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ブラジル・サンパウロの沖縄の家族による祖先崇拝のケーススタディ：1日で3つのミサ

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Case Study of Rituals of Ancestors' Worship by an Okinawan Family in São Paulo, Brazil: Three *Missas* in One Day

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I . Introduction

The expression of religiosity in Okinawa, and various of its cultural, linguistic, social, and ethnic aspects, is different from the rest of Japan, due to the archipelago's historical trajectory, marked by a complex colonial dynamic with both Japan and the US. At first, the island changed its status from independent kingdom to be annexed as a Japanese prefecture in 1879 and transited as administration of the US Army after the Second World War, when it placed one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific, until 1972, the year it returned to be part of Japan. The troubled political context generated a high demographic pressure in the region and a near bankruptcy of the islands' economy, causing several migratory waves towards both industrial areas in mainland Japan and overseas specific locations, such as Colonia Okinawa in Bolivia and Vila Carrão district in Brazil. Local and national government specially promoted projects for overseas migration from Okinawa as the prefecture presented a lower migration rate to the mainland compared to other rural areas of Japan, due to some aspects, such as the prejudice towards Okinawan people and the geographic isolation from the rest of the country (Suzuki 2005).

A network of Okinawan immigrants connected by social and ethnic bounds and values was created, resembling a pinpoint migration path (Tanno 2013), in which individuals moved back and forth between Okinawa and immigrant communities scattered across several countries. In daily life, concepts of Okinawan identity shared in the macro level through the communities are created and affected by the process of immigration, put into practice through many activities, such as the practice of rituals of ancestors' worship. The social networks activated in the ceremonies of ancestors' worship relate to spaces of grieving, reflecting the transnational diasporic context of the immigrant families, and the mechanisms of adaptation shared as information and the generating

matter of these networks.

Okinawan religion adherence is relative to birth rather than belief or conversion, and it is considered animistic, based on the belief that all things have an inhabitant spirit, without a rigid dichotomy between sacred and profane (Lebra, 1985). The absence of metaphysical speculation, the scarcity of mythology concerning the creation of the cosmos and principal deities, coupled with an abundance of etiological myths, explaining customs and historical facts, are explained as consistent aspects of "Okinawan thought", denoting the importance of human relations to the society (Lebra 1985). In Okinawa, religiosity is stratified through the different spheres of the state, the community, the *munchu*¹⁾ and the family. Rituals are organized following cycles based on the lunisolar calendar, Chinese zodiac and a six-day cyclic system that dictates daily fortune (Lebra 1985).

In the context of immigration, religious rituals practiced by immigrants and descendants of the prefecture influenced and were influenced by local culture and religion, producing distinct formats such as the syncretism with Afro-Brazilian religions (Mori, 1998). In Brazil, distinctions are visible in the formation of *yuta*²⁾, and in the focus on ancestors' worship, or *sozen suhai* in Japanese, due to the attempt to suppress the religious ceremonies that were part of the public sphere, by assimilation pressures of the Brazilian society and the Japanese community in Brazil. The rituals are categorizable in terms of time, space and number of people involved and engaged in the ceremonies, varying between fixed events scheduled annually and those referring to the death of specific ancestors, performed either in public or private spaces and with organization ranging between the ones performed only by the family's matriarch to those evolving relatives, friends and *shimanchus*³⁾.

1. Research context

The topic presented in this article is literally familiar to me, as this case study regards the rituals of ancestors' worship practiced by my family, composed by Okinawan people who settled in Colonia Okinawa at the Santa Cruz de La Sierra district in Bolivia on the post-War period and subsequently re-migrated to Vila Carrão, a neighborhood of São Paulo city, Brazil.

My *oba*⁴⁾ on my father's side passed away in 2012 at 90 years old. She always seemed very strong and regardless of her old age, her death felt sudden and surprised the family. Overnight, someone that always lived next door was not there anymore. Even with a close relationship, there was always a language barrier, *oba* and *oji*⁵⁾ spoke a mix of *Uchinaguchi*⁶⁾ and Japanese while I could only speak Portuguese, therefore our conversations were either mediated by someone who could translate the topics or by using mutually known keywords, which limited deeper interactions.

