

THE STRUCTURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SPIRITUAL UNIVERSE OF THE OKINAWAN CULT CENTER

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Resumo: Este artigo examinará as características e os significados, tanto no nível coletivo como no nível individual, do universo espiritual dos deuses e dos espíritos possessivos no centro espiritual criado por Maria Nobuko (no texto ela será referida apenas como Maria), uma mulher que emigrou para o Brasil de Okinawa durante o período pré-guerra. E também discutirá a questão da identidade religiosa e étnica da fundadora desse centro e seus seguidores, 90% dos quais são okinawanos e seus descendentes.

Palavras-chave: imigração okinawana, sincretismo religioso, umbanda, espiritismo, possessão, etnicidade, invenção de cultura.

Summary: This article will examine the characteristics and the meaning of spiritual universe and possession spirits of the spiritual center created by Maria Nobuko, a woman who immigrated to Brazil from Okinawa during the pre-war period, in individual and collective level. And also will discuss topics about the ethnic-religious identity of the founder and its followers, 90% of which are Okinawans or their descendents.

Key words: Immigration from Okinawa, religious sincretism, Umbanda, Espiritismo Brasileiro, possession, ethnicity, Cultural invention.

1. Introduction

This paper examines the characteristics and significance of the spiritual universe-gods and possessive spirits of the spiritual cult center created by Maria Nobuko¹ (henceforth referred to as Maria), a woman who emigrated to Brazil from Okinawa during the pre-war period.

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1. This woman has both a Japanese name: Nobuko, and a Christian name: Maria. These two names can be related to her identity. Regarding the cult domain, she was only called by her Christian name Maria and her Japanese name Nobuko was not used. On the other hand, her Japanese name Nobuko was used in the yuta domain. This was not only Maria's case but was also the case among the mediums and the participants in general.

Maria was born in Sedaka of the former Kushi-village, Okinawa Prefecture in 1928. At the age of two (1930), she emigrated along with her parents to Brazil to join her paternal uncle. Her life had been full of various misfortunes (death of family members, poverty, and illness) and anomalous experiences (such as speaking to spirits and seeing mourning candles) from early childhood. From the period immediately after World War II, Maria succumbed to an illness thought to be incurable by modern medicine, but is regarded as *kamidaari* according to the idiom of possession in Okinawan folk shamanism. As there was no Okinawan shaman - *yuta*² in Brazil at that time, Maria sought salvation at the Brazilian spiritualist center where her illness was recognized as a mediumistic manifestation - *Manifestação Mediúnica* according to the idiom of possession in Brazilian spiritism. She joined the cult center to achieve spiritual development and once developed, she “worked” as a medium³. Following that, Maria left this cult center and formed her own cult center, the Love for Jesus Spiritist Center - *Centro Espírita Amor a Jesus*, in 1958. The characteristics of Maria’s magical-salvation activities were twofold in that she was not only the leader of a cult center, but was also performing these magical-salvation activities through the role of *yuta*⁴. More than 90% of the followers at the spiritist cult center which Maria founded are of Okinawan origin, and most of the followers seeking to have problems resolved by her in her capacity as *yuta*⁵,

2. Refer to the author’s article (2000) about observations related to the process of becoming a *yuta* in Brazil. Mori, Koichi, “The Process of Becoming a *Yuta* in Brazil and the World of Magical-Salvation Religion – in Relation to Ethnicity”, in: Yanagida Toshio (ed.) *The Japanese in Latin America-Nation and Ethnicity*, Keio University Press, 2000, p. 153-212.

3. Maria “started treading her path” at a cult centre whose leader was Dona Dirce, a non-Japanese Brazilian married to an Okinawan. At this centre, many people from Okinawa gathered to have their children “healed” when they were sick (especially those with psychological problems), they participated in the cult, and received advice. At the time, there were no *yuta* or *munushiri* with the capacity of communicating with magical spirits in the okinawan ethnic community.

4. In case of problems or misfortune (in many cases illness where modern medicine was ineffective) the *hanji* or consultation/advice provided by the *yuta* was considered as *saadakaumari*, coming from “a person born of high spirituality” and thus he/she had to “open the way” (*abrir o caminho*). A means of salvation is thus offered to a medium that has not developed spirituality by participating in the cult. Besides, at the consultation within the cult, the matter should be considered as related to an ancestral spirit, Nobuko as *yuta* would offer a *hanji*. Hence, the two magical-salvation activities were linked. In other words, the activities are linked by the fact that the domain of problem or misfortune can be considered as two idioms of possession. Most of the followers related to these two domains are second generation Okinawan mediums, whereas the first generation Okinawan immigrants act as *yutas*, and most of the non-Okinawan followers.

5. Maria’s activities as a *yuta* can be categorized generally as *hanji* (consultation, advice) and various *ugans* (prayers or rituals) conducted as a result of *hanjis* or requests from followers. The *hanji* takes place in a dialogue format between Maria who is possessed by Tio Kokichi and the follower (and his/her escort) seeking the cause of the problem and asking for advice to eliminate the cause. Maria conducts this every Monday

are also of Okinawan origin. Thus the target of her magical-salvation activities are predominantly the Okinawans - *uchinanchus* of Brazil.⁶

Maria and the followers referred to this possession cult as the “White Table” - *Mesa Branca*. *Mesa Branca* visually describes the large table with its white table cloth which is placed at the center of the cult’s place of worship, but as many researchers point out⁷, the name symbolically signifies the non-*Umbanda* nature of their cult center⁸. Furthermore, Maria and the followers named their cult Center - *Centro*, or House of Charity - *Casa de Caridade*, distinguishing it from *Tenda* or *Terreiro* used to refer to the cult space for Umbanda. However, even stating the non-*Umbanda* nature of the cult, there still remains a strong *Umbanda* influence, since Preto-velho and Caboclo (Indio) are core possessive spirits in Umbanda, and they play major roles at Maria’s cult center⁹. We can conclude that the cult center founded by Maria took the basic framework of Umbanda, but it was reshaped to suit her own beliefs and those of the Brazilian Okinawans - *uchinanchus* through incorporating her own ethnic religion, ancestor worship and by selecting a group of symbolic-spirits of possession, deities and magical-religious concepts. In other words, the cult (and the center) created by Maria may be considered an act of transformation of a Brazilian national folk and ethnic religion: *Umbanda*. I have developed this view based on Ortiz’ standpoints (1978) and have called it the “yellowing process” - *Processo de Amarelamento* or watering down of *Umbanda*. Ortiz sees the key to the origin of *Umbanda* as being the unification of two heterogeneous processes; these are the blackening of *Kardecism*¹⁰ and the whitening of African cults. That is to say, the Brazilianization of these two religious traditions and their further fusion

morning from 8:00 to around 10:00 at the *yutanyaa* which is joined to her home. On the other hand there are various types of *ugan*-prayers such as *unige* of *akemadoshi* conducted at the beginning of the year, *houji*, *ugan* thanksgiving, *yashiti-ugan*, *mabuyaa-gumi*, *hoshi-nu-ugan*, *tamashii-unchikee*, *tabi-ugan* and *yashiti-mii*. Maria’s followers are spread widely throughout the Okinawan community dispersed in Brazil, thus visits are made to cities such as Campinas and Campo Grande, etc.

6. Refer to the following work of the author for Maria’s life history and her magical-salvation activities. This perspective of salvation is called *task* or *mission*.

7. Cavalcanti, Maria Laura Viveiros de Castro (1983), *O mundo Invisível- Cosmologia, Sistema Ritual e Noção de Pessoa no Espiritismo*. RJ. Ed.Zahar.

8. Maria’s view of Umbanda was simplistic and focused on only one point of “manipulating spiritual power for money making”.

9. Camargo (1961) sees *Kardecism* and *Umbanda* as being one concept of magical-religious continuum. Camargo, C.P. (1961) *Kardecismo e Umbanda*. São Paulo, Ed. Pioneira.

