

Japan's two and half centuries of isolation ended in the middle of the 19th century. Since then, knowledge and activities of Japanese culture, people and religion have spread across the world. The first known incidence of the propagation of Japanese religions overseas was in the 1890s when several schools of Japanese Buddhism began to be practiced in Hawaii on the basis of Japanese migration and settlement there. Thus over a century has passed since Japanese religion began proselytising outside Japan.

Maintaining 'Japaneseness':

the strategy of the Church of World Messianity in Brazil

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Japanese religions have been propagated in Brazil since 1908 when the first group of Japanese immigrants arrived there. Currently there are approximately 60 branches of Japanese religions in Brazil and more than ten have been engaged in active proselytisation (Matsuoka and Ronan, 2007). Among these religions, Japanese new religions have been the most successful in acquiring followers, overshadowing the traditional Japanese religions, Buddhism and Shinto. The three major Japanese new religions in Brazil by number of followers are Seicho-No-Ie ('The House of Growth') (800,000 followers), Perfect Liberty (*Perfect Liberty Kyodan* in Japanese, henceforth termed 'PL') (70,000) and The Church of World Messianity (*Sekai Kyusei Kyo*, henceforth termed 'Messianity') (400,000). Although these numbers may be inflated, it is safe to say that there are at least one million followers of Japanese new religions in Brazil. This fact may not seem remarkable when the reader considers that there are over 1.2 million ethnic Japanese-Brazilians from the first to the fifth generation, or that São Paulo city has the largest Japanese immigrant population as a city in the world. But it is important to point out that over 95 percent of the followers of these religions are non-ethnic Japanese Brazilians.

By comparing Japanese religions and companies stationed abroad, Nakamaki proposes three categories of foreign-based Japanese religions (Nakamaki 1986). The first category is religions whose headquarters in Japan have neither eagerness nor policies to propagate abroad. Missionaries of this type of religion must proselytise in foreign countries without suggestions or financial support from Japanese headquarters. Examples include Shinto shrines in Hawaii. The second category includes religions that try to proselytise in foreign countries but only adopt some superficial aspects of the host culture and make every effort to maintain their own Japanese ways, rituals and beliefs abroad. Most schools of Japanese Buddhism and Tenri Kyō are typical religions in this category. The third category includes religions that try to grasp the foreign culture positively and sometimes transform their established rituals to fit into the religious arena of the host society. Seicho-No-Ie, PL, and Messianity fall into this category. What happens in reality



Followers gathering in front of the shrine at Messianity's sacred place.

does not fall short of the expectation we may have; the most successful Japanese religions in foreign cultural contexts are those in the third category.

'A pure Japanese policy'

Each Japanese new religion in Brazil has tried to fulfill its own aims in terms of propagation. To understand the organisational aspects of Japanese new religions in Brazil, it is useful to refer to related and suggestive results from the study of Japanese business abroad. Hulbert and Brandt, who study Brazilian companies controlled by multinational corporations (MNCs) headquartered in Japan, the United States, and Europe, reach the following conclusion: in the Brazilian offices of Japanese MNCs, presidents are more likely to be Japanese, and control by Japanese headquarters is stricter than that of American and European MNCs (Hulbert and Brandt 1980). Japanese MNCs have tried to maintain the identities of their group's companies abroad by installing expatriate Japanese managers as executives in these companies and maintaining strict control by the headquarters in Japan. This strategy may be called a 'pure Japanese policy'.

Has Messianity adopted a 'pure Japanese policy'? The Church of World Messianity of Brazil, (about which I published an ethnography entitled *Japanese Prayer below*

the Equator), is a Japanese new religion that has proselytised in Brazil (Matsuoka 2007). The Church of World Messianity, a religion founded by Okada Mokichi (1882-1955), has spread to 78 countries. In terms of the number of followers, significant countries are: the US, Canada, Brazil, Peru and Argentina in the Americas, Korea, Thailand and Sri Lanka in Asia, Angola in Africa and Portugal in Europe. It has approximately 2 million followers world wide. Brazil has the second largest number of followers (400,000) following Thailand (600,000).