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This was the moment when the ancestors' worship got more of my attention. Before, the rituals performed at my *oba's* house and led by her in *Uchinaguchi*, were part of a nebulous private universe of my family life. That universe was made by *missas*, which in Portuguese refers to masses, the Catholic liturgical services, but is commonly used among the Okinawan immigrant families in Brazil to address the rituals of ancestors' worship, where the family gathers in front of the *butsudan*⁷⁾ to light *senko*⁸⁾ with different types of food being offered in front of the altar, receiving visits of *obasans* and *ojisans*⁹⁾ who also would only speak in *Uchinaguchi* in their indecipherable conversations.

My grandmother's death was the first occasion for me to dive deeper into the tasks around the cycle of *missas*, as it was the first experience of a very close death in my family and my grandmother was the one who commanded the rituals until that time. The situation required all family members to get more involved, each one with specific roles guided by kinship relationships, segmented by generation and gender, which guide the religious system. The responsibility for the general organization of the ritual rests with the matriarch of the family and the preparations of the *gwatis*¹⁰⁾, arrangement of the offerings before the *ihai/totome*¹¹⁾ and *hinukan*¹²⁾, among other tasks are delegated by her to the other women in the family. Men are usually left with chores without much involvement with the production of the rituals or outside the home, such as buying ingredients or bringing the *yuta* at home.

I felt lost observing and living through those rituals, procedures that I could not understand, trying to find a logic behind the quantities of each *gwati* offered in front of the *butsudan*, the meaning of the weekly *missas* during the 49 days that follow someone's death or what the *yuta* spoke in *Uchinaguchi* during the rituals. The lack of understanding was the spark of a search for ways to synthesize the system of rituals and the rules that guide them. My hypothesis at first was that the synthesis resided in an idealized pattern pursued by the individuals involved in the system, an imagined "tradition" based in ways and rules of the ritual in Okinawa serving as the main source of references, denying an interference of the immigration process. A manual brought by my grandparents from Okinawa (Toguchi, 1985)¹³⁾, was the first written reference I found about the topic. Toguchi (1985) presented pictures and illustrations with the *gwati* distribution for each type of *missa* and explanatory texts in Japanese about the rituals, but most of the family members were formally educated in Brazil or Bolivia and are illiterate in Japanese language, so the visual elements were the main the model for the family to organize the offerings.

There is a festive atmosphere around those events, in which meanings are created between participants through their meeting and strengthening ties, in conversations and banquets resulting

from ritual offerings and which reaffirms the importance of human relations in maintaining their religiosity.

2. Methodology

As pointed above, this paper is the result of an ethnographic work through participant observation in the cycle of rituals of *soseu suhai* practiced by my family. The analysis is guided by perceptions gathered through a combination of my childhood experiences with a crescent attention and development of methodology from 2015 to 2017. An exceptional event, with *missas* honoring three different deceased family members¹⁴⁾ is described in further details for a better understanding of how the events are organized and the differences between different categories of events of the cycle. Besides observing the rituals, I was also involved in the preparations and banquets, and conducted an interview with the *yuta* that guided the three *missas*.

I investigate the role of the rituals as *deathscapes* (Kong 1999, Maddrell and Sidaway 2010, Hunter 2015), spaces for creation and materialization of memory, in our study case, through the rituals of ancestors' worship and the "in-between" third space formation (Bhabha 1998). The ancestors' worship is built as part of a transnational grieving process (Mas Giralt 2018) and reflects in its diasporic context, combining the traits made possible by such positioning. It refers not only to the objective grief for the loss of loved ones, but it is also connected to the successive discontinuities found through the immigration process, leading the social group to a liminality state, which brings a feeling of alienation from both sender and receptor societies and a higher level of internal cohesion (Tsuda 2013).

