

Jesus Loves Japan: Diasporic Return and Global Pentecostalism in a Brazilian Migrant Church

1. Brief Description

A new pattern of mobility has been taking hold in Asia for the past several decades: the state-sanctioned “return” of diasporic populations. This regime of return has produced potential beneficiaries around the globe, attracting Indian-Americans to Bangalore, Korean-Chinese to Seoul, and Japanese-Brazilians—or Nikkeis—to Toyota. Twenty-six years after the introduction of the “long-term resident” visa, which enabled the mass-migration of Nikkeis, there are roughly 178,000 Brazilian nationals living in Japan. The majority are second- and third-generation descendants born and raised in Brazil who primarily speak Portuguese. While Nikkeis benefit from the visa policy that confers the right to settlement virtually as a right of blood, they are often marginalized for their ethnic ambiguity and working-class profile. In this context of contested belonging, many have been converting to Pentecostalism, which has exploded in Latin America and flourished with the global flows of Latino populations since the 1970s.

Jesus Loves Japan offers a rare window on the people at the crossroads of Asian return migration and Latin American Pentecostalism in transnational Japan. Grounded in detailed ethnographic materials collected over 14 months in Toyota, Japan, it tells a compelling story about the Nikkei Brazilians who experience Pentecostalism as the “third culture” that can help them transcend ethno-national boundaries—the world where they have long been placed in an ambiguous space of hyphenated identity. While migration studies continues to conceptualize return primarily in ethnic terms, *Jesus Loves Japan* foregrounds the impact of religion in the political process of homecoming. In so doing, it also engages the literature in the anthropology of Christianity to present fresh insights into the role of transnational mobility in the development of born-again identity. The book’s ethnography thus illuminates and integrates theoretical discussions about transnational migration and global Christianity.

Just like the people who fill its pages, *Jesus Loves Japan* straddles different worlds. Uniquely positioned to investigate the global crosscurrents of nationalism, migration, and religion, the book speaks to an interdisciplinary audience in East Asian studies, Latin American studies, religious studies, migration studies, ethnic studies, and cultural anthropology. Written in accessible and concise prose (~92,000 words), the book could serve as a key text for a wide range of upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses in these fields. To enhance its readability, every chapter opens with a vivid story or ethnographic scene, which then gives shape to the central questions and concepts that are addressed in the remainder of the chapter. In sum, *Jesus Loves Japan* offers an innovative and yet accessible look at the intersection of migration and religion in ways that crosscut traditional disciplinary boundaries.

2. Outline / Table of Contents

Introduction

Pilgrims in a Strange Homeland

“No one in this nation can understand the meaning of being a pilgrim better than us foreign migrant workers,” exclaimed a Nikkei Brazilian presbyter in Portuguese during a Sunday service in the ██████████ Pentecostal Church in Toyota, Japan. The congregants—mostly Nikkeis who work as unskilled manual laborers in auto factories—nodded in agreement as he connected their contested national belonging in Japan with the biblical theme of pilgrimage in a strange land. The book opens with this ethnographic scene to illustrate what I call “the morality of mobility.” Far from being solely spatial, movement is temporal, emotional, political, and moral to those who experience it. The introduction then turns to the book’s contribution to the studies of mobility and Christianity and ends with a brief roadmap of the following chapters.

Chapter 1

Japanese Blood, Brazilian Birth, and Transnational God: An Ethno-Historical Context

“God is like an iPhone. You can connect it anytime anywhere, whether you are in Brazil or in Japan,” one Nikkei convert explained to me. This concise remark triangulates his Japanese, Brazilian, and Christian identities and makes a firm statement about what comes first. Chapter 1 details how Japanese ancestry, Brazilian birth, and Christian conversion came to shape the lives of Nikkei Pentecostals in contemporary Japan. The story begins in 1908, when the first Japanese migrants arrived in Santos, Brazil, and fades out in 2016, when I made a follow-up visit to Brazilian communities in Toyota, Japan. By recounting the historical trajectories of Nikkei Brazilian diasporas, the chapter illuminates how migrants have continuously grappled with the tenuous relationship between nation, ethnicity, and religion. After demonstrating that identities have always been on the move among Nikkeis, I then discuss the social setting of my ethnographic fieldwork within the context of their historical mobility.

Chapter 2

Life Suspended, Life Renewed: Conversion to the Present

“We Nikkeis stop living in the present here in Japan to work and save money for a better life in Brazil. But the future is uncertain, so we feel trapped in this strange land of our ancestors.” Nikkeis in Japan are at once labor migrants and “return” migrants, who dream of a better future while working in low-paying jobs on visas granted on the basis of their past ancestral ties to the nation. As such, they grapple with the images of the past, the present, and the future in complex ways. Chapter 2 delves into these temporal hopes and anxieties. Specifically, it explores the ways in which conversion addresses common concerns regarding time among migrant converts, such as what they describe as “putting aside living (*deixar de viver*, in Portuguese).” Seen through the lens of time, migration and conversion become part of the same process of moral subject formation, thus forming a “temporal tandem.”

