood in much of anthropological literature (Geertz [1974]1984), has been receiving renewed discussion in this subfield. For example, Joel Robbins (2004) has described how charismatic converts among the Urapmin in Papua New Guinea struggle to become individuals-in-Christ, the sole unit of salvation in Pentecostal eschatology. Such a Pentecostal vision of individuality, however, often generates social tension in contexts where traditional relational values persist. Urapmin converts thus find it challenging to fully embrace Pentecostal emphasis on the individual mind's moral autonomy, which leads to the prevalent self-perception as "sinners." Webb Keane (2007) has provided an equally compelling account of Christian conversion in the context of mission encounters between Dutch Calvinists and local inhabitants of Sumba in Indonesia. Missionaries and local converts placed central emphasis on the self's internal sincerity and disentanglement from social and material interrelationships. Such ethical ideals promoted a certain vision of the autonomous individual. This individualist concept of the person, however, did not resonate well with most unconverted inhabitants who partook in traditional ritual life and maintained a different set of ideas about agency.

Thus, some aspects of individualism show through both Robbins' and Keane's ethnographic materials and analyses. They are, however, almost always contested in the larger social environment where certain relational logics continue to be valued. The presumption that Christian individualism is a static accomplished state can therefore be misleading and perhaps inaccurate. Indeed, many scholars are quite attentive to the ambiguities, nuances, and limits of Christian individuality (Coleman 2006; Vilaça 2014, 2015). Writing about apostolic charismatics in Botswana, for instance, Werbner observed that "there is an unstable yet enduring twining of individuality with dividuality"[3] in the form of an "alternating personhood" (2011, 199). Daswani similarly argued in his article on "(in)dividualism" among Pentecostals in Ghana that Christian identity can be understood as "a living tension between states of individuality and dividuality" (2011, 257). Such observations suggest that the nuances of Christian individualism are open for more theoretical explorations (see, for example, Mosko 2010; Robbins 2010b).

Examining Christian individuality through a case study from transnational Japan can expand the debate in new directions for two reasons. First, it is increasingly common for Pentecostal Christianity rekindled in the global South to travel to the North with the ever-growing flows of transnational migration (Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001). A study of Brazilian migrant converts in Japan responds to the increasing need to include transnational migrant populations in the study of global Christianity (Robbins 2010a,173).

Second, Japanese emphasis on "relational selves"[4] can provide a fertile ethnographic context in which ramifications of Christian individualism can be examined. The existing literature in psychological anthropology has variably characterized Japanese selves as "dependent," "interdependent," "sociocentric," "interactional," "situational," "contextual," "contingent," and "flexible," among others (Doi 1981; Kitayama et al. 1997; Kondo 1990; Lebra 2004; Ozawa-de Silva 2007; Plath 1980; Rosenberger 1992; Smith 1983). While these authors do not necessarily agree with each other, they echo one another in one general observation: that individualist logics of the self are seldom socially endorsed in Japan. "Individual" and "relational" can therefore serve as two analytical themes which are "good to think with," just as the conceptual juxtaposition of "individual" and "dividual" has stimulated a lively discussion among ethnographers of Africa and the Pacific (Bialecki and Daswani 2015).

This article contributes to the debates on Christian individuality and Japanese selfhood by presenting the thesis that Pentecostal personhood in transnational Japan is a kind of relational individual, which I call the "accompanied self." Although the Pentecostal emphasis on the authentic inner self appears individualistic compared to relational selves among the Japanese majority, the ideal self for converts is neither bounded[5] nor autonomous but instead "accompanied" by the perceived presence of the divine Other. The training of the accompanied self consists in (1) the cultivation of an inner sincere self, (2) blurring the line between "inner" and "outer" when it comes to God, (3) and the eventual enmeshment of the sense of self in the presence of alterity. I advance the concept of accompanied self to make a point that, in that they both arise from interdependence between the self and the Other, Pentecostal personhood and Japanese selves are not utterly dissimilar. The accompanied self does not neatly fit within either the "individual" or the "relational" and thus serves as a theoretical critique of the individual/relational dichotomy.

In what follows, I will explore the question of Pentecostal personhood in four steps. First, I present an overview of ethnographic context and methods. Second, I elaborate on dominant cultural logics of the self among Brazilian Pentecostal migrants and the Japanese majority in Japan, respectively. I use "the Japanese majority" gingerly here with an awareness of the growing multiculturalism and economic inequality that are undermining the illusion of "the homogeneous Japanese" (Weiner [1997] 2009). The phrase is meant to refer to the ethnic, religious, and cultural majority in the country who tend to view their Buddhist-Shintō syncretism as a quintessentially Japanese tradition. Third, I will focus on "moments of encounter," or how migrant converts experience and interpret the dominant framework of relational selfhood reflected in Japanese customs and religions. Lastly, I will elaborate on the concept of the "accompanied self," which Pentecostal converts seek to cultivate by blurring the boundary between inner self and outer Other.

## Bread of Life in the Ancestral Homeland: Context and Methods

In 1990, the Japanese government introduced a new type of visa available to foreigners of Japanese descent up to the third generation, a change mainly aimed at remedying the domestic shortage in unskilled manual labor. Given the dire state of the Brazilian national economy