The networks of social connections tensioned in the context of transnational migration (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007) evoke different times and spaces, whose rituals form and make visible the group's ethos and worldview (Geertz 1978). These networks span throughout spatial and temporal limits, connecting people, places and moments, and their creation is associated with the formation, implementation, and exchange of models of survival strategies (Mori 2012a) of the Okinawan ethnic group, mechanisms widely used by the need for adaptation, especially in the face of successive migrations, and which fundamentally compose the community's own cosmology. The trajectory of the studied family is a micro-level expression of the Okinawan diaspora, connected to the historical context of Okinawan immigration to Bolivia and the establishment of the Okinawan immigrant community in Brazil. The immigration path generated a network of transnational connections (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007) throughout which they share survival strategies (Mori 2012a). The network is activated through religious practice and is reflected on the grieving processes (Kong 1999,

Maddrekk and Sidaway 2010, Hunter 2015, Mas Giralt 2018) impacted by the social disruption of migration.

II. The family

The family roots are in the city of Nanjo, in the south of Okinawa's main island, more specifically, to the villages of Chinen on my grandfather's side (*A*), and Shikiya on my grandmother's side (*Aa*). The family, consisting of the couple and their 6 children with ages ranging from 1 to 18 years old, emigrated to Bolivia in 1959. After three months of ship travel, they arrived at the port of Santos in Brazil and continued by train to their destination, *Colonia Okinawa 2*, an Okinawan settlement located in unexplored forest area in Santa Cruz de La Sierra district, organized by the pre-War Okinawan immigrants in Bolivia and the Bolivian, Okinawan and US governments (Tigner 1963, Suzuki 2010, Yamashiro 1994). The last son of the couple was born in Bolivia in 1960 and even though life was going relatively well, maintaining a rice field, according to *B2*'s testimony, *A* could not foresee social mobility in a country without connection to the ocean such as Bolivia, so he decided to re-immigrate to Brazil in 1964, following the path of a friend from Okinawa who re-migrated to Brazil.

In 1964, the whole family left Bolivia for São Paulo, Brazil, but stayed for about 10 months in the city of Elias Fausto, close to Campinas, to work on a grape's plantation on a countryman's farm. My uncles and aunts did not wish to work with agriculture anymore and pressured their parents to move permanently to the district of Vila Carrão, in São Paulo city, where *A*'s friend lived and had a sweatshop with his family. At first, *A* went to Vila Carrão to talk to his friend and arranged to send his son *B2* to learn the necessary to open their own sweatshop. *B2* lived with the acquaintance's family for 3 months before the rest of the family joined him in Vila Carrão, in what was a common practice among the Okinawan immigrants. My family bought a house and moved in the

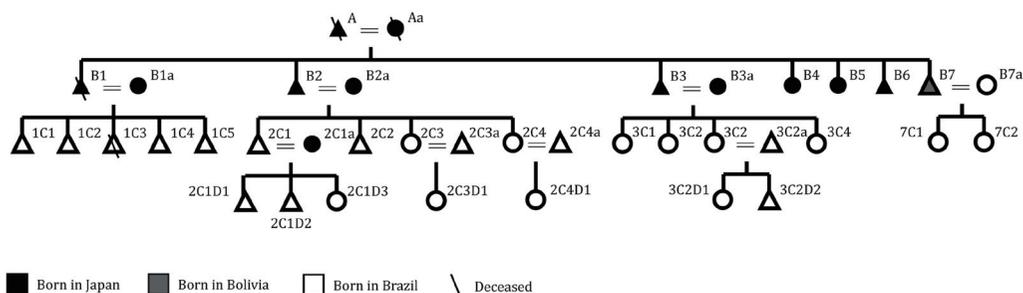


Figure 1: Representation of the family genealogy¹⁵⁾ in 2016.

neighborhood, but before they could establish the business, a crisis in the work field started due to the instability after the Military Coup in 1964, so *A* decided to buy a stand and work selling goods in street markets.