10. *Kardecism*, the mystical spiritual philosophy created in the 19th century by Hippolyte Léon Denizard Riail, a Frenchman, who under the pseudonym Allan Kardec, was introduced to Brazil later in the century. This changed the emphasis on the religious and moral aspects, which are mainly miracle faith, through contacts with popular Catholicism.

resulted in a unique Brazilian religion, *Umbanda*¹¹. Consequently, the yellowing or watering down process, which I have conceptualized, gave rise to *Umbanda*, which became a national religion as aforementioned, later recovering its ethnic aspects¹².

Umbanda, as is well known, is interpreted as a religious movement of spiritual possession, and was created through the syncretism of the African cult (*Macumba*), Kardecism and popular Catholicism in Rio de Janeiro from the 1920s to the 30s, and many researchers define it as a national folk religion¹³. The reasons for which *Umbanda* is understood as a national folk religion are: 1. the lessening of importance of African deities (if not their exclusion) / the focusing more on Brazilian spirits of possession – Preto-velho and Caboclo; 2. the principal followers were non-African Brazilians who were the emerging middle class in Brazilian urban industrial societies; and 3. related to the characteristic of 2, where the central

11. Progress had been noted in Brazil from the end of 19th century, particularly in the southeast, with changes in society such as industrialization, urbanization and stratification becoming evident. According to Ortiz's (1978) analysis, *Umbanda* was the religious manifestation of a "newly born urban middle class and the ideology that embodies it" in this social transformation. Ortiz sees the need regard the birth of *Umbanda* from two different perspectives: the whitening – *embranquecimento* of the African cult, and the blackening – *empretecimento* of *Kardecism*. The former is the penetration of *Kardecism* into the African cult, where halting the disintegration of Candomblé led to a new direction. In addition, the latter is seen as a *non-Kardecism* within *Kardecism* that is believed to have emerged in the 1920s mainly in Rio de Janeiro. In other words, a deviating trend was seen within both *Candomblé* and *Kardecism*, thus the initial trend did not demonstrate a specific direction. However, in 1939, the first Spiritist Federation of *Umbanda* in Brazil – *Federação Espírita da Umbanda do Brasil* was founded in Rio de Janeiro and later in 1941, a congress aiming to standardize the doctrine was convened. The emergence of a movement to standardize the doctrine or unify the rituals led *Umbanda* to take shape as one religion. Ortiz, Renato (1978) *A Morte Branca do Feiticeiro Negro*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.

12. See details of the yellowing process in the author's article. Mori, Koichi (1998) "Processo de 'Amarelamento' das Tradicionais Religiões Brasileiras de Possessão – Mundo religioso de uma Okinawana" (In) *Estudos Japoneses-USP*. No.18, São Paulo. p. 57-76.

13. For example, Brown (1986) as Ortiz, points out the importance of the middle class in the founding of *Umbanda*, but from regarding the relations of possession and deities of *Umbanda*, Brown interprets the creation of *Umbanda* as a nationalistic interest of pursuing Brazilianness or the Brazilian identity. According to Brown, among the divine spirits of *Umbanda*, the possessions of Preto-velho and Caboclo play a central role, whereas deities and possessions such as the Orixás and Exu play peripheral roles. Focusing on this fact, replacing "Orixás which are from Africa and is foreign (to Brazil)" for Caboclo (regarded as a death spirit of an Indian) and Preto-velho (regarded as a death spirit of the black slave), both of which accepted western civilization through slavery and in a certain sense whitened or became Brazilianized, is a mere indication of the nationalistic character of *Umbanda*. Brown also indicates that the peripheral position given to Exu is related to the significance (evil and immoral) given to the Exu category of possession, and is thus an existence contradicting the orderly evolution or progress. Brown sees that by excluding the "African feature" *Umbanda* moved away from Africa and by emphasizing the Brazilian feature, it moved away from "Brazil which is a second class Europe", and he interprets that *Umbanda* is an expression of Brazilianness and the Brazilian national identity. Brown, Diana (1986) *Umbanda: Religion and Politics in Urban Brazil*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research press.

doctrine of *Umbanda* as the ideology of spiritual progression¹⁴ interrelates with the cultural code (that one can progress by one's effort) of an upward social movement in an emerging middle stratum of urban society in a traditional dualistic social structure.

One characteristic of *Umbanda* which is pointed out by Ortiz (1978), Brown (1986) and Pressel (1973), is that the doctrine or rituals of *Umbanda* have yet to be standardized. The difference in the level of syncretism of *Umbanda*, the short time since its creation, the high degree of uniqueness and the level of autonomy of each cult group are all considered factors contributing to this characteristic. Two extra features of *Umbanda* pointed out by researchers are the fact that the categories of spirits of possession are defined by ethnicity and are universally headed by a supreme God at the top of a hierarchy, plus the "openness of the universe of spirits of possession", since these spirits are not given names even though categories of possession exist.

These *Umbanda* characteristics were the underlying conditions which enabled an Okinawan woman named Maria — by being aware of her own situation — to modify what was national in nature, so that it became ethnic once again. In the post war period, the Okinawans changed their *dekassegui* strategy to that of settlers in the new country, formulating a new ethnic identity known as *Uchinanchú* — Okinawans of Brazil and they strove to move upwards socio-economically and become part of the urban middle-class. This paper describes the structural features of the spiritual universe of Maria's cult center as a result of this shift towards being ethnic.

2. Structure of the Spiritual Universe of the Love for Jesus Spiritist Center - Ethnic Nature of the Spiritual Universe.

The spiritual universe of *Umbanda* basically consists of the five deities of possession *Orixá*, *Caboclo*, *Preto-velho*, *Criança* and *Exu*, and these are positioned within a hierarchical pyramid structure with a superior God — *Deus* at the pinnacle. This hierarchical organization is militaristic with Lines — *Linha*, Legions — *Legião* and Regiments — *Falange*, each represented by a head. An *Orixá* deity heads each Line and just as the superior God, they do not possess humans. Rather, their representative belonging to the spiritual category of *Preto-velho* and *Caboclo*, is sent to the human universe by means of possession.

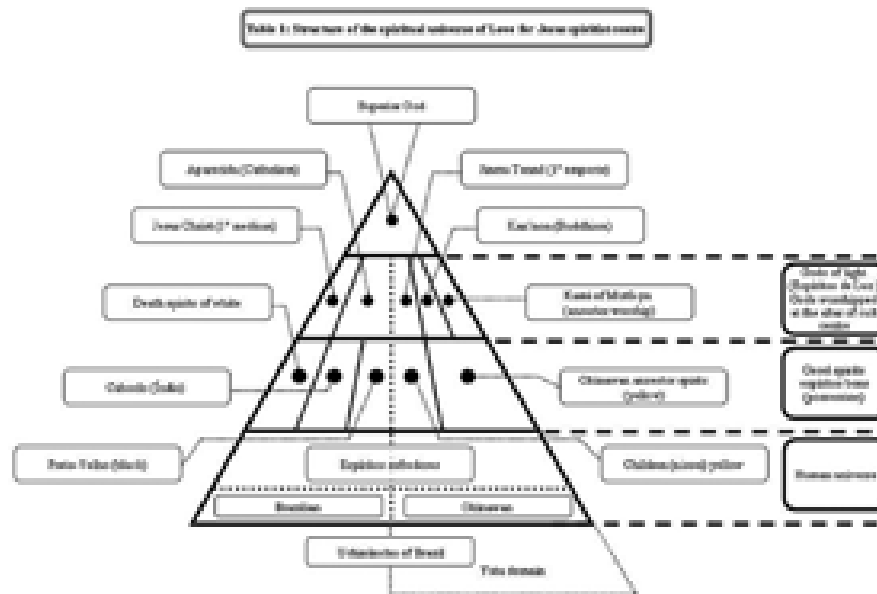
14. The code of the doctrine / cosmology of *Umbanda* is an ideology of spiritual evolution borrowed from Kardecism not found in *Candomblé*. The framework of this is that all spirits are on an evolutionary path and in order to evolve good deeds must be performed. One is expected to become closer to a more perfect existence = Superior God, but in order to achieve this, one needs to repeat the process of reincarnation.