at the time, many of the roughly 1.4 million Nikkeis (Japanese-Brazilians) in Brazil—the country with the largest Japanese descent population in the world—started migrating to Japan. In Brazil, Nikkeis are stereotyped as a model minority with such positive images as industriousness, intelligence, and technological innovation. Many are indeed white-collar professionals securely in the middle and upper classes (Lesser 2007). In Japan, however, the majority of migrants become unskilled foreign laborers. This drastic class downgrade from the "modern Nikkei" in Brazil to the "backward Brazilian" in Japan breeds a feeling of alienation among Nikkei Brazilians—ironically, in their ancestral homeland (Tsuda 2001). Today, there are roughly 178,000 Brazilians living in Japan, which makes them the fourth largest group of foreign residents in the country after the Chinese, Koreans, and Filipinos (Ministry of Justice 2014). Just as Japanese immigrants brought Buddhism, Shintō, and other Japanese religions to Brazil in the early twentieth century (Maeyama 1972), Nikkeis carried Brazilian religions to Japan with them, including Latin American Pentecostalism (Quero and Shoji 2014). Although the legal system defines such migrants (at least partially) as "Japanese," they are often marginalized in Japanese society for their ambiguous foreignness and working-class profile. In this context of contested belonging, many have been converting to Pentecostal Christianity in Japan (Shoji 2014)—a religion that has grown exponentially in their home country of Brazil[6] and also flourished among Brazilian expatriate communities across the globe (Mafra et al. 2003; Margolis 2013). Through the "return" migration of Nikkeis, Pentecostal Christianity from Brazil is gradually changing the religious landscape of Japan—a country where Christians make up less than 1% of the population (Tokyo Christian University 2015).

This article is based on 14 months of fieldwork in the Aichi Prefecture of Japan between 2012 and 2014. The primary research site was Toyota City, which is home to the headquarters of Toyota Motor Corporation. The presence of this multinational corporation gives rise to a significant demand for a flexible labor force in and around the city. Brazilians, like other foreign workers, are typically hired through temporary staffing agencies. As such, they may work for the same factory for years as "part-time" workers without job security or full benefits. I worked at two factories for five months in total.

One of the largest Brazilian enclaves in Japan, a partially subsidized housing project[7] called Homi Danchi, is also located in Toyota (Linger 2001). In 2014, more than half of the city's 5,120 Brazilians (2,746 of them) lived there with 3,717 Japanese neighbors (Toyota City 2014). I lived in the housing complex, participating in various activities that involved Brazilians and Japanese alike. They ranged from "intercultural meetings" hosted by the local NGO/NPO organizations to the Homi Summer Festival.

A church of one of the most active Brazilian Pentecostal denominations in Japan is about 15 minutes away from Homi Danchi by car. Missão Apoio ("Support Mission" in Portuguese) was founded in Japan in 1993 by two Brazilian migrants, one of whom had worked as a minister for the Assemblies of God in Brazil for 13 years prior to his migration (Yamada 2014). If we count the places of worship (and not the number of members, which is more elusive), Missão Apoio is the second largest Brazil-derived Protestant denomination in Japan

after the Assemblies of God (23%) and on par with the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (10%) (Shoji 2014, 40). I participated in a number of church activities on a daily basis, ranging from Sunday worship to home-group gatherings to barbecue parties. Missão Apoio Toyota had roughly 450 Brazilian members, the majority of whom lived in Homi Danchi. According to the results of the demographic survey I administered, roughly 70% converted in Japan after migrating.[8] The economic incentive for initial migration and subsequent "unexpected" conversion in Japan made many converts claim, somewhat poetically, that they "came to earn the bread to put on the table and found the bread of life instead (*vim para ganhar o pão e encontrei o pão da vida*)."

In addition to numerous lengthy conversations that took place organically during participant observation, I also conducted 63 interviews in total: 16 with Nikkei Brazilian Pentecostal men, four with non-Nikkei Brazilian Pentecostal men, 17 with Nikkei Brazilian Pentecostal women, three with non-Nikkei Brazilian Pentecostal women, five with Nikkei Brazilian Catholic men, four with Nikkei Brazilian Catholic women, two with Nikkei Brazilian men who considered themselves nonreligious, four with Japanese men, and seven with Japanese women. I initially attempted to conduct semistructured interviews by preparing a set of questions, but my informants' eagerness to inquire about myself often changed the interview structure into a more open one. Almost all the Pentecostal subjects started by interviewing me about my ethno-national identity and religious affiliation. Those who already knew that I am a Japanese national from a Buddhist family would start by checking on my spiritual progress: "So, have you had any experiences with God yet?" The Japanese interview subjects—most of whom were teachers, friends, and neighbors of Brazilian residents in Homi Danchi— were equally curious about my identity. I often had to clarify why I spoke Portuguese and appeared somewhat Americanized when I was—borrowing one informant's words—"really, actually, 100% Japanese." I would answer that I had lived in the States for some time and studied Portuguese to conduct my anthropological research. The fieldwork took place in an incredibly multicultural and multilinguistic context. To reflect this cultural and linguistic diversity in my work, all words and phrases in Portuguese will be *italicized* and all words in Japanese will be underlined. Japanese words that have entered the daily lexicon of Brazilian migrants in Japan will be marked by *both*.

Due to space constraints, some important aspects of Brazilian migration to Japan are beyond the scope of this article, such as the ramifications of "return" migration, class issues related to manual labor, and conversion as a strategy for social belonging (for some of these politico-historical discussions, see Ikeuchi 2015). The primary focus of this article is on the relationship between religion and the self, a topic which has not been squarely addressed by existing ethnographies on Nikkei Brazilians in Japan (Linger 2001; Roth 2002; Tsuda 2003). I do not, however, claim to address all the religions—or all the different kinds of Christianity—present among Brazilians in Japan. Although I frequented the local Catholic churches and interviewed some Catholic Brazilians in Toyota to seek contrast, the focus of this article is on Pentecostal converts. While I sometimes use the general category of "Christian" instead of the more specific "Pentecostal," my argument on the following pages always concerns a particular branch of Christianity.

## "Beyond Religiosity": Sincere Self among Pentecostal Converts

Sara is a third-generation Nikkei in her mid-twenties who converted to Pentecostalism in Japan in 2008, several years after her arrival. While her "*japonês* (Japanese-Brazilian)" father is Buddhist, her "*brasileira* (non-Nikkei Brazilian)" mother is Catholic and took Sara and her sister to church every Sunday when they were little. As she recounted her conversion in Japan, she constantly contrasted her current Pentecostal identity with her childhood religion. "God is your best friend, you see," she repeated the phrase Pentecostal churchgoers often use to stress the personal relationship converts aspire to cultivate with God. "When I prayed with my own words for the first time, as if I were talking to my best friend, it felt so good!" She then continued:

> In Brazil, at the Catholic church, I didn't understand anything, you know. It was all ceremony (*cerimônia*). People did what they did because of religiosity (*religiosidade*).