After a few years, the family established a stand to sell *pastel*¹⁶⁾, until 1970 when it became more difficult to arrange a license to sell this product at the street markets. From this period, the family established a sweatshop on the back of the family residence. As the family grew with the second generation getting married, another floor was built to the residence, transforming completely the architecture of the building to accommodate the family members and the necessary infrastructure for the sweatshop.

In Okinawan tradition, the *chōnan*¹⁷⁾ heirs all the family properties and is responsible for the maintenance of the ancestors' worship rituals. In case of men without male children, a son of the closest relative could be adopted if it was not a *chōnan*. *A* was *chōnan* of a *jinan*¹⁸⁾, but his oldest uncle did not have children, so *A* was adopted by him from a very young age and *A* only discovered that he was not raised by his biological father at 18 years old, when *A* got his birth certificate in order to enroll in the army, which generated conflicts in the family, because of the unconformity with the Okinawan tradition. After the discovery, *A* went to live in his biological father's house where he stayed with *Aa* and had their children before and after WWII, until the immigration to Bolivia. The first return of *A* to Okinawa after emigrating to South America was in 1972, on the occasion of his uncle's death, and in 1976, because of the death of his biological father, for the necessary rituals to bring *A*'s father's *ihai*, the *butsudan* and other objects used in the rituals to Brazil.

III. Description of rituals

The private rituals in the observed family occur mostly in the family house, in front of the *butsudan* or the *hinukan*, and the public rituals are performed in the cemetery in front of the family grave. The main events of the fixed cycle are the *Tsuitachi Juugonichi*¹⁹⁾, *Shiimii*²⁰⁾, *Higan*²¹⁾, *Tanabata*²²⁾ and *Obon*²³⁾. Besides the ones based on the traditional Okinawan rituals, the family visits the cemetery on some dates traditional to the Brazilian society, such as *Finados*²⁴⁾, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Children's Day, and make offerings to the ancestors in the *butsudan* on festive dates such as birthdays and Christmas.

The cycle of rituals after death consists of seven weekly rituals during the first 49 days, followed by the rituals of 1, 3, 7, 13, 25 and 33 years, and the *Senkotsu*²⁵⁾, which is getting rarer due to the increasing popularity of the practice of cremation.

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1. Three *missas* in one day

On March 28th, 2016, three different *missas* were held at the family's house in honor of *A* (3 years death anniversary), his oldest son, *BI* (13 years death anniversary), and *BI*'s son who passed away as an infant, *IC3* (33 years death anniversary). According to the family members, it is not permitted to conduct *missas* for ancestors in a year that another family member passed away, so the *missas* of *IC3* and *BI* were delayed on account of the recent and consecutive death of *Aa* (2012) and *A* (2014).

The *missas* of 3 and 13 years have similar rituals but the 33 years' *missa* is much more complex considering the offerings, as the last *missa* in an ancestor's cycle.

1.1. *Yuta*

A *Yuta*, which is the name commonly used among the Okinawan immigrant community to address an Okinawan shaman, was invited to work as a guide for the rituals, functioning as a connection between the world of the living and the spiritual world. The shaman guided the family on how to organize the offerings, the rituals' order, taking the control of the praying and explaining the importance of the steps, besides giving advices on parts of the rituals which were not being performed accordingly to her view on the tradition and were representing an imbalance in the relationship between the living and the ancestors' worlds.

The shaman (*Yu*) invited to the three *missas* event was from the same city as the family (Nanjo). *Yu* migrated to Brazil at the age of 11 and speaks Portuguese fluently, having completed her studies in Brazil, and started acting as shaman in 1997, but reported having experienced the outbreak of mediumship since she was a child. *Yu* reported returning to Okinawa 16 times to improve her techniques and perform *missas* for Brazilians living there and who had difficulties with the language to get help from local shamans. The language barrier also happened in Brazil, with older generations of *yuta* that only spoke Japanese or *Uchinaguchi*, as it was the case of a previous *yuta*²⁶⁾ who used to visit the family rituals.