Chapter 3

From Discipline to Love: Historicizing Race and Affect

“*Te amo, querida* (I love you, my dear).” At the Sunday service following the weekend retreat for “family healing,” many spouses, parents, and children exchanged affectionate words and hugs before the whole congregation. Such open expressions of love are commonplace in many

Christian—especially charismatic—communities around the globe. While my informants suggested that love is therefore a timeless Christian emotion, the trope of love seems to carry multivocal meanings within their century-old transpacific migratory circuits. Chapter 3 delves into the historical register of Christian love in this ethnographic context. I start by illuminating how Nikkeis have transformed from “Asian whites” with “culture of discipline” in Brazil to “delinquent Latinos” with “culture of disorder” in Japan. Given this historical trajectory, Nikkei congregants often contrasted Christian love (*amor*) with Japanese discipline (*educação*). Specifically, they suggested that love augments and overcomes rigid discipline because it is more sincere, spontaneous, and modern. The chapter thus situates the experience of Christian love within the transnational landscape of flexible racial identities, thereby historicizing affect.

Chapter 4

Of Two Bloods: Kinship and Citizenship in Question

“Utterly, 100%, it’s Japanese blood that runs through our veins. I also gave Japanese names to my kids. But these bullies still told them, ‘We don’t need you foreigners here,’” one Nikkei migrant mother told me in a quivering voice. To many Nikkeis, their “Japanese blood” carries a contentious meaning as a marker of their marginal place in the national kinship of Japan. This is in stark contrast to the other kind of blood that migrant converts frequently spoke about: the blood of Jesus as the medium of Christian fellowship open for any “brothers and sisters in faith.” Chapter 3 takes the tension between the two bloods—the “Japanese blood” and the blood of Jesus—as the point of departure to probe how Nikkei converts are crafting a new sense of citizenship in their strange ancestral homeland. While the national kinship locates the source of migrants’ moral entitlement in their Japanese ancestral past, the Pentecostal kinship emphasizes the importance of continuous conversion in the charismatic present. I will delve into the ethical aspects of kin-making by investigating the two diverging logics of relatedness.

Chapter 5

Layered Faith: Language, Meaning, and Belief in Pentecostal Practice

“Water baptism is done by men; the baptism in the Holy Spirit is done by God,” said a pastor during his sermon entitled “Strengthening the Faith”. His remark implies that converts differentiate between various phases in their cultivation of charismatic faith, with some steps considered more divine than others. Chapter 5 challenges the widespread view—both in popular imagination and academic discourse—that Protestant Christianity is first and foremost a culture of sincere belief. By analyzing the ritual life at ██████████ Toyota, I demonstrate that the purview of what converts call “faith (*fé*)” goes beyond the cognized acceptance of explicit doctrines. For example, converts do not express much concern with declarative belief when they speak in tongues—a practice that seems to appeal to the speaker’s embodied disposition. By analyzing a wide range of rituals, the chapter demonstrates that charismatic faith in this ethnographic context consists of multiple layers. It is this multiplicity that makes it possible for migrants from diverse cultural backgrounds to envision and construct “one community in faith.”

Chapter 6

Accompanied Self: Debating Pentecostal Personhood in Transnational Japan

“Japanese people always say that,” my Nikkei Pentecostal interlocutor lamented in a dismissive tone when I answered his question about my religious identity by saying that my family was Buddhist. “I am asking about *you*, your individual relationship with God, not about your family!” While the notion of the individual figures prominently in the debate about Christian personhood

in anthropology, the concept of “relational selves” has shaped much of the existing literature on Japanese self. Chapter 6 takes this seeming divergence between “individual Christian” and “interdependent Japanese” as the point of departure. It probes how Nikkei Brazilian converts narrated their subject positions vis-à-vis the Japanese majority by engaging multiple ideals of personhood. Interestingly, both migrant converts and their Japanese neighbors often articulated their understandings about authentic self by discussing the category of religion (*religião* in Portuguese, or *shūkyō* in Japanese). The chapter therefore brings together religion, authenticity, and personhood to illuminate how my Brazilian and Japanese informants envisioned the ethics of the self.

Conclusion

Jesus Loves Japan: Morality of Mobility in the Twenty-First Century

In the conclusion, I revisit the theme of moral mobility. As the ethnographic expositions in the preceding chapters have shown, mobility is at once spatial, temporal, affective, and ethical. My argument is that movement itself would be simply inconceivable without such moral registers. “*Jesus ama o Japão* (Jesus loves Japan)” is a phrase I heard repeatedly in a wide range of contexts during my fieldwork. Some migrant converts exclaimed the phrase in a triumphant tone while evangelizing Japanese passersby in public; others uttered it more hesitantly while reminiscing about the sense of in-betweenness that had haunted them in Japan. In other words, migrant converts uttered the same phrase—“Jesus loves Japan”—to generatively articulate the ethical dimensions of their mobility. The concluding chapter explores how such experiences of moral mobility may be redrawing the boundaries of Nikkei diaspora in the present.