> [S. I.] For example?

> [Sara] Well, the rosary. "*Ave Maria, Cheia de Graça, O Senhor é convosco...*" I didn't understand what it meant! And no one understands—maybe fathers, yes, but no one cares about the meaning because no one explains. You are just told to repeat the same thing again and again. I didn't feel anything because I didn't understand, but I still did it as a child because I thought I had to....

> [S.I.] So, what is prayer for you?

> [Sara] Prayer is conversation with God (*Oração é conversar com Deus*). You pray with sincere heart and simple words (*coração sincera e palavras simples*). Just like we are talking here. He is your friend. Sincerity always (*sempre sinceridade*), you see, because we can say one thing and feel another but God always knows our heart.

Here Sara contrasts the "sincere simplicity" of Pentecostal prayer with the "ceremonious religiosity" of Catholic practices such as the rosary. According to her, while the former consists of "one's own words" and is therefore more transparent, spontaneous, and sincere, the latter is centered on repeating fixed phrases, whose meaning is not readily available to lay practitioners.

We can see how Sara's sense of sincere self is firmly connected to the ideal of sincere and transparent speech—a prominent feature of Protestantism. Webb Keane's concept of "semiotic ideology" is useful here. The concept is based on the idea of "language ideology," which indicates "cultural notions about the nature of language and its use" (Robbins and Rumsey 2008, 411). While "semiotic ideology" overlaps with "language ideology" to some degree, the former also highlights nonlinguistic forms of signification between signs, persons, and objects. Keane defines the concept as "basic assumptions about what signs are and how they function in the world," which determines "what people will consider the role that intentions play in signification to be, what kinds of possible agent ... exist to which acts of signification might be imputed, whether signs are arbitrarily or necessarily linked to their objects, and so forth" (2003, 419).

According to Keane, Protestant semiotic ideology upholds the ideal of sincerity by requiring speaking subjects to closely monitor the alignment between their inner intentions and their outward speech. They are expected to "mean what they say" to cultivate the moral self since doing otherwise is to undermine human agency entrusted to the individual's interiority. Indeed, Calvinists insisted, "words are merely the external expressions of inner thoughts" (2007, 15). While Calvinism and Pentecostalism are two distinct forms of Christianity, the Protestant semiotic ideology that Keane articulates often shapes Pentecostal subjectivities as well (Robbins 2001). His insights can therefore help illuminate the background assumptions behind Sara's remarks. Her characterization of Catholicism—that is, dependence on formulaic expressions, "ceremonious" ritual practices, and inattentiveness to words' semantic meanings—points to the semiotic ideology of sincerity at work. For her born-again sensibility, Catholic practices appear less sincere because they do not reflect an "authentic inner self." Pentecostals, Sara thinks, pray in words that are semantically accessible as well as reflective of the speaker's sincere inner intention.

Sara appealed to the word *religiosidade* (religiosity) to point out what she identified as compromised sincerity. It is well known that Pentecostalism in Latin America typically expanded as a movement posed against the institutional hegemony of the Catholic Church (Chesnut 1997). In this context, Pentecostals have often associated the term "religion" with Catholicism and other traditions that have historically coexisted with the Church by accepting its dominance (Mariano 2011; Smilde 2007, 106). In other words, they tend to invoke "religion" as an institutionalized "traditional" way of faith that they may have culturally inherited (through infant baptism, First Holy Communion, and so on) but later deliberately chose to leave behind by converting to Pentecostalism. My Pentecostal informants who grew up in Catholic families, for instance, often described their preconversion past as "trapped in religiosity (*preso na religiosidade*)" while stressing the authenticity of their current faith with phrases such as "free in Jesus (*livre em Jesus*)." In such rhetoric, "religion" is something that converts must ideally "free" themselves from through sincere conversion. For this reason, my informants generally resisted characterizing their born-again faith as a "religion" and instead considered it as a newfound "truth" that helped them transcend the old ways of "traditional religiosity." As such, "religion (*religião*)"—along with other terms such as "religiosity (*religiosidade*)" and "tradition (*tradição*)"—broadly signified to them uncritical adherence to inherited "external forms" such as conventional formulae, rules, and customs. Consequently, most converts distanced themselves from the ways of life meant to be represented in these terms because conversion ideally allows them to "make a complete break with the past" to embrace sincere selfhood (Meyer 1998).

When migrant converts such as Sara contrast the "sincerity" of Pentecostal personhood with the "religiosity" of their past religious affiliations, they seem to be invoking what Keane calls the "moral narrative of modernity": "the cultivation of and high value given to individual agency and inwardness, the goal of individual self-creation, and, paralleling these in the domain of the social, the devaluation of tradition in the name of historical progress" (2003, 201). Sara's valorization of prayers "in one's own words" with "sincere heart" suggests that she locates prayer's efficacy in "individual inwardness." As she related later in the same

interview, she felt such a style of prayer was "better than religious prayers (*rezas religiosas*)" because it originated "in your own heart and not in tradition." The semiotic ideology of sincerity and the moral narrative of modernity thus jointly shape Pentecostal discourse of "post-religion."

A survey conducted in 1991 by the Research Center of Japanese-Brazilians in São Paulo reports that 53% of Nikkeis self-identified as Catholic and 31% as belonging to various Japanese religions (Matsue 2006, 122).[9] While the ratio of Catholics increases among younger generations, some Nikkei families continue to adhere to Japanese religions such as Buddhism, Shintō, and Japanese New Religions. New Religion (shinshūkyō) generally refers to a group of religions founded in Japan since the mid-nineteenth century (Reader 2005). This means that, for some Nikkei migrant converts in Japan, "traditional religion" conjures up memories of such Japanese religions instead of Catholicism. Gustavo is a second-generation Nikkei from Mogi das Cruzes in São Paulo who has been living in Japan for over 20 years. He grew up in a family that follows Seichō-no-ie, one of the most successful Japanese New Religions in Brazil (Carpenter and Roof 1995; Shimazono 1991). While elements of psychology, philosophy, and other world religions are found in its eclectic teachings, many of its central practices are influenced by Buddhism and Shintō, such as memorial services for ancestral spirits.

