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# **Progressive Entanglements** Religious Intimacy in Japanese–Filipino Marriages

Studies on international marriages often focus on how gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity are constructed and articulated through the migration process. The influence of religion as one articulator in migrants' lives and its influence on the family tend to be ignored, but arguably individuals' faith must be included in the research agenda. Using ethnographic examples, this article traces the religious practices that develop in the lives of some Japanese–Filipino couples. This article highlights not just the transnational mobility of migrants, but also the movement of their faith and its potential impact on intimate relations within migrant homes and communities postmigration.

**KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE • MIGRATION • FAITH • CHRISTIAN  
CONVERSION • JAPAN • PHILIPPINES**

International marriage on the global stage represents opportunities for interaction in an intimate sphere and allows for reflection on how gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity are reworked through the experience of migration. Given these dominant foci of research, the influence of religion as an important articulator in migrants' lives tends to be overlooked. Can research address how religion plays a role in Japanese–Filipino marriages? Can the faith of long-term Filipino migrants mold religious practices in ways that offer their Japanese partners choices in participating in different forms of intimacy?

This article aims to show how, for some Filipinos in the postmigration phase of their stay in Japan, their religious selves come to play an important role in the everyday practices available to them over the course of their lives. I highlight how religious practices can slowly come to take on new meanings for some migrants, evoke responses from them, and enliven dialogue between them and their Japanese partners. Faith among Filipinos allows some Japanese nationals to enter into a religious Christian-orientated realm not openly available in everyday Japanese society. These engagements tend to trigger what Cannell (2007) has described as “destabilizing effects,” which challenge dominant kin practices and widen the intimate sphere to be more inclusive. Through long-term ethnographic research, I closely examine the micropolitics of religious practice through three case studies that show how, over the course of their marriages, interactions in the home can stretch out and interlock persons in a nuanced and shared public sphere that expresses religious encounters in international marriages.

### **Tying Together Nations through Migratory Processes**

International movement tends to be theoretically couched in metaphorical terms that invoke global fluidity, risk, and uncertainty (Appadurai 1994, 295–310; Featherstone and Lash 1995). Yet, international migration is not a metaphor. It occurs within “a complex system of formal and informal institutions and networks, and macro social forces shape migration streams” (Aguilar 2002, 424). Research on individual migratory experiences and their relation to macro social forces has focused on how power produces subjects and how movement across borders shapes migrants and their experiences. When looking at this movement, two main themes are apparent. Firstly, crossborder processes show that migrants create durable and enduring postmigration ties across countries. Secondly, communities, social networks, groups, organizations, and individuals negotiate these ties according to their

particular circumstances and conditions (Faist 2010). These analytical foci have led to more research into “contact” and “border” zones, which Mary Pratt (2007, 7) describes as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.” International marriages are a contact zone where it is possible to scrutinize how subjects understand their places as both overseas migrants and settled residents. International marriage research goes to the heart of intimate movement across human contact zones. They allow researchers to see how individuals experience movement and how this plays out within the social relations they form with and in their families. They also present those who marry across national boundaries not just crosscultural experiences but also encounters with the systems and institutions that structure them. Thus, for those who step into them, they offer ways for subjects to reflect upon the ideologies that structure ideas pertaining to love and romance.

Studies into intra-Asian crossborder marriages over the past twenty years have clearly shown that gender imbalances exist. Most marriages move women from lesser-developed nations to more industrialized ones. Such imbalances have mediated the experiences of females (and males) within various institutions, through kin networks, at sites of brokerage in different nations, and even as forms of intraethnic brokered marriages between immigrants overseas and females back in the home countries (Yang and Lu 2010; Thai 2005). Sassen (2002, 2003) points out how the gendered impact of survival has come to form a core part of migrant networks within and across regions as families have become dependent upon female members living overseas, including those involved in marriage migration. As others have noted in turn, these women provide for others in dual- or triple-tiered systems of support for families (Parreñas 2001). These tiered responses rest upon mobility and entail the creation of new forms of social intimacy. To varying degrees, these forces have shaped the connections that link both Japan and the Philippines.