1.2. Preparing the *missas*

Preparations for the *missas* began a few days in advance, as the rituals require a big quantity and variety of *gwatis*. Generally, the sweet dishes such as *mochi* are prepared much earlier than savory dishes, since they take much longer to be made.

The coordination of the preparations was divided among *B4* and *B5*, the two only daughters of *A* and *Aa*, and *B1a*, *BI*'s widow and mother of *IC3*, who now lives and takes care of the family's



Figure 2 and 3: Improved cooking area outdoor and kitchen during the preparation of food for offerings.

Source: Photograph by author.



Figure 4: Uchikabi brought by the Yu.

Source: Photograph by author.

house. *B7*, *A* and *Aa*'s youngest son, and *IB1*, *B1* and *B1a* oldest son, were also present during the morning of the event to help with the preparations. The task division was settled by gender, as women prepared the food and coordinated the tasks and men prepared the *butsudan* room²⁷⁾ for the event. After lunch, I went with *IB1* to *Yu*'s house, to pick her up for the ceremony.

After arriving at the family's house, *Yu* greeted all the people and was taken to the dining room next to the kitchen, where she separated and prepared the materials to be used on the *missas*. During this time, I stayed with *Yu*, separating the *senko* in groups of 24, 17, 12, 9 and 7 to be used in specific moments during the *missas*, and asking some questions about her and *sosen suhai*, besides to ask for permission to take pictures during the rituals, which she agreed to be taken but only after she conducted the main parts.

At first, *Yu* showed a pack of *uchikabi*²⁸⁾, that she brought from Okinawa, taking the opportunity

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to talk about a man in Brazil that was selling an overpriced false representation in the “wrong color”, as an example of someone trying to take advantage of people who follow the rituals of ancestors' worship in Brazil. *Yu* also brought other two papers from Okinawa, red and white, for the celebration of the 33 years *missa*, which she explained to represent gratitude to the gods of heaven and earth.

1.3. Hinukan

The first part of the ritual was conducted in the kitchen, assembling all the offerings prepared for the 3 *missas* in front of the *hinukan*. According to *Yu*, the *hinukan* represents a direct communication media with the ancestors which already turned into deities and *kami*, as goddess of fire and nature from Okinawa and her “Brazilian version”, represented by *Nossa Senhora da Conceição Aparecida*, an image of Blessed Virgin Mary widely venerated in Brazilian Catholicism and considered the patroness of Brazil. The equivalence between the deities from Okinawa and *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* highlights the importance of the connection to the land in the religious system.

The offerings were assembled by the family women according to the instructions of *Yu*. At the *hinukan* altar, *Yu* lit two candles, one to *Nossa Senhora* and another to light up the *senko*. All the interactions with the offerings and the *hinukan* were mediated by *Bla*, so *Yu* positioned herself on the left side with *Bla* on her right and passed the lit *senko* to *Bla* so she could put it on the censer.

First, *Yu* prayed in *Uchinaguchi* to the deities of Okinawa, talking about the place and family origin, listing all the family members and where they lived, explaining the reason for the event, the three *missas* and their contexts, who were those ancestors and where they were buried. After



Figure 5: Offerings exposed over the kitchen sink under the *hinukan*.
Source: Photograph by author.

that, *Yu* prayed in Portuguese to *Nossa Senhora Aparecida*, explaining the meaning of that ritual as a form of “translation” to that entity. The prayers resembled a request for permission to hold the *missas*. Next, *Yu* required *Bla* to put more water and *sake* in the *hinukan* and three portions of rice over the *senko*. Finally, using chopsticks, *Bla* lifted each *gwati* towards the *hinukan* and turned it before putting it back to its plate.