Gustavo recounted his first visit to a Pentecostal church in his early twenties by sharply contrasting it to the rituals for ancestral spirits he experienced as a child:

> It was a whole new experience for me. The songs, testimonies, sermons, screaming, jumping, and dancing! Just the expressions on people's faces, so alive, so happy, full of emotions. I had never seen anything like it in Seichō-no-ie. All I remember about it is, let's see, when I was a child, a monk occasionally came to our house to chant Buddhist sutras (*rezar okyō*)—in such a monotonous way [he mimics intonated voice used for chants]. All of my relatives would sit forming neat lines, staying still for such a long time until the sutras were over. Sometimes, I'd look around and see my uncle nodding off. Nothing touched me, not once, because my family was doing all this only out of the sense of obligation. It's mere religiosity.

Like Sara, Gustavo characterizes his childhood memory of religious practices with what he regards as markers of insincerity: formulaic "monotonous" sutras, passive participation "out of the sense of obligation," and a ritual code oriented toward external forms (i.e., sitting still in neat lines). Coming from such a background, he found Pentecostal styles of worship "alive," "full of emotions," and spontaneous. In such a narrative, religion comes to be equated with practices "only in form," which do not comprise spontaneous expressions of inner sincere emotions.

To the extent that, as Keane argues, the cultivation of the sincere self is a modern project, converts such as Sara and Gustavo are embodying modernity through conversion—a point that has been made by a number of anthropologists of Christianity (Meyer 1999; van der Veer 1995). In such a project of self-transformation, converts ideally experience something

like a moment of awakening from "tradition" and "religion" in which they come to realize that their old ways did not allow for deep interiority, sincere intention, and independence from social relations.

Indeed, many of my informants made critical comments about what they saw as "the Japanese tradition," ranging from Japanese religious practices to kinship relations. Such remarks implied that they understood their ideas and practices as more modern. In this vein, conversion to Pentecostalism in Japan may be interpreted as a social endeavor to rebuild in Japan the modern social status they once had in Brazil as a "model minority." In other words, Nikkei Brazilian converts are compensating for their failure to achieve upward mobility—economic and social—in Japan by engaging in spiritual advancement to "modern" religious sensibility through conversion (Ikeuchi 2015). The Pentecostal emphasis on the inner self's autonomy from "tradition" and "religion" points to an aspect of individualism at play in the remaking of the moral self among migrant converts.

## "Nonreligion" and Disciplined Selves among the Japanese Majority

Emiko, a Japanese housewife in her forties, was an active volunteer who frequented the NGO/NPOs for foreign residents in Homi Danchi. She was learning Portuguese to communicate better with the mothers of the Brazilian friends her three children—all enrolled in local schools with a large Brazilian student body—often brought home. One day, I visited her home for an interview. When I explained to her that I was a researcher studying the role of religion among Brazilian migrants in the area, she responded, "Oh, you mean, like that building down the road with the green roof?" Since she was referring to one of the Brazilian Pentecostal churches in the neighborhood, I answered that I indeed studied such groups. She told me that she guessed it was a church but was never sure. I asked if she had heard of Pentecostal Christianity (pentekosute-ha). With a quick laugh, she responded, "No, I have no clue. I don't know much about religion." Then she added rather firmly, "Because I am nonreligious (watashi mushūkyō desukara)."

When I asked her a few follow-up questions later in our conversation, however, it became clear that she engaged in a number of folk Shintō and Buddhist practices on a regular basis. Before the construction of their house, for example, she and her husband invited a Shintō priest to hold jichinsai, a ceremony to calm the spirit of the land and ask for permission to work on it. The ohuda (rectangle-shaped paper amulet) from this ceremony years earlier was still on the wall of her living room. She had participated in similar activities on many more occasions. When I challenged her jokingly that some may find such activities "religious," she tilted her head with a doubtful look and paused for a moment. Then she countered:

> But I don't think these things have absolute meaning. Well—how can I say this—it's all up to how you hold your heart (ki no mochi yō). Just the fact that you visited a shrine and did something about what worries you already makes you feel a little lighter (ki ga hareru). This paper amulet [points at the ohuda from the ceremony], I don't really believe in it. I mean, it doesn't have any real supernatural power, everyone knows that, right? But it's soothing (ki ga shizumaru) to see it and feel that you are protected. It also

feels more fulfilling to pray (<u>te wo awaseru</u>) to <u>ohuda</u> than toward somewhere in the sky—supposing there is some god up there—without any focus.

To Emiko, religion primarily consists in "believing" and "finding absolute meaning in" ritual actions and objects. Since she doesn't, she thinks it is only appropriate to characterize herself as "nonreligious." Such a belief-centered understanding of religion is widespread in contemporary Japan. For example, in the survey conducted by the Institute of Statistical Mathematics (2013), only 28% of the 1,591 respondents had religious faith (<u>shinkō</u>) or devotion (<u>shinjin</u>) while 72% answered that they "do not have faith or devotion, do not believe, or are not interested in such matters" (Institute of Statistical Mathematics 2013). While the majority of Japanese do not "believe in" religion, a different picture emerges when we shift our attention to *practice* in religious contexts. According to Yomiuri Newspaper's Public Opinion Poll (<u>yoron chōsa</u>) (2008), the majority of the 1,837 respondents answered that they engaged in the following practices: "frequently pray (<u>te wo awaseru</u>) to Buddhist or Shintō altar at home" (56.7%), "pay visit to family's grave on the Buddhist holidays for commemoration of ancestral spirits (<u>bon</u> and <u>higan</u>)" (78.3%), and "visit local shrine or temple for New Year's Day" (73.1%). Furthermore, 94% answered that they "have a feeling of deep respect for ancestors," which reflects the close historical tie between Buddhism and veneration of ancestors in Japan (Rowe 2011).