Maria basically incorporates the characteristics of the spiritual universe of *Umbanda*, such as the hierarchical structure with the superior God at the pinnacle, the categories of possessive spirits and the openness of the universe of possessions; however, she has also made some modifications. The following are the summarized details of these modifications. (Table 1)

Firstly, she maintained the concepts of the hierarchical structure with its separating lines, the superior God, spirits that do not possess humans (*Orixá* category), spirits of possession and the human universe. However, the name “Spirits of Light” — *Espíritos de Luz* is given to the *Orixá* category (hierarchy), and each of the *Orixás* is the “head of a line”. As in the case of the superior God, they do not appear in the human universe. By maintaining these concepts, Maria has deviated from the African cults and has introduced deities which do not possess humans. These deities — *kamis* are Jesus Christ, Our Lady of Aparecida, Emperor Jimmu, Kannon, and Mutú-ya-nu-kami (the founding god of patriclan (*munchú*) in Okinawa). According to Maria’s explanation, “these *kamis* have evolved spiritually and therefore they do not descend to the human universe”. Jesus (Christ) is the *kami* of spiritism (or Kardecism where it originates from) and is regarded as “the first medium that the superior God sent to the human universe”. Our Lady of Aparecida¹⁵ is the *kami* of Catholicism or *kami* of Brazil. Emperor Jimmu is the *kami* of Shintoism and is regarded as “first emperor of Japan and founder of Shinto”. Kannon is the *kami* of Maria’s birth year (Maria’s *umaredoshi nu kami*) and the *kami* that back then, opened the path to *kamidaari* (spiritual manifestation). At the same time, it is the *kami* of Japanese Buddhism. Mutú-ya-nu-kami is the *kami* of the founding couple of the patriclan (*munchú*) in Okinawa or the *kami* of ancestor worship. The symbols representing these deities are worshipped at the altar of Maria’s cult center.

15. If the creation of *Umbanda* is a religious expression of the national identity reflecting the collective characteristics of Brazilian civilization, in other words, the expression of *Brasilianness* as a mixture of three races, then Our Lady of Aparecida as the patron saint of Brazil, was an attempt to unite Brazilian people by integrating the religiousness of non-official Catholicism of the masses, that is, popular Catholicism – through the political power that leaned towards nationalism in the 1930s. For the Church, however, the 30’s was the period when the image of Catholicism was being strengthened in Brazilian society. With the mutual interest of secular power and religious power in the background, making Our Lady of Aparecida a patron saint, and Catholicism a national religion, were attempts to establish a more homogeneous religious state with the image of Brazil as a Catholic nation.

Souza, Juliana Beatriz Almeida de (1993), “*Nossa Senhora da Aparecida e Identidade Nacional*”. D.O. Leitura, São Paulo, v. 12, n. 139.



Secondly, under the stratum of Gods of Light — *Espíritos de Luz*, there is a stratum of Good Spirits — *Espíritos bons* that are possessions sent to the human universe as representatives of superior *kamis*. The spirits of possession in this stratum are placed in the categories of *Preto-velho*, *Caboclo (Índio)*, death spirits of the white man and death spirits of Okinawans. It is believed that the *Criança* category of *Umbanda* is represented by the death spirits of Maria’s two younger sisters¹⁶. These spirits of possession are believed to be representatives of superior *kamis*. For example, as a representative of Jesus Christ “the death spirit of a doctor or a nurse, which are the spirits of Kardecism” is sent. The spirit sent by the catholic *kami* (or Our Lady of Aparecida) is a Brazilian spirit such as Preto-velho or *Caboclo*, and the spirit sent by the Japanese (Okinawan) *kami* (Jimmu, Kannon, Mutú-yá-nu-kami) are the death spirits of the Okinawans. Thus, depending on the religious or ethnic origin of each spirit, a link is created with the superior *kamis*. Beneath this universe of spirits of possession lies the human world where humans are incarnate spirits, the restless spirits — *espíritos sofredores*, whose racial or ethnic origin is not clear.

The structure of the spiritual universe of *Umbanda* performed by Maria has been briefly summarized, and what must be noted is Maria’s perspective of spiritual salvation. In her cult, Maria always explains to the Okinawan participants that the *Uchinanchus* of Brazil need to have two guardian spirits in order to be completely saved; a Brazilian guardian spirit and an Okinawan (Japanese) spirit.

16. The image given to the death spirits of the two sisters overlaps with the image of the Child - Criança category of Umbanda regarding innocence and the playfulness.

In fact, many of the mediums that experienced spiritual development at Maria's cult have received two types of possessive spirits, one being of Brazilian origin and the other of Okinawan (Japanese) origin, and they are both maintained as their respective guardian spirits. In short, according to Maria's view of salvation, the *Uchinanchu* entity of Brazil is assumed to be a hybrid one, receiving spiritual influence from spirits of both Okinawa (Japan) and Brazil. Furthermore, when one examines Maria's description of her salvation activities, a duality can be observed in these two types of possessive spirits and the idiom of possession (cultural code) created by the superior *kamis*. The spirits of Brazilian origin use the spiritist idiom of possession, whereas spirits of Okinawan origin use the idiom of possession of Okinawan shamanism.

3. Principal Possessive Spirits of the Love for Jesus Spiritist Center

3.1. Non-individualized Spirits and Individualized Spirits

Possessive spirits are death spirits that possess mediums, who have already gone through a spiritual development session — *Manifestação Mediúnica (Sessão)* and they are the center of the possession cult. Mediums refer to the spirits as guides / guardian spirits — *Guias*, and to themselves as apparatus — *Aparelho* “transforming their own bodies so as to host the spirits”. These spirits of possession have common features. First of all they each have individual names. The spirit presents itself giving its individual name at a spiritual development session — *sessão de desenvolvimento mediúnico*, by possessing a medium that has not yet been spiritually developed. The spirit that presents itself becomes the medium's guardian spirit. According to Eishun, “the spirits that each medium receives are distinct existences”. However, the spirits of possession that belong to the *Caboclo (Índio)* category such as *Índio Paraguaçu*, one of Maria's spirits, or *Burukutu*, Eishun's spirit, or *Pai-Tupi*, Roberto's spirit, are not necessarily recognized as having distinct personalities or individual histories. Moreover, it is more reasonable to see these spirits as empty personalities — *personagem vazio* as Ortiz (1978) states. According to Ortiz, these spirits of possession are given individual names, but their personalities or characters are common to the *Caboclo (Índio)* category. In this way, spirits of possession that are given categorical personality or characters will be referred to as non-individualized spirits — *espírito desindividualizado*. In addition to the spirits that fall under the *Caboclo (Índio)* category, there are those which fall under the category of *Preto-velho* or “death spirit of a black slave” such as *Pai João de Angola* (Maria's spirit) and *Mãe Maria* (Edina's spirit). Apart from the spirits of possession that belong to such categories, other spirits are recognized

as existing with personalities which bear their unique history. These spirits will be referred to here as individualized spirits - *espírito individualizado*.

There are two types of spirits of possession at the Love for Jesus Spiritist Center. When these two types of spirits are examined from the perspective of whether the spirits may have any direct contact with the medium or whether there are any family ties, the former type of spirits never have any contact with the medium's life, however, the latter type of spirits have actually encountered the medium in his/her lifetime, or it is a death spirit of the medium's ancestor or family. Furthermore, from a religious perspective, spirits of possession of the former type have characteristics of those originating from *Umbanda*.

The spirits are also classified by Maria and the mediums into their racial/ethnic categories. The racial/ethnic categories are: Black (*Preto-velho*); Brazilian Indian or mixed (*Índio or Caboclo*), White and Okinawan (Japanese). These spirits of possession are recognized as "representatives" of superior *kamis* which do not possess humans, thus there is a link (line) with a specific *kami*.