I will take the case of Messianity in Brazil in order to introduce some principles of organisational structure in new religions. Messianity was introduced to Brazil in 1955. The group increased the number of its followers steadily and claims that it has 400,000 followers in 2008, and that over 95 percent of them are non-ethnic Japanese Brazilians. Messianity is best known for its religious activity *Jhorei* - transmission of the light of God by holding one's hand over the recipient. Messianity's doctrine and practice is strongly influenced by that of Shinto, a Japanese traditional religion. For this reason, it might be considered that Messianity is rather out of place in the Brazilian cultural milieu and very different from traditional Brazilian religious orientations, which tend towards spirit-

ism and Roman Catholicism. However in terms of doctrine and practice, there are some aspects that indicate continuity between Messianity and several influential Brazilian religions. An example is the belief in the existence of the world of spirits from whom human beings may receive transcendental power, a notion Messianity shares with Kardecismo, a French spiritism that has spread throughout Brazil, and also with the Brazil-born spiritism, Umbanda.

As mentioned earlier, it has been observed that the percentage of non-ethnic Japanese followers in Seicho-No-Ie, PL, and Messianity exceeds 95 percent. There are also many non-ethnic Japanese members of the clergy in these groups. The higher the rank of clergy, however, the higher the proportion of ethnic Japanese, and the presidents of the Brazilian chapters of all of these three groups are ethnic Japanese sent by Japanese headquarters. From this data then, we can surmise that these groups have adopted the 'pure Japanese policy' within Nakamaki's typology, but major differences in the policies of these three groups must also be accounted for. I will try to elucidate Messianity's policy for maintaining its identity by comparing it with those of the two other groups.

Seicho-No-Ie, which has been propagated

in Brazil since the 1930s, has many ethnic Japanese Brazilian clergy, and the president is a second-generation Japanese Brazilian. By contrast, all successive presidents of PL have been Japanese who were sent to Brazil by the Japanese headquarters. They stay in Brazil for seven to nine years and then return to Japan. During this time, some learn Portuguese, some do not. Generally they are not committed to speaking Portuguese with the Brazilian followers. In terms of leadership, Messianity differs from both of these groups. The Brazilian president of Messianity, Reverend Tetsuo Watanabe has been in Brazil for almost 40 years. Since Watanabe holds significant positions in Messianity's global organisation, he travels frequently between Japan and Brazil. Therefore, he addresses followers only at special events such as The Festival of Heaven on Earth, but he speaks Portuguese very well and his dynamic preaching style is popular with followers. His speeches are regularly summarised in the *Jornal Messiânico*, Messianity's monthly journal. In 1992, there were 14 Reverends (the highest rank in the Messianity hierarchy) under Watanabe, 13 of whom were Japanese who immigrated to Brazil in the 1960's for proselytisation. After almost 40 years in the country, the Japanese clergy have assimilated into Brazilian culture, although they sometimes make statements such as: "I am not accustomed to *feijão* (Brazilian popular boiled bean dish)," or "I hope to send my daughter to Japan to receive a college education there." One of them told me "we [Japanese Reverends] are already half Brazilian." In this way it can be seen that Messianity, which sends Japanese religious leaders from Japan for a lifetime posting in Brazil, differs from PL which follows the more corporate model of sending 'Japanese expatriate managers' for a fixed term to Brazil, after which they return to Japan.

According to Maeyama, an anthropologist who researched Japanese religions in Brazil, in 1967 Messianity had around 7,000 committed followers and 60 to 70 percent of them were non-ethnic Japanese Brazilians. When this figure is expanded to include *frequentador*, those who have not yet formally joined Messianity but visit the church, 90 percent were non-ethnic Japanese Brazilians (Maeyama 1983). The percentage of ethnic Japanese among the followers of six groups of Japanese new

religions in Brazil in 1967 is shown in Table 1. According to this research, Messianity had the highest percentage of non-ethnic Japanese among the six groups (although since 1967 this percentage has increased in Seicho-No-Ie and PL also). We can conclude that, from the outset, Messianity has propagated itself among non-ethnic Japanese Brazilians more eagerly than other