As Reader and Tanabe succinctly put it, lived religion in Japan is "less a matter of belief than it is of activity, ritual, and custom. The vast majority may not assert religious belief but … that same majority participates in religious activities and rituals" (1998, 7). This focus on practice, coupled with the popular understanding of "religion" as a product of self-conscious belief, sustains the dominant "nonreligious" self-image among the Japanese majority. The discourse of "nonreligion" also fuels a widespread perception that "religion" is for the foreign Other who "believes." Like Emiko, many Japanese associate the term with institutionalized monotheism, most commonly Christianity.

The underlying cultural logic behind the claim of "nonreligion" among the Japanese majority, then, clearly diverges from the semiotic ideology of sincerity invoked by Brazilian Pentecostal migrants. For Emiko, what Pentecostals typically perceive as insincere and thus immoral—that is, a "gap" between inner intention and outward act—is not necessarily immoral or even insincere. Take, for example, how she spoke about the act of prayer. Both Emiko and the Public Opinion Poll used the phrase <u>te wo awaseru</u>, the literal translation of which would be "to put one's palms together." While there are other Japanese words such as <u>inoru</u> which refer to a certain state of mind and thus better approximate the connotation of "to pray," <u>te wo awaseru</u> is in itself a purely descriptive phrase which focuses on the outwardly visible form of prayer. Such a focus on form is closely tied to the theory of <u>ki</u>, which can be loosely translated as "energy field." Ki, a central concept in many East Asian medicines, continues to shape the thoughts and experiences of many contemporary Japanese. It is an "organizing force-field" (Ozawa-de Silva 2002, 28) that unites seemingly disparate domains of life such as nature, the self, mind, body, and well-being. To Emiko, the efficacy of religious practice does not lie in meaning, belief, or in the intrinsic power of objects but

rather in "how one maintains one's own energy field (ki no mochiyō)." In this framework, material objects such as amulets help her "quiet the energy field (ki ga shizumaru)" while formal actions such as visits to shrines similarly "clear the energy field (ki ga hareru)." In other words, what matters to Emiko is not whether "genuine" inner intentions preceded and gave rise to "spontaneous" actions but instead how form-centered ritual behavior can facilitate the alignment of the self through bodily practices and material mediations.

Following Dorinne Kondo, here I refer to such a cultural vision as "disciplined selves." Her insights highlight the cultural emphasis placed on the interdependence between form, relationship with others, and self-cultivation in Japan:

> Yet the moral weight is placed not on some sense of the "self" as inviolable essence, separate from "society," but on the construction of disciplined selves through relationship with others and through forms we might find coercive. . . . But it is by first keeping the rules which define the form, even if one's understanding is incomplete or one disagrees with them, that a sincere attitude is eventually born. (Kondo 1990, 107)

Sincerity in the cultural framework of discipline, then, is not so much the individual's transcendence from social and material contexts inasmuch as it is a well-trained alignment between social roles, other persons, and the self. Kondo adds, "Sincerity, *magokoro*, becomes sensitivity to social context and to the demands of social roles—not dogged adherence to an 'authentic,' inner self to which one must be true, regardless of the situation or the consequences for others" (1990, 107–108).

While both Brazilian Pentecostal converts and the Japanese majority frequently engage in the discourse of "nonreligion," the underlying cultural logics for such a claim vary between the two. Migrant converts invoke "religion (*religião*)" as an unreflective adherence to inherited ritual forms. They detach themselves from it because the cultivation of modern sincere selfhood hinges on transcendence from material and social entanglements. Many Japanese, however, understand "religion (shūkyō)" as a self-conscious articulation of consistent internal belief. They distance themselves from it since the cultural framework of discipline places greater emphasis on the interdependence between the self, material forms, and social others. The diverging ways in which the category of religion is invoked reflect how multiple logics govern the cultivation of moral self in transnational Japan (Asad 1993).

## Encounters: Insincere Japanese?

Given the divergences between the logics of sincerity and discipline, what does it entail to be born-again Christian in a country where Buddhist-Shintō syncretism and the vision of relational selves predominate? Compared to evangelical Christianity, Shintō and Buddhism in Japan do not place as much emphasis on proselytization but rely on inherited familial and communal units as well as commercialized activities such as tourism for their continued existence. Recent foreign migrants are seldom incorporated into such local units called danka or ujiko. Most Brazilian residents of Homi Danchi therefore base their working understandings of Japanese religions on their experiences of local festivals

at shrines and temples (if they make the effort to attend). More likely, it is the Japanese media's coverage of religious festivities around the nation that influences their views on such matters.

However, cultural logics crystallized in religious practices often extend beyond such contexts and inform many activities in people's day-to-day lives. Cleaning, for example, is at once a part of Zen ascetic life as a training of mind-body unification as well as a regular activity at Japanese schools and companies aimed at furthering general ethics (Reader 1995). This means that the contexts in which migrant converts encounter the logic of discipline are not limited to explicitly religious practices but also include their daily interactions with Japanese society. Some, for example, complain about *chōrei* (morning ceremony), a customary practice at many Japanese companies which consists of daily briefing, collective recitation of fixed phrases such as company slogans, and sometimes brief warm-up exercises. At the factory where Takashi worked, employees collectively vocalized a set of greeting phrases such as "yoroshiku onegai shimasu (please)" and "arigatō gozaimasu (thank you)" during *chōrei*. He expressed his distaste in a mixture of Portuguese and Japanese:

> It doesn't make sense (*não faz sentido*). I don't need to shout these phrases every day to remember them. When we don't say them loud enough, *hanchō* (team leader) is like, "Gen ki nai (You don't have energy)." And in my head [I'm thinking], "Gen ki aru. Shitakunai (I am well, I just don't want to)." [laughs] I just don't like it, you sound like a robot, repeating the same thing mechanically every day.