3. Market Consideration

This book is written for scholars, graduate students, and advanced undergraduates interested in transnational migration, globalization of religion, Japan, and/or Brazil.

(1) Scholars and Specialists in My Fields

I derive my confidence in the book’s appeal to an expansive scholarly audience from the positive inputs I have received from the leading scholars in some of my fields. The feedback commended the ethnographic depth and theoretical rigor of my writing.

██████████, a leading scholar in the anthropology of Christianity and ██████████ ██████████, read a previous version of Chapter 5 and provided the following comment: “I think your notion of ‘accompanied self’ is very compelling and will become an important part of the debate on individualism and Christianity, and I think your discussion of sincerity is really original and excellent – in fact, it may be the first real ethnographically grounded advance in this discussion I have seen in a long time.”

██████████, a specialist on Brazil who ██████████ ██████████, read a previous version of Chapter 2 and found it “extremely well written.” Based on his own research experience, he commended my writing for its ability to “capture the hopes, anxieties, and *geist* of these people.”

██████████, a specialist on Japan and ██████████ ██████████, read Chapter 4 and found it “ethnographically rich and theoretically informed.”

He also commented that the project is “an important contribution to the scholarly exploration of globalizing Asia.”

Based on these encouraging inputs from established scholars in diverse fields, I believe the book has a great potential to attract a broad readership interested in religion and migration in Brazil, Japan, and beyond.

(2) Advanced Undergraduates and Graduate Students

The manuscript, including notes and references, contains roughly 92,000 words. This length would make a concise book suited for course reading. I received generally positive impressions when I assigned parts of Chapter 2 to undergraduates in an advanced (300-level) anthropology course on religion and healing in 2015. Students spoke about their fascination with the flexible identities of return migrants in class discussion. I also assigned parts of Chapter 6 to undergraduates in an advanced course (400-level) in religious studies in 2017. The majority could accurately summarize the text’s conceptual argument in their weekly online posts, which attests to the readability of the prose. I therefore believe that the book is adaptable to advanced undergraduate and graduate courses in a wide range of fields, ranging from anthropology to migration studies to religious studies.

4. Comparable and Competing Volumes

Jesus Loves Japan will compete primarily with books on (1) return migration in Japan and Asia, (2) global Pentecostalism in Brazil and beyond, and (3) the intersection of diaspora, return, and religion. Below are some of such works. *Jesus Loves Japan*, however, is unique in that it creatively synthesizes the theoretical discussions in the study of return in migration studies and the study of global Christianity in the anthropology of religion.

(1) Ethnographic Monographs on Return Migration in Japan and Asia

Linger, Daniel Toro. 2001. *No One Home: Brazilian Selves Remade in Japan*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Roth, Joshua Hotaka. 2002. *Brokered Homeland: Japanese Brazilian Migrants in Japan*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Tsuda, Takeyuki. 2003. *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland: Japanese Brazilian Return Migration in Transnational Perspective*. New York: Columbia University Press.

As Xiang Biao and others pointed out in their edited volume, *Return: Nationalizing Transnational Mobility in Asia* (Duke 2013), return migration points to a new form of citizenship in today’s globalizing world, thus making it an important topic of study in mobility studies. Being one of the better-known examples of return in Asia, Nikkei Brazilians have received notable scholarly attention in the form of ethnographic monograph. The three existing books on this population listed above, however, all came out roughly 15 years ago and their excellent ethnographic insights are consequently becoming slightly outdated. Not only can *Jesus Loves Japan* provide an up-to-date picture of Nikkeis in Japan, it also engages an issue that the three earlier works never focused on: religion. My book thus simultaneously builds on and goes beyond the competing volumes on Nikkei return migrants in Japan.