3.1.1 Non-individualized Spirits

Preto-velho

In this category of spirits of possession, there are both Maria's *Pai João de Angola* and *Mãe Maria*, the spirit of a second generation Okinawan medium. There are only two death spirits that are spirits of possession in this category and they are given family titles such as *Pai* — father and *Mãe* — mother. The mediums and general participants acknowledge that these two spirits are the death spirits of "an older black slave (and an older woman) from the days of slavery". Their personalities are regarded as being "very humble and quiet as they have suffered much during slavery and so they well understand the sufferings of others", "a very patient and tenacious personality having worked under their masters during the days of slavery", or "the spirit is stronger as they are spirits of *Umbanda*".

Brown (1986) points out that in the *Umbanda* cult, when a spirit of the *Preto-velho* category "descends or possesses", it is accompanied by a certain pattern of behavior which makes it immediately identifiable, but in the case of this spiritist center, such a pattern of behavior is not usually exhibited when the possession takes place. However, by saying his own name and speaking slowly in the low voice of an older person, the participants can easily understand that it is *Preto-velho*. At this center, it is only on May 13¹⁷ (Abolition of Slavery Day) which is known as *Pai*

17. The celebration of the birth of *Pai João* takes place on the afternoon of May 13, the day when the abolition of slavery is commemorated. On that day, the directors of the Love for Jesus Spiritist Center gather at the center

João's anniversary that *Preto-velho* will show such a pattern of behavior as pointed out by Brown. On this day, purification of the spirit is conducted and an anniversary celebration is held. Maria possessed by *Pai João* “wears a straw hat, sits on a small bench and smokes his favorite pipe”, “she walks with a black cane like an elderly person” and “drinks red wine”. These activities are repeated on this day.

Brown and other researchers have pointed out that in 19th century Brazilian literature such as in works by Castro Alves, Machado de Assis and Artur Azevedo, the stereo-type descriptions of the black slaves are extremely similar. Within the cult, *Pai João* and *Mãe Maria* offer consultation services, where the former offers solutions and the latter puts forward a moral message. However, while giving his advice *Pai João* mentions, “I am getting old and I would like to rest a while” therefore he is relinquishing the role of consultation to the *Caboclo* spirit and thus possession does not occur so frequently. The mediums and general participants accept that “*Pai João* has spiritually evolved and will gradually stop descending to the human universe”.

In relation to the superior *kamis*, the spirit of *Preto-velho* is perceived as “black like Our Lady of Aparecida and is therefore a representation”. On the altar set up at the cult, a statue and photograph of *Preto-velho* are placed on the right side of the statue of Aparecida, and the mediums and participants give cigarettes as offerings.

Caboclo (Índio)

The spirits of possession that belong to this category are *Paraguaçu*, *Timba-Tupã*, *Pirajara*, *Burukutu*, *Ubirajara*, and *Iracema*, etc. According to Brown (1986), the origin of the personal names of spirits in the *Caboclo* category of *Umbanda* can be: 1. nature; 2. an object expressing sacred power; 3. the name of a Brazilian Indian tribe; 4. a character who appears in a novel written by José de Alencar. Following this classification, the origin of the names are mainly from numbers 3 and 4.

in the morning and set up the celebration venue as well as prepare the feijoada offered to the participants. In preparing the venue, the Mesa Branca and chair are taken away from the cult space and instead, the small bench where Maria possessed by *Pai João's* spirit will sit, a straw hat, a cane, red wine, and a pipe are brought in. At 2pm, the members (mediums, their families and general participants) gather at the site. The mediums do not wear their symbolic white gowns. The participants will gather in front of the altar in about 10 rows and wait for Maria to appear. Maria then sits on the bench and concentrates. Once possessed with *Pai João's* spirit, she wears the hat, smokes the pipe, drinks red wine, and behaves like an old man with a cane walking around the audience, snapping her fingers repeating the movements of spiritual purification (*passé*). This day is regarded as the day when *Umbanda*, which is the religious origin of *Pai João's* spirit, is symbolically reenacted.

Some of the personalities/characteristics that have been identified with regard to the spirits of possession in this category are “living in the forest and hunting for a living”, “a sound and strong warrior”, “young with much physical strength due to running in the forest”, “has knowledge of herbs because of life in the forest”, “he is spiritually strong due to natural powers”,—“worships ancestors like the Japanese”. Thus, characteristics such as youth, strength and knowledge of herbs are depictions of the Brazilian Indians seen as being “uncivilized”, noble barbarians, which is nothing more than the image of Brazilian Indians depicted in popular literature on the subject¹⁸.

The role of the *Caboclo* spirit in the cult is one of councilor, conducting the purification of the spirit or “*passé*”, and offering advice. During the consultation he has strong spiritual power, and *passé* or purification of the spirit and he performs the process of eliminating the influence of spirits of a lower level of evolution. *Tisane* and herbal bath, etc. are offered using his knowledge of herbs, or a spellbound method that aims to eliminate the negative spiritual power¹⁹. There are no statues

18. Monteiro (1954) and Carneiro (1964) point out that the Personalities/Characteristics of the spirits in the Caboclo category of Umbanda are not derived from contact with reality, but rather from the depictions of Indians in popular Brazilians Indian folklore. Teixeira Monteiro (1954), “A macumba de vitória” (in) Congresso Internacional de Americanistas 31. p.463. Carneiro, Edson (1964), *Ladinos e Crioulos*. Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira.

19. This is a case of a consultation with a Caboclo spirit. In this case, a Caucasian woman in her fifties is worried about her mother’s illness. The consultation is conducted in a dialogue form with Maria(N) possessed by the Caboclo spirit and her assistant Dona Maria(A), and the follower(FL).

A: Thanks to you mother.

N: Thanks to Pai Tupã, I am purified. The evil spirits are eliminated...all in peace...Pai Tupã. All is purified... (the leg aches)... you are bearing much pain.

A: There is really something possessing my mother. That is why she is not in good mood. Really possessed.

A: If your mother cannot fall asleep, stay with her. Give her the protective bath so that she will get better. Understand? So that she will be better. Your mother’s illness is a spiritual one and not a somatic one, understand?

N: ...help...she is already protected.

A: Is there anything that would work on her bad leg?...swollen...arm.

FL: When we showed it to the doctor, he said it was a problem of blood circulation.

A: Then let us first try spiritual healing. Let us see (whether she will improve)

N: Now, have some tea, jasmine tea and...

A: There is *quebra-pedra* (medicinal tea which is said to dissolves kidney stones) and chamomile tea...

N: We also have *rosario* (a kind of tea). Drink lots of tea. This will help you pass water more easily.

FL: At home in our garden the *arruda* – common rue tree was blooming beautifully. But just overnight, it died. The whole tree, the branches died over night as well.

N: Someone contrived that. And it was the tree that was hit. It did not strike you or your family, but hit the tree. That is why you are safe. That is good. It was a good thing that it was the tree.

After this dialogue, Maria possessed with the Caboclo spirit screamed “Take it, destroy it, cut it, vomit it

or photographs depicting the *Caboclo* spirit on the altar, but at the side there are hunting instruments such as bows and arrows representing the Brazilian Indians as hunters. The frequency of possession of the spirits in this category occurs often.

The Restless Spirit

The spirits that are believed to be in the Restless Spirit — *Espírito Sofredor* category are not given personal names as in the case of other spirits. Maria and the mediums consider these spirits of possession to be “spirits that are at a lower level of the spiritual evolution scale” or “restless spirits” and thus live “on the street or in the bush”. Furthermore, unlike other spirits of possession, the racial or ethnic backgrounds are not clearly understood. When one of these spirits possesses the medium during a session, the medium will show behavior patterns such as pain, stomping the floor, and pounding the table, or use of coarse language (immoral behavior). When this type of spirit descends, Maria and her assistant Dona Maria will expel the spirit from the cult by saying: “this is not a place for a spirit like you to come”, or offer a prayer so that this spirit can rest in peace. One can guess that the origin of this type of spirit is *Umbanda’s Exu*, even though *Exu’s* category name is not used and in the language of Spiritism, such a spirit is considered one which lags behind in spiritual evolution.

3.1.2 Individualized Spirits

In this section, the characteristics and personalities of the spirits possessing Maria and her husband (Eishun) who is also a medium will be studied distinguishing Brazilian spirits from Okinawan spirits.