He then shook his head and added, "I really like Japanese people, but I just don't like the meaningless tradition—so rigid. No human warmth (*nenhum calor humano*)."

While Takashi himself is a longtime Pentecostal who converted in Japan, a similar perception about the rigidity of Japanese society and people is widely shared among Brazilian migrants at large. Like the interlocutors of Daniel Linger, who conducted fieldwork in Homi Danchi almost two decades before me, my Brazilian informants also insinuated to me repeatedly that "Brazilians are warm; Japanese are cold" (Linger 2001, 290). Brazilians are expressive, playful, and open; Japanese are rigid, serious, and closed. As stereotypical as they are, such contrastive images persist in part because they reflect a certain experiential truth from the migrants' perspective. In Brazil, "spontaneity in interaction is of the utmost importance. . . . Interactional selves should be more than status constellations; inner selves should show through" (299). Coming from a society in which interpersonal improvisation is highly valued, most Brazilian migrants perceive the Japanese emphasis on context and social role as lacking in intimacy. The irony is that, in Brazil, Nikkeis are also stereotyped for being more square and serious than non-Nikkei Brazilians. Life among the Japanese majority in Japan, however, typically strengthens Brazilian identity among Nikkeis, as encounters with conventional customs reinforce the image of the "rigid" Japanese Other (Tsuda 2003). Collective ritualized vocalization thus gives out a strong impression of inauthenticity to Brazilian migrants because it focuses on adherence to fixed form rather than spontaneous "showing through" of "inner selves."

For Pentecostal converts like Takashi, such practices also go against the semiotic ideology of sincerity cultivated in their religious commitment. In its formulaic character, vocalization practice in the Japanese workplace resembles styles of prayer that do not reflect the Pentecostal ideal of sincerity, such as the Catholic rosary and Buddhist sutra. In fact, my informants used two separate verbs to distinguish "sincere" kinds of prayer from "insincere" ones: *orar* (to pray) for what they considered as spontaneous prayer with one's own words and *rezar* (to pray) for form-centered prayer based on fixed phrases. This latter form of prayer, *rezar*, is what Pentecostals often call "vain repetitions (*vãs repetições*)," invoking the term from Matthew 6:7. Both Sara and Gustavo (who, as I mentioned above, converted from Catholicism and Seichō-no-ie, respectively) used *rezar* to refer to fixed prayers in other traditions and *orar* to describe "spontaneous" prayers in born-again Christianity. The majority of congregants at Missão Apoio Toyota did the same. In Pentecostal framework of thought, then, *rezar* holds a similar function to other terms such as *religião* and *tradição*. It linguistically constructs and marks off the insincere premodern subject, which the sincere modern person must transcend through a set of techniques such as speech reflective of "inner self."

Catholics, of course, would not agree with such views since their rich techniques for self-cultivation are grounded on a different set of logics centered on materiality, embodiment, and "saintliness" (Corwin 2012; Lester 2005; Mafra 2011). Nor do the Japanese. The rationale behind the disciplinary pedagogy is still widely accepted in Japanese society: namely, katachi kara hairu (enter through the form). "The process of true learning begins with a model, a form, repeated until perfectly executed. Without this form, there can be no transformation of the *kokoro* [mind-heart]" (Kondo 1990, 106). Kata—standardized postures, movements, and compositions—forms the foundation of training process in many Japanese arts and religions, ranging from martial arts to meditation practice. Kata training aims "to fuse the individual to the form so that the individual becomes the form and the form becomes the individual" (Yano 2003, 26). Granted, very few would reach such an advanced level Yano describes in ascetic and spiritual training. Yet the fundamental premise of the philosophy of kata is still reflected in the emphasis placed on proper form in many social contexts in contemporary Japan (Bardsley and Miller 2011). To Takashi and many other Pentecostal Brazilians, however, the pedagogy of kata that underlies practices such as collective vocalization gives out an impression of insincere, superficial conformity. Indeed, Japanese preoccupation with form often invited the opinion that Japanese people seem *falso*—"fake."

I must quickly point out here that, contrary to my Brazilian informants' perception, many Japanese do find the pedagogy of kata coercive. Although Takashi attributes his frustration to the lack of "meaning" in the "tradition" of "Japanese people," not all Japanese workers support such activities. When I worked at an auto parts factory in Toyota, I heard virtually all the other Japanese contingent laborers openly complain about these practices as mendōkusai (troublesome, tiresome). In contrast, full-time employees who enjoyed more job security and therefore saw themselves firmly belonging to the workplace seldom, if ever, expressed similar feelings in public. There was, in fact, a sense of resentment among part-time workers about the fact that they were being forced to "discipline" themselves for social others—including social superiors—who could dismiss them on a day's notice any time. As the Japanese labor

system becomes increasingly neoliberal, flexible, and unequal (Allison 2013), more and more marginalized Japanese workers today share the same frustration that Takashi expresses. Some foreign migrant laborers, however, at times conflate the ongoing class issues with essential cultural differences, thereby reifying the perceived boundary between "Japanese" and "Brazilian."

I must therefore stress that the points I have made thus far are not about a "clash" between two inherently different religious and cultural entities. Rather, they are about diverging *logics* that govern the grammar for self-cultivation, which people often use as a scaffold to make sense of—and sometimes reify—their identities. That being said, I would summarize that the logic of sincerity places emphasis on ethical cultivation "from within" while disciplinary pedagogy foregrounds embodiment "from without."

## Accompanied Self: Is Pentecostal Selfhood "Individual"?

Is the ideal self in Pentecostal culture an individual? The logic of sincerity indeed places great emphasis on individualist visions such as agency reserved to inner self, transcendence from material mediations, and abstraction of the self from social embeddedness. It appears individualistic especially against the backdrop of disciplined selves in Japan, which seek to train the alignment between the self, context, and social others. Given such apparent divergences, it is indeed tempting to conclude with a contrastive picture between Christian individuality and Japanese relationality, as some have in the past (Lebra 2004, 224–54).