(2) Ethnographic Monographs on Global Pentecostalism in Brazil and Beyond

- Burdick, John. 2013. *The Color of Sound: Race, Religion, and Music in Brazil*. New York: NYU Press.
- Van de Kamp, Linda. 2016. *Violent Conversion: Brazilian Pentecostalism and Urban Women in Mozambique*. Suffolk, United Kingdom: James Currey.
- Vilaça, Aparecida, 2016. *Praying and Preying: Christianity in Indigenous Amazonia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

With the rapid rise of its Pentecostal population, Brazil is today an epicenter of Pentecostalism in Latin America and beyond. *The Color of Sound* and *Praying and Preying* are two excellent books that investigate the ramifications of Pentecostal conversion among the nation's ethnic and racial minorities. The former delves into the religion's racial meanings among afro-Brazilian Pentecostal singers while the latter details the uneven process of Christianization among the indigenous Wari'. These studies are valuable since they carefully situate the rise of charismatic Christianity in the Brazilian national context. Brazilian Pentecostalism, however, extends far beyond the nation's territorial boundary today. *Violent Conversion* addresses this global reach of Brazilian Pentecostal denominations with a powerful ethnographic study from Mozambique. The book offers an exciting window on the South-South connections of globalizing religious networks. *Jesus Loves Japan* similarly sheds light on the evolving landscape of global Pentecostalism but, unlike *Violent Conversion*, focuses on the movements from the South to the North. Doing so with a study of Nikkeis in Japan is important because the country holds the third-largest Brazilian expatriate community in the world after the US and Paraguay.

(3) Ethnographic Monographs on the Intersection of Diaspora, Return, and Religion

- Capone, Stefania. 2010. *Searching for Africa in Brazil: Power and Tradition in Candomblé*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Seeman, Don. 2009. *One People, One Blood: Ethiopian-Israelis and the Return to Judaism*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Valentina, Napolitano. 2015. *Migrant Hearts and the Atlantic Return: Transnationalism and the Roman Catholic Church*. New York: Fordham University Press.

These three books are excellent ethnographies that, like *Jesus Loves Japan*, offer rich and accessible analyses of the interrelationships of diaspora, return, and religion. While they focus on diverse geographical areas and religious traditions, they all empathically approach marginalized people's attempts to envision their roots, pasts, and identities. *Searching for Africa in Brazil* details how Candomblé practitioners reconstruct the "pure Africanness" of their practice by appropriating the scholarly discourse about Afro-Brazilian religious orthodoxy. *One People, One Blood* narrates a story of Ethiopian-Israelis who seek full belonging in the nation by negotiating the contours of national kinship and Jewish identity. *Migrant Hearts and the Atlantic Return* focuses on Latin Americans in Rome and analyzes the "return" of New-World faith to the putative center of Roman Catholicism. *Jesus Loves Japan* draws on but diverges from these works because of its emphasis on Pentecostalism—a religion that, according to prominent scholars such as Birgit Meyer, mediates a "break from the past" rather than a "return to the past." My book delves into the complexity of this paradoxical "return" through Pentecostalism.

In sum, *Jesus Loves Japan* builds on and synthesizes the study of global Christianity in the anthropology of religion and the study of return in migration studies. Return is an intensely political process that also involves intimate work of self-making among its participants. An analysis of Pentecostal conversion among return migrants consequently needs to adopt a psychopolitical approach. The book does this by elaborating on the “morality of mobility,” a framework I devise to highlight the inseparability of emotive, ethical, and political forces that shape the Nikkei experiences of movement and conversion. *Jesus Loves Japan* thus illuminates why Pentecostalism has flourished among people who inhabit some of the most fluid and contested boundaries—cultural, ethnic, and national—in this age of globalization.



5. Apparatus / Illustrative Materials

The estimated total word count of the completed manuscript is 92,000, including footnotes and bibliography (no appendices). The bibliography includes roughly 380 references cited in the main text (in approximately 8,000 words). The footnotes are roughly 2,000 words. The main text is therefore around 82,000 words. I plan to include 5 black and white photographs, 1 table, and 2 media images. I took all the photographs I hope to include. I also made the table, which explains how the local terminology of Nikkei identity correlates with different visa categories. The 2 images I hope to include are from the Portuguese-language magazine called *Alternativa*, which is widely read among Brazilian migrants in Japan (see Status of the Work).

6. Status of the Work

The full manuscript will be ready for review by January 2018. As of March 2017, the thorough revision of the dissertation on which this book is based is roughly 50% complete. To finish the revision, I will spend the upcoming summer at the University of Göttingen, Germany, as a Fellow-in-Residence funded by the Social Science Research Council’s InterAsia Program. Specifically, I will tie all the six chapters together with the theme of “morality of mobility,” which refers to the interworking of religion and migration in the subject formation of transnational migrants. Once I return from Germany in the fall of 2017, I will then seek expert feedback for the entirety or parts of the draft from my colleagues to fine-tune the overall arguments. The projected date for submission of the manuscript is hence January 2018.

Parts of Chapter 2 and 6 have been published in peer-review journals: *Ethos* and *Ethnos*. I have revised both chapters so they better fit into the overall flow of this manuscript. I will seek permission to include the revised versions in the book once I establish an ongoing conversation with an academic press interested in this book project.

Two of the images I want to include in the book require permission from  , a publishing company located in Tokyo, Japan. I will start the permission request process once I establish an ongoing conversation with an academic press interested in this book project.

7. Possible Reviewers

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