(1) Brazilian Spirits – White (branco) category

Unlike the death spirits in the Preto-velho or Caboclo category, most of the spirits belonging to this category had some contact or some kin/relation with Maria, Eishun or Dona Maria.

The main spirits of possession are Irmão Silva, Padre Donizetti, Dr. José Mendonça, Maria da Glória and Tia Neide.

out, the sickness of the spirit”, moved her wrist as if trying to get rid of something and snapped her fingers.

Padre Donizetti:

Maria first encountered Padre Donizetti in 1951²⁰, when she was struck by a peculiar illness leading to loss of vision after the birth of her second daughter. Even after having consulted the doctor, she was not cured. Then, the paternal uncle took Maria to Padre Donizetti's chapel. At that time he was well known as being "a priest who performs miracles". According to Queirós, Padre Donizetti had been giving blessings — *Benzer* over the radio from the late 1940s to the early 1950s, and many of the ill were cured, thus he was extremely popular. Maria said that as soon as she received Padre Donizetti's blessing her vision recovered. As she was leaving the chapel, she received a statue of Aparecida from Padre Donizetti, and this is the Aparecida statue which is still worshipped at the center of the altar at the cult center. Since the foundation of this center, Maria has continued visiting the chapel with the mediums. She has also continued receiving blessings. After the death of the Padre, they started visiting the cemetery and this has become one of the main annual events of the center. The role of the Padre in the cult is seen at the *Prece Final* – Final Prayer where holy water is sprinkled onto all the participants to eliminate negative spiritual influences and to give them positive influences. This death spirit does not possess Maria very often during the cult and it only appears about once every two weeks.

Irmão Silva:

Irmão Silva's true name is Elvino Luiz da Silva and he was a medium serving as director of the Spiritist Foundation of the State of São Paulo - *Federação Espírita do Estado de São Paulo*. Maria's encounter with Irmão Silva was through this federation. Maria left the cult center where she went through her spiritual development as it was turning into an Umbanda center and opened her private magical-salvation activity at home. However, with many Okinawan followers rushing to seek help, she "was scared as her activity was an underground one", and thus went to the federation to seek advice. Maria consulted Irmão Silva who showed an understanding towards her problem. He praised Maria's activity and thus the Federation granted a two year limited permission for "family gatherings".

20. Maria's encounter with Padre Donizetti was when she encountered popular Catholicism, and this was an opportunity to reinterpret her Catholic identity. Maria regards spiritism as similar to Catholicism and the background to this is the fact that in Brazil both Catholicism and Kardecism were undergoing revision.

Renshaw, J. Parke (1969) *Sociological Analysis of Spiritism in Brazil*. The Univ. of Florida (dissertation)

Bastide, R. (1985). *As religiões Africanas no Brasil*. São Paulo, Brasiliense.

Azevedo, Thales (1976) "Catequese e Aculturação" (in) E. Shaden(ed) *Leituras de Etnologia Brasileira*. São Paulo, Nacional.

Irmão Silva performed an important role in solidifying the foundation of Maria's cult center (Family Meeting of Irmão Tio Kokichi - *Reunião Familiar de Irmão Tio Kokichi*) since its infancy, as he participated in the cult as a medium and offered guidance on the cult or on incantation. Although it is not clear when Irmão Silva died, his death spirit possesses Maria and plays a role in giving moral messages during a session - *sessão*. This possession happens about once a week.

Dr. José Mendonça:

Dr. José Mendonça is a white doctor who lived in the Brás district of São Paulo where Maria lived and ran a fruit store. At the time, she was already “working” at the cult center as a medium. Dr. Mendonça apparently shopped at her store frequently. He always wore white clothes and was said to have strong spirituality. Later, Maria's family moved to the Vila Ema district and thus there was no more contact with him. There is no record of when Dr. Mendonça's death spirit started possessing Maria. Maria is only possessed by this death spirit about once a month, which is not so often. The role that this possession plays in the cult is to offer a moral message.

Maria da Glória:

Maria da Glória is white and a nurse by profession. Maria first met her when she lived in the Brás district while running the grocery store. Maria da Glória worked at a nearby hospital and often shopped at the store. She was a quiet, intellectual woman. After Maria da Glória's death, she began to possess Maria. It is believed that Maria da Glória was a member of the Medical Spiritual Group — *Grupo Médico Espiritual*, which consists of 3 doctors and 2 nurses (Maria and Irmã Freire da Silva). Members of this group carry out medical spiritual *assistance* — *Assistência Médica Espiritual* for mediums or family members and friends that require medical treatment due to illness or injury and this is performed at the request of the participant during the first prayer, immediately after the cult starts. The group also shares with Padre Donizetti the role of purifying the spirit by sprinkling holy water on all the participants at the final prayer conducted at the end of the cult. The doctors of the spiritual medical team to which Maria da Glória belonged are Dr. Bezerra de Menezes who is regarded as “the father of Brazilian spiritism”, Dr. Américo Veloso and Dr. Olívio Nascimento who are prominent doctors in spiritism²¹.

21. Hess, David (1987) “O Espiritismo e as Ciências” (in) *Religião e Sociedade*. Vol.14-No.3, p.41-54.

Okinawan Spirits

Most of the Okinawan possessions either have a family tie (including mystical family relation) with the possessed, or involve a death spirit of someone who had social contact with the person during their lifetime. The characteristic of these spirits of possession is that the language used to convey the message related to their personal history varies from Okinawan to Japanese and Portuguese. Some of these spirits use Okinawan folk songs and Japanese children's songs in their messages.

Kokichi Hanashiro (paternal uncle) (Tio Kokichi):

Maria's paternal uncle, Kokichi Hanashiro (henceforth referred to as Tio Kokichi) emigrated to Brazil in 1918 as a *dekassegui*, along with his wife Nabe and younger brother Kosei with the intention of staying for 4 or 5 years. However, the initial *dekassegui* plan soon fell through. He worked as an agricultural laborer on a coffee plantation, became a tenant farmer (rice plantation) in Minas Gerais state, owned his own farm at the Itariri settlement on the Santos-Juquiá railway line, planted coffee on a plantation on the Sorocabana railway line, moving from one place to another and after the War, had his own laundry business in Alvares Machado city. He finally died in that city in 1947.

Maria's family emigrated to Brazil in 1930 to join her uncle, and lived on his coffee plantation as an agricultural laborer for the first year. According to Maria, Tio Kokichi "adapted to Brazilian society and spoke Portuguese fluently", as he lived in Brazil for about thirty years. Maria was first possessed by Tio Kokichi's death spirit in 1948 at a session for spiritual development — *sessão de desenvolvimento mediúnico*, where she herself developed her spirituality. At that time, Maria was not only possessed by Tio Kokichi's spirit but also by the death spirit of *Pai João de Angola*. Maria stayed at this cult center as a medium even after her spirituality developed and carried out consultation "work" involving *Pai João's* possession. At that time, however, the spirit of Tio Kokichi was to play a role in only conveying moral messages in Portuguese at the cult.

Later, Maria left this center and started to conduct her personal salvation activity in her own living room. Word spread among the Okinawans that there was a Yuta practicing, which led to a shift in followers from non-Japanese Brazilians to Okinawans. At that same time, tasks were divided between Maria's two spirits of possession depending on the origin of the followers. With this shift in origin of the followers, Tio Kokichi came to take on the salvation activity of the Okinawans and the Okinawan trait which was latent at the previous center became more prominent. In short, depending on the problem that the follower might bring, a solution or search for a cause was carried out, not through the idiom of possession of Brazilian

spiritism, but through the idiom of possession of shamanism among the Okinawa folk society. The language used in *hanji* — consultation, and performed in the form of a dialogue, shifted to either Okinawan or Japanese. When Maria founded her own cult center, Tio Kokichi's spirit along with that of Pai João's became possessions which were in charge of consultations — *consultas* within the cult. However, after Maria's role as cult leader and her role as *Yuta* were separated, Tio Kokichi's spirit changed to a spirit whose role was to convey only moral messages. Tio Kokichi's possessions occur frequently, possessing Maria at almost every cult session conveying messages. These messages are given in three languages: Okinawan, Japanese and Portuguese.