The individual, however, remains a contentious concept among the Brazilian Pentecostals whom I studied. That is, the cultural emphasis on sincerity and interiority does not necessarily equal the idealization of the bounded autonomous subject who exerts free will. In fact, efforts to control one's own self by sheer conscious will are devalued among my ethnographic subjects as "depending on oneself (*depender de si próprio*)," the antithesis of the ultimate virtue which is to rely on God (*depender de Deus*). Congregants certainly used the word "individual" to stress the inviolability of person-in-Christ as the sole eschatological unit (e.g., "Everyone should have an individual relationship with God; no one, not even your parents, can tell you to convert"). At the same time, they also invoked the concept of individual in a negative light, especially in remarks critical of what they perceived as liberal morality in a "relativistic world." On rare occasions when they brought up contentious issues such as abortion, the word *individualista* was used as a virtual synonym for "lacking fear of God." Pentecostal personhood, then, is multifaceted and divergent from the bounded subject with autonomous free will on two interrelated points.

First, the Pentecostal person is not a bounded subject. As culturally significant as the self's interiority may be as the locus of sincere selfhood, such inner self is not closed but open to the divine Other—God and God's associates such as Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Lara, for instance, explained the ideal of utter transparency and openness toward the Other with a metaphor of the self as a house. Many people, she observed, "hide dirty things about oneself in the rooms on the second floor" while welcoming Jesus to "the clean living room on the

first floor." One day, a demon breaks into the house and starts destroying the second floor, but Jesus remains on the first floor and does not do anything about it. When the host blames Jesus that he could easily expel the demon with his power, he answers that he could only enter the rooms the host lets him in. "If you open up only half of yourself to Jesus, then Jesus can work in only half of your life. If you let him into all the rooms of your heart, then his power permeates all of your self," Lara concluded.

What is significant about Pentecostal Christianity is that its sensory and immersive practices seek to transform such a story from a mere metaphorical allegory to experiential reality. As the pastor at Missão Apoio Toyota once put it, "God is not an abstract idea but someone (*alguêm*)" who is there for dedicated congregants. Takie, for example, was known for being quite skilled in the art of prayer among church members. Since I attended the weekly Friday night home gatherings hosted by her and her husband, I saw her pray for and with others many times, and she always seemed absorbed in the practice. Indeed, she related during an interview how she would sometimes lose track of time during prayer: "Sometimes, I come out of prayer and think, 'Wow, it's this late already? I have to start cooking dinner!'" When I asked her to describe the experience in more detail, she responded:

> It's like a ball of warm energy getting bigger and bigger inside you. As I keep praying, it swells up and fills me completely from within like a big warm balloon. Then, sometimes, it's like I am not thinking the words any more, but they are coming out of my mouth like a river. That's when I know that I am flowing in the Holy Spirit (*fluindo no Espírito Santo*).

Takie seems to be describing the effects of a mental state which Tanya Luhrmann refers to as absorption, or "the capacity to focus in on the mind's object ... and to allow that focus to increase while diminishing our attention to the myriad of everyday distractions that accompany the management of normal life" (2012a, 200). As Luhrmann's study on a branch of evangelical Christianity in the United States demonstrates, immersing oneself in such activities with rich sensory components can, over time, make God feel real:

> People train absorption by focusing on sensory detail. They practice seeing, hearing, smelling, and touching in their mind's eye. They give these imagined experiences the sensory vividness associated with the memories of real events. What they are able to imagine becomes more real to them, and God must be imagined, because God is immaterial. (221–22)

Training to interpret affective and mental movements in one's mind as the experience of an external presence teaches people "to blur the distinction between inner and outer, self and other" when it comes to God (222). Inner self, or a realm of immediate subjective experiences, is ideally neither bounded nor private in such forms of Christianity. The conventional boundary between "inner" and "outer" becomes porous. Although interiority continues to be identified as the locus of sincerity, it must also be trained as an interactive realm open to the perceived presence of alterity (Csordas 1990, 1994).

Since the notion of sincerity does not fully capture the centrality of the Other in the construction of Pentecostal personhood, here I will refer to it as "accompanied self." In much

of Pentecostal Christianity, the ideal person is not self-sufficient but instead susceptible to and reliant on the Other, whose presence people seek to make real by training to reinterpret the boundary of the self. The training of accompanied self consists in (1) the emphasis on inner sincere self, (2) the blurring of the line between "inner" and "outer" when it comes to the culturally consecrated Other, and (3) the eventual enmeshment of the sense of self in the perceived presence of alterity. As such, the accompanied self does not replace the sincere self but instead builds and expands on it. Common phrases such as "I am filled with the Holy Spirit" and "Jesus Christ lives in me" reflect the moral weight placed on the vision of accompanied self.

Second, Pentecostal personhood is not autonomous, at least not with respect to the relationship with God. The blurring of the line between inner self and outer other leads to a shift in locus of agency from conscious mind to the realm of perceived Other. Accompanied selfhood places moral emphasis on enhancing the self's susceptibility to the agency attributed to the divine Other, thus delimiting the monopoly of will by individual consciousness.

Lucas' testimony can serve as an example here. Lucas, a 25-year-old third-generation Nikkei who served as an interpreter at Missão Apoio Toyota, was first brought to Japan at the age of three. Although he started his education initially at a local Japanese public school, his parents were forced to transfer him to a Brazilian private school after several months due to severe bullying. Since all classes were taught in Portuguese, he could not speak good Japanese despite the fact that he virtually grew up in Japan. In fact, he detested the language. Some years after his conversion in late adolescence, a Japanese man walked into the church one Sunday. Since Lucas happened to be the only one present who could speak some Japanese, he had to translate the whole procession for the man, including a sermon with biblical quotes. The result, Lucas felt, was disastrous: "*Cabou!* (It's over!) This man will never come to our church again!" To Lucas' great surprise, the man kept on coming back every week, and Lucas continued to interpret for him despite his reluctance to do so.