Japanese Ministry of Justice (MOJ 2012) statistics from 1985 to 2009 show that Filipinos in Japan make up the fourth largest group of migrants in the country and are overwhelmingly female. Many of them came to Japan as entertainers, although not exclusively as such (*ibid.*). From the early 1990s, the number of Filipinos registered in Japan has increased to nearly 10 percent of the foreign population. Close to 90,000 are now permanent residents (*ibid.*), with an average of 7,560 marriages per year between 1999 and 2009

(MHLW 2012). Since the rise of Filipino communities in Japan and in other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, considerable research has traced how Filipinos articulate themselves in a number of different contexts. Studies have delved into Filipinos' engagement with domestic and international care work in the Southeast Asian region (Asato 2003; Constable 1997; Espiritu 2002, 47–66; Lan 2003; 2006). In Japan, marriages between Japanese and Filipina nationals have been shown to express transnational relations (Suzuki 2003a, 2003b), while other studies have manifested the othering of Filipinas (Suzuki 2002, 2003a; Tyner 1996), their work as entertainers (Suzuki 2002; Ballescás 1992, 2003; Fuwa 1999; Asis 2001; Dizon 2003; Anderson 1999; Nagata 2004; Satake and Da-anoy 2006), and as mail-order brides (Constable 2003). Others have demonstrated how Filipinos have been portrayed as sources of exoticism and otherness (Shimizu 1996; Suzuki 1997, 2003a; Tyner 1996).<sup>1</sup> Some images have been partially absorbed within a complex power relationship between Japan and the Philippines, the latter operating as a mirror that reflected back a repertoire of images and stereotypes subsumed in an unequal relationship that still persists (Shimizu 1996; Azuma 2010).

Ethnographies over the past decade by Filipino, Japanese, and other scholars have started to respond to the need to portray the nuanced sense of self that subjects maintain between and within both nations. One study has explored married Filipinas' perceptions of themselves to show the contradictions that arise from residing in Japan as residents with families (as wives and mothers) while doing night work (Dizon 2003). Another study has argued for a more detailed analysis of both women's and men's desires in the creation of transnational social relations that play out in couples' lives, showing how some individual's paths cut across multiple dimensions (Suzuki 2003a). Filipinos have been very active in challenging ahistorical categories as well as their partners to consider them in different ways. A recent work has focused on the converging histories of Japanese and Filipinas in remaking rural Japan, challenging the static images that have arisen from some studies conducted in the 1980s and 1990s (Faier 2009).<sup>2</sup>

Other recent studies have also documented how Japanese–Filipino marriages question and negotiate politico-economic disparities between Japan and the Philippines (Nagata 2007, 2011). Shared spaces create novel opportunities for dialogue between two cultures, where different values produce friction but ultimately are adaptive.<sup>3</sup> Satake and Da-anoy (2006) affirm how, even as a minority group, Filipinos who have settled in Japan

offer a litmus test to the country's commitment to multiculturalism; Filipinos are aware of and actively transmit their cultural fabric, simultaneously reconfirming and revitalizing themselves, their families, and their positions in local communities.<sup>4</sup> Satake (2004, 445–73) also suggests that we should view international marriages as providing new ground for gender relations, with Japanese husbands' perceptions of their wives shifting and leading them to adopt a more egalitarian approach toward them. Despite the insights these studies have provided, there is one crucial area where they have had a blind side: an analytical focus on faith and its role in creating religious identities.

### **Framing the Religious in Everyday Practices**

Whereas other studies have offered penetrating analyses around the categories of ethnicity, race, and gender, faith has been glossed over. As Hagan and Ebaugh (2003, 1145) note, the role of migrant Christianity and spirituality have all been neglected in many studies. Yet, migration has led, and continues to lead, to the globalization of religion, creating opportunities for religious encounters (Csordas 2009). Cahill's (1986, 125) crosscultural study of Filipinas married to Japanese, Swiss, and Australian nationals treads lightly on the role of religion in the lives of overseas Filipinos, referring to it as an “anchor” and noting that “religious practices can and do play a critical role in making them feel at ‘home’ in their new social milieu.” Yet Cahill does not go further than this, for he glosses over how subjects in a religious framework may influence others outside of it.

For the Catholic Church in Japan the growth of migrant Christian communities has led to more foreign Christians than Japanese (Le May 2006, 1–2).<sup>5</sup> This phenomenon is not peculiar to Japan as the movement of migrants and the spread of religious belief is a global one (Csordas 2009). However, we can ask why there is a paucity of research focused on the religious lives of Japanese or Filipinos. This problem can be considered within a perspective broader than that of disciplinary nervousness in both sociology and anthropology to broach migrants' religious experiences. Cannell (2007, 5) provocatively argues that Christianity has remained the “repressed” of anthropology during the period of its formation as a discipline, a condition that may have reverberated in studies on Japanese–Filipino marriages.<sup>6</sup> Where Filipinos' religious faith is touched upon and Catholic beliefs are asserted as shaping their attitudes in Japan, ethnographies fall short of seeing if these attitudes shape those of others too (Faier 2009, 177). The scarcity of studies focusing on the centrality of religion in everyday life

may be a disciplinary bias toward issues that connect to gender, ethnicity, and national identities, at the expense of sidelining the role of religion especially as manifested in everyday practices. As Levitt (2003, 869) makes clear, worldviews can be organized primarily around religious identities just as much as they can be around ethnic or national ones. Engaging with faith provides a crucial experience, “a proximity to the sociological facts of religion” (Engelke 2002, 6), and its role in developing intimacies between persons. Yet, any religious expression should not be treated as merely a “social fact,” for it is part of a repertoire of “cultural facts” for believers. Previous research has shied away from dealing with this most intimate realm, in effect creating distance between the ethnographer and informants.