One of the principal mediums of this cult center, Roberto (a second generation Japanese) says, "Kokichi-san is not like an uncle — *Tio*, but rather in recent years has become more like a grandfather — *Avô*. *Pai João* is not like a father — *Pai*, but more like a grandfather — *Avô*. The light is extremely strong so I do not think that he will descend during the session in the near future. It just means that he is spiritually higher". Roberto also explains that Tio Kokichi's spirit and Pai João's spirit have extremely similar personalities and "they all suffered as slaves and agricultural laborers in Brazil which shaped their similar personalities and generous characters".

Nabe Hanashiro:

Nabe Hanashiro was Tio Kokichi's wife. Nabe was to inherit the title of *Nurugami* or Okinawan village priest, however, she married Kokichi, and emigrated to Brazil. She never returned to Okinawa and died due to illness 10 years after emigrating. Because of this, Maria never met this aunt. The main message that Nabe sends to the cult is that she was born a child of god, and she was to become the village's *nurugami* — priest, but that did not happen. She emigrated to Brazil and did not keep her word with the kami and because she upset the *kami* she died 10 years after she arrived in Brazil.

Seishin Hanashiro:

Seishin Hanashiro was Maria's father and in 1930 along with his wife Kameto and two-year-old Maria, they left for Brazil to join his older brother Kokichi. The initial plan was to stay for 4 or 5 years to make money and return to Okinawa, but he never went back and died in São Paulo after the war. Seishin spent the first year with his family at his brother's coffee plantation as an agricultural laborer at the Nittô Settlement, which was in Presidente Prudente in the hinterland of the state of São Paulo. Following that he moved to the Alecson Settlement, which

was on the Santos-Juquiá Railway line where many immigrants from the Okinawa Prefecture were living, and there he engaged in rice plantation. However, because his wife Kameto, who was always frail, never recovered well after giving birth and was often bedridden, and because of Maria's illness, Seishin moved to the Cedro Settlement where his other brother lived. This was another Okinawan settlement along the Juquiá line and there Seishin engaged in banana plantation. In 1947, he moved to the Brás district of São Paulo seeking his older brother and started a fruit store. He finally died in the early sixties due to illness. According to Maria, "father was a very devout ancestor worshipper and taught me a lot along with my mother". Also with the mother dying of illness and due to Maria's illness, Seishin had to do the housework as well as having to work, and therefore he suffered financially as well. After his death, Seishin possesses Maria, but his possession is not so frequent. His role in the cult is communicating messages.

Kameto Hanashiro:

Kameto is Maria's mother and she moved to Brazil following her husband's decision to emigrate. Kameto had always been frail, so going through pregnancy and giving birth to a child at the Alecson Settlement often left her bedridden, as her postnatal recovery was not good. Even after moving to the Cedro Settlement, and frail as she was, she became pregnant four times more and gave birth to four children (two of whom are Lidinha and Aurora). She died of illness in her late thirties at the Cedro Settlement.

According to Maria, Kameto often told her that she was also born a *saadakaumari* (*kami-umari*) or village priest. Kameto was a devout ancestor worshipper, and as early as Maria can remember, Kameto always had a candle lit pointing in the eastern direction and performed *utoushi* — prayers to the kami of the family as well as *ugan* — prayers of apology. She talked to Maria about the rites and customs concerning ancestor worship in Okinawa. Kameto had also told Maria several times about the time "when she was still resting recovering from delivery, a woman wearing a beautiful white kimono with long hair and who had just washed, appeared beside the pillow", and the woman asked her to "give me this child (Maria)" as she "had much milk to give." Kameto said that this woman was a *kami* and that she had come to take Maria to "the path of the *kami*". She simply said, Kameto had repeatedly talked to Maria about being *saadakaumari* (*kami-umari*) — village priest, and that her destiny was the same. Kameto in her possession of Maria plays the role of teaching the customs and rituals of ancestor worship, as well as conveying messages through her experience. In the cult, edicts coming from the *kami* are fateful and they cannot be rejected.

Lidinha/Aurora:

Lidinha and Aurora were Maria's two younger sisters who both died at an early age at the Cedro Settlement. Lidinha possesses her sister frequently but Aurora seldom possesses Maria. During these possessions, the language spoken is only Portuguese and her messages are full of innocence, similar to the characteristics and traits of the child — *Criança* category of *Umbanda*. There is a photograph of Lidinha at the altar and the participants bring candies and sweets as offerings, which in turn are distributed to the children after the cult.

Uncle Miyazato (the older brother of Maria's mother):

Uncle Miyazato who is the older brother of Maria's mother emigrated to Peru with his family. This uncle's death spirit first possessed Maria in February of 1992. It was immediately after Maria's husband Eishun had visited the paternal uncle in Peru about the inheritance of the *Totome* — ancestral tablet, and he used the opportunity to visit Uncle Miyazato's grave. The message at the time of possession was an expression of appreciation for Eishun offering the *ugan* — prayer. This possession does not happen so often but the messages (in Okinawan and in Japanese) speak of how they suffered as immigrants in Peru and the importance of keeping Okinawan customs.

Kameto Kanashiro:

Kameto was Eishun's mother-in-law and later on her spirit would come to possess him. After the war Maria and Eishun wanted to "let her see her Brazilian grandchild's face". They invited Kameto to come and visit. Kameto spent about 8 months with her son-in-law's family and died in Brazil due to old age. Eishun "wanted to return her ashes to a tomb in Okinawa", but at the time there was no crematorium, thus she was cremated in his backyard and the ashes were sent along with an acquaintance who was returning to Okinawa for a short visit. Kameto's death spirit possesses Eishun about once a month.

Seiei Kanashiro:

Seiei was Eishun's older brother, and he was married with one child but was conscripted into the army during World War II. He died in the battle of the South Pacific. According to Eishun, "my brother died suffering at a field hospital", and "when my brother's spirit descended in the late 1960s, his suffering still lingered on, and I too was tormented. Now, the pain has diminished. My brother's suffering was not only restricted to dying in action, but also the pain of not being able to assume fatherly responsibility during his lifetime and leaving behind his wife and

young child. That is why it took so much time for the spirit to rest in peace”. Seiei’s possession occurs about once a week and the messages conveyed during the possessions are in the Okinawan language.

Hanako:

Hanako is Eishun’s younger sister and when she died, she lived in Amagasaki City in the Hyogo Prefecture where many from Okinawa lived at the time. Hanako did not recover well from childbirth and soon died. Eishun is also possessed by Hanako’s spirit and he was “tormented the first time her spirit descended as in the case of Seiei”. Hanako’s possession occurs about once a month and the messages conveyed during the cult are in Okinawan and in Japanese.

Kamesuke Kanashiro:

Kamesuke along with his wife Kamata immigrated to Peru and he is the paternal uncle of Eishun. In Peru, Kamesuke and Kamata only gave birth to daughters, thus Eishun who is the second son in the family, was adopted into the family and he maintains the couple’s *totome* or ancestral tablet. Maria and Eishun visited the daughters after the deaths of the uncle and his wife, and performed the *unchike* — ritual then brought the ancestral tablet back to Brazil. From the time that Kamesuke died in the 1960s, the spirit began possessing Eishun. The possession of Kamesuke’s death spirit occurs about once every two months, and the messages conveyed at the sessions are spoken in the Okinawan language.

Gensui Taira:

Gensui Taira was an immigrant from Okinawa but unlike other Okinawan spirits of possession he had no kin relation and was therefore unrelated to Eishun *who* is the *aparelho* — apparatus. Gensui had been engaged in rice and banana plantation for a long time at a settlement on the Juquiá line where many Okinawan immigrants concentrated. Later he moved to São Paulo and ran a laundry business. According to Eishun, “he was a person who attached great importance to trust in society, as well as in his work and the home”. In addition, according to one medium, Gensui’s personality is “very similar to Mr. Eishun. Mr. Eishun is also a person who has placed great importance on trust in society, work and the family.” Gensui’s possession happens about once a week which is relatively frequent and the messages conveyed are in the Okinawan language and also in Japanese.