> So I started praying to God. "Lord, what should I do? I can't speak Japanese well, you know that!" Then, He answered my prayer, "You are the interpreter of my Word. You will be used by me." But I was still resistant to God, because back then, my favorite subject was mathematics! I hated languages—Japanese, especially. But then, God talked to my heart, "Lucas, who made your tongue? I did. Do you think you'll be speaking with *your* tongue? No. I made it, so why do you think that you cannot do something with the tongue I made?" I said, "Alright, God." And I started studying like a crazy person that day. I would come home from [Brazilian] school, then I would sit down and just write *kanji, kanji, kanji* (Japanese alphabet) . . . God was working in me, God was using me.

Here, the agency of his own conscious thoughts and emotions is overridden and deemed "incorrect" by that of alterity. The sense of the Other inhibits the monopoly of will on the part of individual consciousness.

Lucas' testimony adds an important layer to how the self is understood and cultivated in Pentecostal culture. Not only is the self open and susceptible to the presence of the Other, but it is ideally also yielding to the Other's agency. That is, alterity—that which is perceived

to arise from the margins of consciousness—can exert just as much, if not more, agency as one's own conscious mind. In fact, any markers of the autonomous self—self-will, self-control, and self-reliance—must be surrendered to the agency of the Other to cultivate the ideal accompanied self in this cultural context. Many of my informants referred to this ultimate virtue as "obedience to God."

## Conclusion

What constitutes Pentecostal personhood? A case study of Brazilian Pentecostals in transnational Japan yields a twofold response to this question. First, some individualist logics do inform Pentecostal visions of moral selfhood, as seen in the ideals of sincere speech, agency of human interiority, and abstraction of the self from material and social interdependence. Such an ethical emphasis stands out especially in the Japanese context, where relational selves and disciplinary pedagogy—which do not necessarily value the "inner self"—predominate.

The ethnographic picture, however, is more complex than the relational/individual, Japanese/Christian dichotomy, which brings me to my second point. The ideal self in Pentecostal culture is "accompanied" by the Other, that is, neither bounded nor autonomous. In fact, its primary focus is on the direct relationship with the divine Other, to whom the self must be open and transparent. Ideally, the dependence on the conscious "I" eventually yields to the obedience to the transcendent "Him," whose agency practitioners seek to render tangible through a set of sensory and bodily practices (Luhrmann 2012b; Luhrmann and Morgain 2012). Thus, while Pentecostal personhood may be characterized as individualistic, it is also founded on the relational interdependence with the culturally legitimized Other (such as God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit). In fact, in that they both place great emphasis on self/Other relationships, accompanied self and disciplined selves are not completely opposed to each other.

What I characterize as the accompanied self in Pentecostal visions of moral personhood, then, can be considered as a kind of relational individuality. While it is individualistic in its focus on person-in-Christ as the eschatological unit and inner self as the locus of sincerity, it is relational in its emphasis on the relationship with the transcendent Other as the site of ethical cultivation. These observations point to the fundamental role the Other plays in formations of self, particularly when it comes to moral pursuits. In a sense, the accompanied self is just as relational as disciplined selves—but in significantly different ways.

It is my hope that the concept of the accompanied self contributes to the cross-cultural study of the self in psychological anthropology by deconstructing the dichotomous rhetoric between individuality and relationality. The transnational context of my ethnographic study allowed for a direct comparison between Pentecostal personhood and Japanese selfhood, which are known for individualism and relationalism, respectively. My observation is that, although the semiotic ideology of sincerity and the pedagogy of form-centered discipline each fuel different notions of personhood, this divergence cannot be taken as a fixed line

between individuality and relationality. As the concept of accompanied self demonstrates, Pentecostal migrant converts seek to be individualized by the relationality with the culturally consecrated Other by training to reinterpret the boundary of the self. In other words, they aspire to become relational individuals.

The concept of the accompanied self engages two distinct fields of inquiry. On the one hand, it contributes to the ongoing debates on the limits and nuances of Protestant individualism in the study of global Christianity. On the other hand, it also speaks to the existing work on relational selves in Japan by illuminating how transnational migrants experience and interpret the logics of self-cultivation dominant among the Japanese majority. By bringing these two bodies of literature—which tend to focus on individuality and relationality, respectively—into conversation, I have stressed that these two visions of personhood are far from dichotomous but instead are interlaced with one another among many migrant converts. The accompanied self does not fall within either the "individual" or the "relational." It can thus serve as a reminder that individualism and relationalism are not dichotomous entities but rather analytical themes that help capture the rich layers of personhood.

SUMA IKEUCHI is Assistant Professor at University of Alabama.

## Notes

1.  By "Christian," most of my Pentecostal informants meant "born-again Christian."

2.  My response, "my family is Buddhist," was a direct translation of the common phrase used to identify religious affiliation in Japan: <u>Ie wa bukkyō desu.</u>" In that it reflects the long history of interdependence between kinship, Buddhism, and state power in Japan, there is nothing "factual" about this response (Hardacre 1989; Rowe 2011).

3.  Strathern defines the notion of the dividual as a view of personhood "as the plural and composite site of the relationships" (1988, 13).

4.  "Selves" is a common term in the anthropological literature on Japanese personhood. While it may sound somewhat unnatural in colloquial English, I will employ the term throughout this article to emphasize the fluid and contextual dimension of the self.

5.  By "bounded selfhood," I mean self-contained, autonomous subjectivity that cordons off the individual from external social contingencies. Bounded selfhood is a form of subjectivity that minimizes relationality and regards the self as a solitary unit.

6. Between 1970 and 2010, the percentage of the Brazilian population that identified with Protestantism increased more than fourfold from 5% to 22%. This exponential growth owes mostly to the expansion of Pentecostalism, which grew from 6% in 1991 to 13% in 2010 (Pew Research Center 2013).

7. Some apartments in Homi Danchi are subsidized by the Aichi Prefecture for low-income families.

8. 68.3% (127 out of 186 valid responses).

9. Protestants constituted 7%, an absolute minority.

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