1.4. Butsudan

The *missas* were conducted in the *butsudan* room in crescent order, from the most recent death, so the first was the 3 years’ *missa* for *A*. By this time, other members of the family started to arrive, and the house got more crowded. In general, the women brought and organized the *gwatis* in the room. Once everything was in place, *Yu* positioned herself in front of the *butsudan* and started the prayers in *Uchinaguchi*. In front of the *butsudan*, during the three *missas* there was a tray with three portions of rice in teacups, three piles of three white *mochis*, a glass of water and a cup of *sake*.

The family members lined up to light three *senko* each and deposit it in the *okuru*²⁹⁾ and to put an envelope with money on the side of the *butsudan* as offerings. A glass container was put on the side filled with water and with seven pieces of sugar cane on top of it, and after all the family members deposited their *senko*, *Yu* asked *Bla* to burn the *uchikabi* over the “bed” of sugarcane and dispose of the tea, water and *sake* that were part of the offerings.

B1’s *missa* was very similar to *A*’s *missa*, only the rice, the soup and one *gwati* from each *juubaku*³⁰⁾ were changed from one to the other, however, *IC3*’s *missa* was more elaborated than both. According to *Yu*, from the 25 years death anniversary on, *missa* offerings have red tones, so the sweets, rice and even the flower arrangements were painted with red dye, and the *kamaboko* was pink. Besides, since it was the last *missa* of the cycle, two whole chickens, eggs, two lobsters, crabs and fish were offered. Another different offering was that of pork, which should have been the head, but the leg was used due to difficulty to find it in supermarkets.

During this ritual, *Yu* also used the other papers (red and white) which she explained as meaning gratitude to heaven and earth. *Yu* conducted the prayers using a notebook with writings in Chinese. The family members also lit three *senko* each, distributed by *B6*, the sixth son of *A* and *Aa*.

Another different part of the ritual for this *missa* was that 3 sheets of *uchikabi* were burned for each person who attended to the *missa*, with *Bla* raising the 3 pieces of burned *uchikabi* towards the altar using chopsticks saying the name of the offering participant. By the end, *Yu* burned the red and white papers and *Bla* filled up the cups of tea, *sake*, and water three times in a roll and offered

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Figure 6: Offerings at the *butsudan* for the *missa* of A, the *okuru* is in the middle of the image, filled with *senko* from the family members.

Source: Photograph by author.



Figure 7: *Bla* burning the *uchikabi* over the "bed" of sugarcane.

Source: Photograph by author.



Figure 8: The setup of the offerings for *IC3's missa*.

Source: Photograph by author.



Figure 9: Bowl with scraps of food, cups of tea, water, and *sake* to abandoned spirits.

Source: Photograph by author.

a piece of each *gwati* to the *ihai*, by raising them with the chopsticks.

At the end of the *missa*, the glass of water and the teacup which are always left in the *butsudan* were refilled using the water and tea from the cups and glasses used in the rituals, and a handful from each cup of rice was picked up to be thrown at the sugarcane "bed" and over the envelopes by the family members.

A curious tradition in those rituals is to leave a small plate with scraps of the food served for offerings at the side of the *butsudan* for "starving" spirits of those whose families do not conduct the rituals properly.



Figure 10 and 11: Participants having a meal around the kitchen table and talking at the sofa in the backroom.

Source: Photograph by author.

1.5. Family meeting

Different family members engage in the rituals since the preparation of the offerings to the end of the *missas*. Throughout all that process, most of the time is spent outside of the *butsudan* room, but with the people scattered through different parts of the house, especially the kitchen, either preparing, eating, or talking with each other. It is important to the family that the offerings are not thrown away but brought back to the kitchen to be consumed after the *missa*, consisting of a final part of the offering to the ancestors by consuming it all. A large quantity was made of all the different *gwatis* to be enough for all the participants to eat during the ritual and to bring back home, as at the end of the night the remaining food was divided for all the families to bring it back home. The gender separation is also visible through the meetings, as the work of separating the food for the families and to tidy up the kitchen is exclusively regarded to the women of the family.

During these moments, the different generations can meet and talk, in conversations about the past, the immigration, the ancestors and the rituals.