Table 1
Ethnic Breakdown among Japanese New Religions in Brazil in 1967

Religious Group	ethnic Japanese Brazilians (%)	other (%)
Ōmoto	50	50
Tenri Kyō	100	0
Seicho-No-Ie	99–100	0–1
Messianity	40	60
PL	80–90	10–20
Sōka Gakkai	100	0

groups, and has been very successful in the project. There are indications that the leaders of Messianity at its Japanese headquarters, were, at that time, experiencing ambivalent feelings towards this remarkable achievement. On the one hand, they were pleased to be realising Okada's slogan "Messianity should be international", but at the same time they were afraid that Messianity would become 'Brazilianised.' Faced with the increase of non-ethnic Japanese Brazilians followers, the Brazilian leaders started considering certain procedures which might help maintain the church's identity. One of the main pillars of this identity maintenance project was a seminarist system started in Brazil in 1971. In the beginning, the number of seminarists was around five, but in the last 20 years, five to ten seminarists have been sent to Japan for a year or two after being trained at the headquarters in São Paulo, to study Japanese language and culture and even proselytise in Japan. Messianity branches in Korea, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Angola, and Portugal have adopted the seminarist system, but the Brazilian one has been the most organised.

These seminarists, including both ethnic and non-ethnic Japanese Brazilians, become the elite of Messianity in Brazil and globally. After completing their training in Japan, their main duty will be proselytisation and some of them are most definitely destined to become leaders of Messianity both in Brazil and worldwide. In terms of its organisational ties with Japan, it is highly significant that Messianity sends seminarists to Japan to experience the culture of the country from which the group emerged.

New religions as multinationals?

I return to the comparison of Japanese new religions with Japanese multinational corporations. In general, when Japanese companies start business abroad they establish affiliated overseas companies as subsidiaries. Kono suggests there are three types of management in these subsidiaries (Kono 1984). The first type is a subsidiary whose president and departmental or section managers are all expatriate Japanese, posted to the venture from Japan. A newly established overseas company or a company that is eager to raise productivity tends to adopt this pattern. The second type is a company in which only the engineering and finance departments are con-

trolled by Japanese managers. This type of company is typical of those with a strong focus on engineering and thus it employs many Japanese engineers. The last type is a company that employs many local executives and the role of expatriate Japanese is as consultants. Only the president, the manager of the finance department, and staff who support these local line manager executives are Japanese. This type is seen among companies that have a long history of doing business overseas. Based on Kono's argument, it is possible that a company with the first type of management style would adopt the third type in the long run. It was in 1955 when two young Messianity followers started its proselytisation without financial support from the Japanese headquarters. But in the 1960s, the headquarters sent young Japanese missionaries to Brazil and started dominating Brazilian Messianity. Thus, Messianity has



'Guarapiranga'.
Messianity's sacred place. Courtesy of Messianity.

fallen into the the first category since the 1960s. But 'Brazilianisation' has been progressing steadily in this new religion. As previously mentioned, in 1992 there were 14 Reverends; 13 were ethnic Japanese who came from Japan and one was an ethnic Japanese Brazilian. In 2008, by contrast, there exist 37 Reverends; 13 ethnic Japanese from Japan, five ethnic Japanese Brazilians, and 19 non-ethnic Japanese Brazilians.

So far in Brazil, there has not been a Japanese new religion that resembles the third type of Kono's classification, in which Japanese act as consultants. But in the near future, it seems likely that Messianity will adopt the third type of management style and the organisation has been preparing for it.