Agi-gami:

Agi-gami is not a personal name and according to Eishun, who is possessed by it, *Agi-gami* is “a spirit of an Okinawan *samurai* with strong spiritual powers” and is recognized as “the ancestral spirit of Kanashiro’s family.” When possessed by *Agi-gami*, Eishun uses forceful language and shows gestures of drawing a sword or becomes more animated. The possession of this spirit only occurs during special occasions of the cult at the beginning and end of the year. The role of this possession is *passé* - purification of the spirit as in possessions from the *Caboclo* category.

3.2. Role Division among the spirits of possession during a session

Table 2. Possession at a Public Session

Scene	Specific activity	Possessive spirits
Opening prayer	- prayer to supreme God - prayer to thank ancestors’ spirits and to seek protection - prayer for the successful cure or surgery of a medium or his/her family, relatives or friends	- Death spirits (Brazilian/white category of Spiritual Medical group consisting of 3 doctors and 2 nurses) - Tio Kokichi’s spirit (Maria’s possessive spirits) which is a representative of Okinawa’s <i>mutoyanukam</i> .
Consultation (1)	- hearing the follower’s story and suggesting solutions from life experience.	- Preto-velho category
Consultation (2)	- hearing the follower’s story to eliminate the cause of the curse and suggesting preventive measures, such as herbs and tea	- Caboclo category
Mediumistic Manifestation	- possession of the medium conveying moral messages	- all possessive spirits (except <i>Agi-gami</i>)
Final Prayer	- at the end of the session, superior God and Spirits of Light are asked to provide spiritual protection.	- death spirits of Padre Donizetti, Lidinha and Maria da Glória
Passé (Spiritual Purification)	- purification of the spirit by the medium’s own possession to receive influence from a higher stage of evolution	- Caboclo category - Okinawa possessive spirits

The possessions described in the previous section mainly involve Maria and

Eishun during the sessions at Maria's cult center. In this section, the division of the tasks of these spirits of possession during the public session — *sessão pública*²², which consists of (1) opening prayer – *prece*; (2) consultation; (3) mediumistic manifestation — *manifestação mediúnica* (4) final prayer — *prece final*; (5) purification/protection of the spirit (*Prece*), will be demonstrated. Table 2 indicates the category of the spirits according to the different scenes of the public session.

The division of roles during the public sessions indicates that in almost all the possession scenes, at least those involving the Brazilian and Okinawan spirits of possession, we find duality if we further add *hanji/akashi* — equivalent to a consultation in the cult — that Maria conducts with Tio Kokichi's spirit. When the division of roles among the spirits of Brazilian origin are considered, the spirits of possession that are believed to originate in Kardecism, or the spirits of the category of *branco* — white, are seen to be more evolved spirits, according to the 19th century social evolution theory of which spiritism is part. Thus, they assume the role of spiritually assisting modern medicine, whereas the spirits originating in Umbanda, given the strength of their spiritual power, assume the role of purification/protection of the spirits and of consultation.

The presence of Okinawan spirits of possession is most prominent in the spiritual development sessions — *Manifestação Mediúnica*, whose role it is to convey various messages. The messages of the Brazilian spirits conveyed during the spiritual development sessions relate to the spiritist idiom such as, love thy neighbor, the importance of charity, the importance of prayer, positive thinking, etc. On the other hand, in the case of Okinawan spirits, as illustrated in Table 3, the messages refer to concepts relating to the culture of Okinawan shamanism, such as the importance of ancestor worship or the rituals in ancestor worship, and the fate of the village priest — *saadaka-umari (kami-umari)*, as well as experiences as immigrants and memories of World War II, etc.. The language used to convey these messages vary among Japanese, Okinawan and Portuguese, depending on the life history of the spirit of possession. In addition, depending on the spirits of possession, melodies of Okinawan folk songs or Japanese traditional songs with a variation in lyrics are incorporated in the messages.

22. At Maria's cult center, there is a training session for controlling a trance-possession called *sessão de desenvolvimento mediúnico* – Spiritual Development Session held once a month.

Table 3 Messages of Main Okinawan Possessions

Posses-sions	Messages	Usage of Music	Language	Attributes
Tio Kokichi	Importance of ancestor worship How perform totome-ugan Main annual events, hachimizu, tanabata, obon, jurukunichi-shogatu, kami of the year of birth, and suffering as an immigrant	none	Okinawan, Japanese Portuguese	First generation Okinawan immigrant, Maria's paternal uncle.
Nabe	About kamiumare, the fate, suffering as an immigrant, Ryukyu folksongs and dances, about ochatu of the first and the 15th day, offering at ugan	Singing Okinawan folksongs	Okinawan, Japanese Portuguese	First generation Okinawan immigrant, Maria's aunt
Seishin	Hardships and life at the settlement along the Juquiá line, importance of ancestor worship, memories of Okinawa, longing for home, business in São Paulo	none	Okinawan, Japanese Portuguese	First generation Okinawan immigrant, Maria's father
Lidinha	Food and playing at the colony	none	Japanese	Second generation Okinawan immigrant, Maria's younger sister
Kameto	Fate of being kamiumare, hardship being an immigrant's wife, importance of passing on ancestor worship	none	Okinawan, Japanese	First generation Okinawan immigrant, Maria's mother

Seiei	Experience in the battle of the S. Pacific, remorse in leaving behind his wife and child, importance of praying for the ancestors	Japanese school songs, Okinawan folksongs	Okinawan, Japanese	Eishun's older brother, died in battle during WWII
Hanako	Life of Okinawans in mainland Japan, difficulty in personal relationships in Japan (language and customs), always praying to Okinawa's mutoyanokami on the 1st and 15th days of the month	none	Japanese	Younger sister of Eishun, dekassegui in mainland Japan, lived in Amagasaki.
Kamesuke	Life and hardship of immigrants in Peru, importance of keeping Okinawan customs	none	Okinawan, Japanese Portuguese	Paternal uncle of Eishun, first generation immigrant in Peru
Gensui	Importance of trust in work and business, importance of ancestor worship, hardship as Okinawan immigrant, discrimination from mainland Japanese	Okinawa folksongs	Okinawan, Japanese	First generation Okinawan immigrant, unrelated but from the same home Prefecture
Agi-gami	Importance of trust and faith, keeping Okinawan traditions Behavior of Okinawan samurai	none	Okinawan	Ancestors' spirit

4. Conclusion

What are the features of the structure of the spiritual universe and spirits of possession of the cult center described up to this point? One can also question the kind of universe they represent. What does this make-up of the spiritual universe particularly mean to the followers who attend the cult center, for approximately 90% of them are Okinawans and their descendants? What kind of entities are these spirits for this Okinawan woman, Maria, who emigrated to Brazil and created the cult center? In this section we will examine the symbolic meaning of the structure of the spiritual universe and the composition of the spirits of possession, at a collective and individual level.

4.1. Collective level.

Researchers such as Ortiz (1978), Brown (1986), Pressel (1971) and Birman (1980)²³ have presented various interpretations regarding the make-up of possessions in *Umbanda*. For example, Pressel has interpreted the 4 categories of *Umbanda* — *Preto-velho*, *Caboclo*, *Criança*, and *Exu* — from a psycho-anthropological perspective and at the following three levels²⁴,

(1) Of the four categories of possession, three, namely *Preto-velho*, *Caboclo* and *Exu* represent ethnic background that makes up the Brazilian population — African blacks, Brazilian Indians, and foreigners (particularly Europeans), whereas the *Criança* category, which is not given a specific racial or ethnic origin, may represent Brazilians who descend from such ethnicities.

(2) Focusing on the relative ages of the spirits of possession (category), these spirits may indicate the stage of development of the religion of possession in Brazil.

(3) The personality attached to a spirit of possession (category) on the whole, represents a well balanced ideal personal trait²⁵.