IV. Conclusion

The motivations for this research are very personal, as an observation of rituals in my own family, which I experienced throughout my life, but as a first attempt to consciously try to understand the meanings behind the practices. Several times this was a rather confusing task, having to shift between the necessity to keep a distance to see things more clearly but inevitably having a role designated by the degree of kinship, age and gender, within that environment.

Visual and performative aspects were what attracted me most initially, due to the impossibility

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of verbal understanding about what was happening. Due to the complexity of the variables that command each *missa*, the attempt to frame the forms, visuality and performances produced in this reality with an external pattern seemed to be a complicated and meaningless exercise. In addition, even from the superficial comparison with the way in which the rituals are followed in other Okinawan families, there were many variations for reasons of both region of origin, generation, and immigration history.

Despite a initial goal to look for the meanings of the offerings, which have an ordering of numbers and types of food controlled by the older women in the house, what started to draw attention over time were the social ties engaged in the performance of the rituals. The various levels of engagement of the participants proved to be dependent on the importance of the *missa* in question. The rituals resemble banquets and preparation requires efforts of up to a week, from the purchase of ingredients to the production of the food itself. These efforts are focused on the older women in the household, who distribute tasks among those who are most available. Men rarely engage in food preparation, taking on operational tasks when necessary.

Some minor *missas* have only the visit of the closest family members, where after lighting the *senko* in the *butsudan*, everyone gets together to eat at the kitchen table and spread around the house freely. In more important *missas*, where relatives, friends and *shimanchus* pay visits, the spaces in the house are divided, and mainly older men are left with the task of interacting with visitors in the room adjacent to the *butsudan* room, while women eventually come to serve food and drinks, but stay with other family members in the kitchen. In this context, *soseu suhai* rituals function as a mechanism triggered in moments of mourning and rupture, as a system in which social roles are redefined by the absence of the death of one of the family members.

Under the perspective of transnational migration, the diasporic community from Okinawa, passing through Colonia Okinawa (Bolivia) and settling in São Paulo (Brazil), developed and shared several survival strategies internally, due to a historical context that placed the group in a constant state of liminality, result of the subsequent disruptions between the originating and receiving societies. This sharing is based on the social cohesion of the community, taking as an example the common realization of *tanomoshis* (informal Rotating Savings and Credit Associations) based on trust among relatives, friends and *shimanchus*. The reunions resulting from the rituals reaffirm the social relationships between the participants, validating the positions based on the generations and the gender roles within the family logic and incorporating the grieving process in the support network that underlies the group's survival. Within this system, ancestors are maintained with a similar status of the living family members, with a central role in maintaining

their organization from these events. The process of grieving of the family is connected to the Okinawan and Brazilian religious systems through the guidance of the *yuta* and the rituals also are a point of exchange among the family members, friends and *shimanchu*.

The fundamental point of this reflection is the correspondence between the religious experience of a transnational immigrant group, focused on the grieving process that reflects their way of acting in the face of ruptures, and their ways of sharing survival strategies, through the contact networks created and the ethos and worldview shared in this process.

Notes

- 1) In Okinawan language, *munchu* means patriclan, a social division which aggregates groups of family.
- 2) *Yuta* is the name given in Okinawan language to the shamans who guide rituals, whose identity and performance are re-signified while in Brazil through a syncretism between the cultural systems of spirituality of Okinawa and Umbanda (Afro-Brazilian religion). (Mori 2012b)
- 3) Term in Okinawan language referring to people originary from the same village, functioning as an expanded family concept, especially in the context of immigration in which the blood ties were extended for the distance.
- 4) In Japanese and Okinawan language, *oba* means grandmother and it is the way we address my grandmother in my family.
- 5) In Japanese and Okinawan language, *oji* means grandfather and it is the way we address my grandfather in my family.
- 6) *Uchinaguchi* means Okinawan language in Okinawan language.
- 7) *Butsudan* is a family altar, where the memorial tablets with the ancestors' names are placed, and which is usually located in the main bedroom in Okinawan families' houses in Brazil.
- 8) Incense.
- 9) *Obasan* and *ojisan* are words taken from Japanese language, used to address older women and men, respectively.
- 10) From *Uchinaguchi*, *gwati* means delicacy and is the name attributed to the foods served in the masses as offerings to the ancestors.
- 11) *Ihai/totome* are terms in *Uchinaguchi* for the set of red tablets in which the names and other information about the deceased family members are engraved. As those objects represent the ancestors, they have a central role in the worship system.
- 12) *Hinukan* is a small altar made of white porcelain pieces, assembled in the kitchen, representing the fire deity. It is usually composed of a white ceramic pot with sand and ashes