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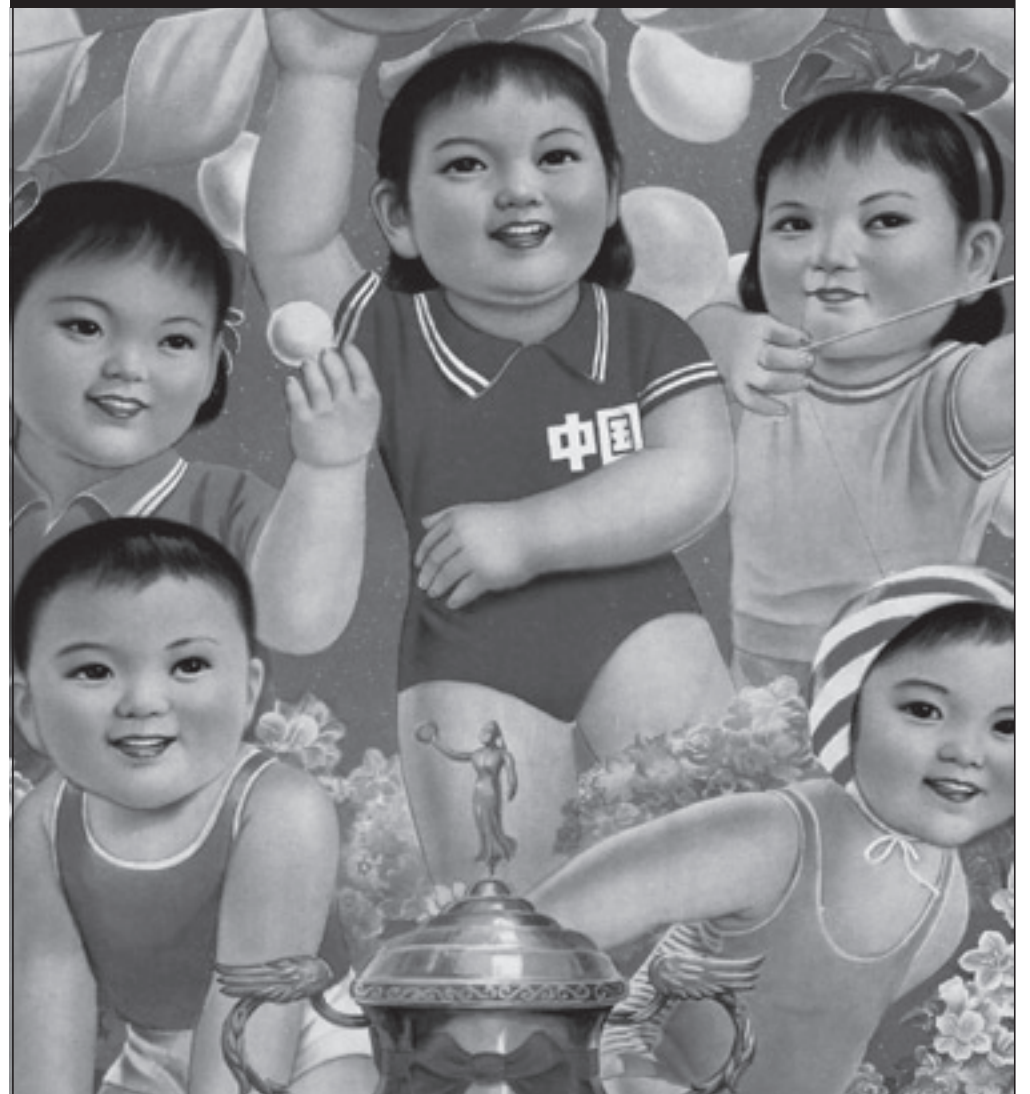
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CHINA IN POSTERS: THE DREAMT REALITY



Kunsthall, Rotterdam

14 June to 7 September 2008

In anticipation of the Olympic Games Kunsthall Rotterdam presents a broad selection of Chinese posters, originating from the two largest and internationally authoritative collections in the world. 'China in Posters' provides the audience with an historical survey of seven decennia of Chinese poster art, in which both the periods before, during and after Mao are covered. Some of the posters on display are extremely rare and no longer available in China. This exhibition belongs to a successful series of exhibitions on Asian Art — in 2004 for instance, the Kunsthall presented a large collection of North Korean Propaganda Art.

History of China

The posters visualize the modern history of China from the thirties up to the Olympic Games in 2008. Workers, farmers and soldiers set an example to the public during The Great Leap Forward (1958-1960) by working firmly on creating the China as Mao had envisioned it: an industrial nation with an enormous steel production. During the Cultural Revolution the posters showed wildly enthusiastic men and women waving their red books fanatically. In the course of time the tone of the political message and the way people were portrayed changed. Although propaganda and symbolism remained present in the posters that were produced after the death of Mao in 1976, the militant and political messages were more and more pushed aside to make way for posters stimulating and canalizing consumptive behaviour. Western influence had evidently reached China.

The posters belong to collections from the International Institute for Social History (IISG) and from Stefan Landsberger (University of Leiden, University of Amsterdam).

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