Bearing the interpretation of previous researchers in mind, I shall interpret the type of *universe* that the spirits of possession and the spiritual universe of Maria's cult center represent. Firstly, the spirits of this center have a racial/ethnic composition with blacks, Brazilian Indians, whites, and Okinawans (Japanese), when we exclude the restless spirits — *Espíritos Sofredores*, whose racial and

23. Birman, P. (1980) *O que É Umbanda?* Coleção Primeiros Passos/SP. Abril/Brasiliense

24. Pressel, J.Ester.(1973)*Umbanda in São Paulo: religious innovation in a development society*. In E. Bourguignon (ed.). religion, altered state of consciousness and social change. Columbus: ohio State Univ. Press. p. 265-318.

25. The significance Umbanda believers give to the possession categories is the following: Preto-velho—calmness, generosity, Caboclo—braveness, austerity, Criança—innocence, playfulness, Exu—shrewd, aggressiveness

ethnic composition are unknown and are “not included at the center”. If we follow Pressel’s first interpretation, for Maria and the followers, the composition of the spirits of possession can be understood as their interpretation (model) of the “Brazilian” world, as this nation is made up of “four races/ethnicities.”— Furthermore, when we consider the roles assigned to the spirits in the cult, one can say that harmonious racial relationships are depicted in Brazil (without racial discrimination), a nation which divides the roles of the four races/ethnicities according to their traits and characteristics. Clearly the influence of 19th century racial discrimination encompassed in Kardecism is recognized here, but even though the white category is given the image of a more evolved stage, at Maria’s cult center, the distinct contribution of each race/ethnicity is emphasized.

The second interpretation is that the structure of the spiritual universe of this center religiously depicts Okinawans as human. From the perspective of the theory stating that Japan and Okinawa share the same ancestors, it is recognized that Okinawans as well as mainland Japanese people have a common Japanese religious tradition represented by Buddhism and Shintoism. Despite the aforesaid, Okinawans have a distinct religious ancestor worship tradition, and therefore these people are seen as different from mainland Japanese.

The third interpretation is that *Uchinanchus* — Okinawans of Brazil²⁶ are not people who simply “assimilate” into Brazilian society but rather, they maintain their distinct “culture”, thus contributing to and integrating Brazilian culture. This is because they have dual guardian spirits and we find dual roles played during the cult. Portuguese, Okinawan, and the Japanese are spoken in the cult, which is therefore multilingual, and duality is also found in the heterogeneous nature of the messages that are communicated by the spirits of possession. That is, the existence of duality in the idiom of possession is a condition upon which *Uchinanchus* of Brazil are construing themselves as hybrid beings, continuously receiving the influence of Brazilian and also Okinawan spirits of possession.

The fourth interpretation is a model of the universe different from that of the first level of interpretation, in which the social universe of the Okinawan immigrants in Brazil is depicted. The Okinawan spirits of possession can all be placed in either of the following categories: 1. family of Okinawans who moved to Brazil or people from the same religion; 2. the remaining family; 3. family or relatives that

26. Refer to the author’s paper (2000) regarding the characteristics of the collective identity of okinawans in Brazil and the transformation. Koichi Mori (2000) “Identity Transformations among Okinawans and Their Descendants in Brazil” (in) Jeffrey Lesser (ed). *Searching for Home Abroad: Japanese-Brazilians and the Transnationalism*. USA. Duke Univ.Press. p.47-65.

emigrated to countries other than Brazil; 4. *Nisseis* — second generation Japanese born in the land they emigrated to; 5. relatives that live on the Japanese mainland; and 6. ancestors. Moreover, the Okinawan immigrants that came to Brazil at least at the time when the center was founded, also share this social universe. Within the structure of the spirits of possession, there are no immigrants from mainland Japan, or other immigrants of Japanese origin. Although this argument is weak, this may be so due to the subtlety of the social relationships and the background of the mutually discriminatory relation between immigrants of mainland Japan and those from Okinawa in the pre-war Japanese immigrant society.

In this way, the structure of the spiritual universe of the cult center, in particular the composition of the spirits of possession, is a “description” of the *Uchinanchus* of Brazil including people from various levels and backgrounds.

4.2 Personal Level - Spirits of possession - structuring Maria’s life

Table 4 Maria’s Principal Possessions

Personal name of spirit	Relation	Possession category	Religious origin	Language used	Personal encounter	Place of encounter
Tio Kokichi	Paternal uncle	Okinawan immigrant	Ancestor worship	J. P. O	Yes	Nitto Settlement (Interior of SP)
Nabe	Paternal aunt	Okinawan immigrant	Ancestor worship	J. P. O.	Yes	Nitto Settlement
Kameto	Mother	Okinawan immigrant	Ancestor worship	J. O.	yes	Nitto, Cedro Alecson, Settlements
Seishin	Father	Okinawan immigrant	Ancestor worship	J.O.P.	yes	Nitto, Cedro Alecson, Settlements
Lidinha	Younger sister	Okinawan nisei	none	Portuguese	yes	Alecson
Aurora	Younger sister	Okinawan nisei	none	Portuguese	yes	Alecson
Pai João de Angola		Preto-velho	Umbanda	Portuguese	no	São Paulo-Vila Nova Conceição

Indio Paraguaçu		Caboclo	Umbanda	Portuguese	No	São Paulo-Vila Nova Conceição
Indio Pena Branca		Caboclo	Umbanda	Portuguese	No	São Paulo-Vila Nova Conceição
Indio Piajara		Caboclo	Umbanda	Portuguese	No	São Paulo-Vila Nova Conceição
Indio Timba-Tupã		Caboclo	Umbanda	Portuguese	yes	São Paulo-Vila Nova Conceição
Pedro Donizetti		Branco	Catholicism	Portuguese	yes	São Paulo-Brás
Dr. José Mendonça		Branco	Kardecism	Portuguese	yes	São Paulo-Brás
Maria da Glória		Branco	Kardecism	Portuguese	yes	São Paulo-Vila Ema
Irmão Silva		Branco	Spiritism	Portuguese	yes	São Paulo-Vila Ema
Uncle of Miyazato	Husband's Paternal uncle	Okinawan Immigrant to Peru	Ancestor worship	J.O.	yes	São Paulo-Vila Ema

note: J=Japanese, O=Okinawan, P=Portuguese

If the structure of the spiritual universe of the center, in particular the composition of the spirits of possession, is collectively a “description” of *Uchinanchus* of Brazil, what do these spirits mean to each of the mediums? A case study will examine this question focusing on Maria’s spirits, the founder of this center. Table 4 shows the principal spirits of possession of Maria.

Maria has always stated at the cult that “the *Uchinanchu* of Brazil must have Brazilian and Okinawan guardian spirits to be completely safe”, thus Maria’s spirits are roughly classified as spirits of Brazilian origin and spirits of Okinawan origin. Possession is when the body is temporarily given up to the possessive spirit, this being nothing but the temporary experience of being a “Brazilian” or “Okinawan.” In other words, this means that in terms of possessions, Maria as a person is the recipient of spiritual influences, which define her as an *Uchinanchu* of Brazil, and thus her religious identity is represented.

This table reflects the data concerning her life history, which was obtained during an interview. One can observe that these spirits are idioms that outline her life. Firstly, the spirits of possession represent the places where Maria lived during

her lifetime. She left for Brazil with her parents at the age of two, starting out at the Nitto-Settlement, she lived at the Alecson Settlement on the Santos-Juquiá line, the Cedro Settlement, the Brás district of São Paulo, the Vila Nova Conceição district and the Vila Ema district. Her spirits are the death spirits of people she had encountered at these places where she resided, thus the different localities of residence throughout her life are represented methodically.

Secondly, the spirits seem to depict her religious journey. The religions that Maria encountered throughout her life, namely, ancestor worship in Okinawa, popular Catholicism, Spiritism, *Umbanda* and Kardecism are articulated in an orderly manner through her possessions.

Maria's spirits of possession systematize her "life" as a whole and are idioms that restructure her existence. Psychologically, the spirits of possession are idioms of possession introduced through *Umbanda* to restructure society cognitively by adding meaning to society's psychosomatic disorders and symptoms caused by internal struggle; thank to tasks of projection that reconfirm individual identity, constantly integrating Maria's fundamental ego.

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