from *senko*, a cup of water, a small plate with one or three lumps of salt and a container for leaves. It represents the Fire deity, connecting the living beings to higher deities and Okinawan ancestors, even though those concepts are not so precise in the group imaginary.

- 13) 渡口初美 (1985). 『沖縄の葬祭と先祖供養』 . 新報出版 .
- 14) These *missas* were for my grandfather, my oldest uncle and one of my cousins, who died when he was still a baby.
- 15) For anonymization and easier understanding, I changed the names of the family members for an alpha-numeric code. The upper-case letter represents the generation (in alphabetic order, from oldest to newest, starting with my grandparents), the lower case represents the spouse of the individual and the number represents the order among the siblings.
- 16) *Pastel* is a type of deep-fried pastry, commonly produced and sold in São Paulo city at street markets by *nikkei* people, allegedly invented in Brazil by Chinese immigrants and made popular in street markets in São Paulo by Okinawan immigrants.
- 17) Oldest son in Japanese language.
- 18) Second son in Japanese language.
- 19) Simple rituals which occur every 1st and 15th day of the month, in front of the *hinukan* for acknowledgement and to ask for protection to the household and the family members.
- 20) Ritual related to the harvest period, held on the 15th day after the spring equinox, usually around April.
- 21) Celebration held on Autumn and Spring equinoxes, with offerings in front of the *butsudan*.
- 22) *Tanabata* is a day reserved for the cleaning of the family grave and the *butsudan*, representing also a “notice” to the ancestors about the *Obon* celebrations. Traditionally celebrated on the 7th day of the 7th month of the lunisolar calendar, therefore varying yearly in the Gregorian calendar. Recently many Okinawan families in Brazil celebrate *Tanabata* on July 7th.
- 23) Three days celebration, one week after *Tanabata*, for the ancestors to “return” home. During this period, friends, relatives, and acquaintances pay visits and three daily meals are offered in the *butsudan*.
- 24) All Soul’s Day, also known as the Day of the Dead, on November 2nd, is a day for the remembrance of the deceased people of the Catholic tradition.
- 25) Ritual of exhumation and cleaning of bones at the 7th death anniversary.
- 26) Mori (2012b) describes the formation of Okinawan shamans in São Paulo under the influence of *Umbanda* (a syncretic Brazilian religion based on African, Indigenous and Christian religions) and discusses the generation changes and differences among the shamans, as some had their formation based in Brazil, while other would go back to Okinawan for completing the process.

- 27) The *butsudan* room was the bedroom of *A* and *Aa* and the bed gave place to chairs for the occasion.
- 28) In *Uchinaguchi*, it is a yellow paper with the shape of rounded coins pressed on it, representing money and that usually is burned during the *missa*. In Japan, Okinawa, or Okinawan products' shops it is possible to find it for sale, but in Brazil the family used to improvise and make their own version using yellow napkins and pressing coins into it.
- 29) Ceramic censer, the one in the *butsudan* is blue with details in golden and the *hinukan* one is entirely white.
- 30) Square containers in glass or ceramics in which the *gwatis* are organized to be offered in the *butsudan*.
- 31) In Okinawa, those informal associations are commonly known as *moai* or *muie*, but in the conversations about the topic among the Okinawan immigrants in Vila Carrão, they were addressed mostly as *tanomoshi*, the Japanese word for this type of association.

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