Filipinos who have settled in Japan bring with them their religious selves, which may not have been scrutinized due to: (a) their not being important in the initial stages of migration; (b) Japanese silence on the subject; and, (c) assumptions that Japanese nationals do not have religious sensibility that may be activated at different stages of their lives. However, faith practices can lay small foundations for manipulating social capital, which might not have held the same level of significance prior to migration. I will suggest that religious practices, which are taken for granted in Filipino lives, may emerge upon relocation in Japan, instilling them with a new meaning.<sup>7</sup> This article does not claim a comprehensive or generalized approach toward understanding all expressions of Japanese–Filipino marriages/relations. However, any analysis of gender, race, sex, ethnicity, or nationality must also include religion for it operates as an important junction that articulates with the former categories through which some Japanese–Filipino couples define themselves. The following case studies emphasize some of the hidden diversity of affective experiences in Japanese–Filipino marriages, to show that religion can also be considered an analytic category. These case studies show how faith operates and acts as a catalyst for dialogue.

Research for this study was conducted over a three-year period in Fukuoka, Kumamoto, and Oita prefectures between 2005 and 2008, with further fieldwork in 2009. Forty-three informants—sixteen couples (or thirty-two individuals, excluding children and parents of Japanese respondents), six men (three of them Filipinos), and five women (four of them Filipinas)—were interviewed. Brief conversations were also held with other informants, bringing the total number of informants to fifty-four. Over half of the informants lived in rural or semirural areas close to large cities (Kumamoto, Fukuoka, Oita City). Five Japanese had attained education

up to university level, and the rest to the level of commercial senior high school. Of the Filipinos, five had reached university level, while the rest were high school graduates. Except for three women, all Filipinas traveled to Japan to work as entertainers. Through open-ended interviews, I spoke to all informants on an average of four times. Interviews were recorded and transcribed.<sup>8</sup> They were conducted in Japanese with Japanese husbands, and a mixture of English, Filipino, and Japanese with Filipina wives. Out of the fifty-four informants, six Japanese men had converted to Christianity; one converted to Christianity before meeting his wife; another eight (including one Japanese national married to a Filipino) were entertaining the idea of attending catechism and actively participating in the Catholic mass<sup>9</sup>; and one had revoked his vows as a priest to marry his Filipina partner. In all six Japanese men converted to Catholicism in the course of their crosscultural marriages. This article focuses on three of these cases of conversion, which were chosen primarily based on the length of their marriages.<sup>10</sup>

## Rewriting Life Practices

Here I introduce one couple who underwent their own separate cathartic conversions to Christianity through their mutual encounter. Kato, originally from Tokyo, is in his early 50s and a divorcee with two grown children. A real estate urbanite, he met Corazon, his present wife, in the late 1980s. Corazon is from Manila and the eldest of five siblings with family members in the US, Guam, and Canada. She travelled to Japan for the first time in 1979 and had her only child out of wedlock in Japan in 1981 with a former partner. She had the child raised in Manila by her family while she worked in Japan. Between 1979 and 1992 Corazon went to Japan seven times before overstaying in 1992 due to family circumstances. This was due to obligations to provide for the education of her son and support their family home back in Manila. In the same year she met Kato in Tokyo with whom she cohabited for five years. However, when her father died in the Philippines in 1992, she wanted to attend his funeral and surrendered herself voluntarily to immigration authorities and subsequently returned back to the Philippines for a period of time. Corazon married Kato in the Philippines in 1994 and returned to Japan on a spousal visa at the age of 44.

A number of crises between 1994 and 1998 (her younger brother was shot and paralyzed and another became addicted to drugs) led Corazon to suffer a mental breakdown under the pressure to support her family. In this context she turned to the Catholic Church, underwent a cathartic catechism, and

was rebaptized in 2000 in Japan. She took her catechism in the presence of her then “secular” husband, who in 2002 chose to become a Christian. This sudden turn to faith was informed by circumstances and situations beyond her control. As her problems with her family mounted, Corazon became exasperated and remembered a verse from Matthew (11:28–30), which became the turning point in her life:

Everything I gave up and surrendered as I was so tired . . . *mentally and spiritually*. I don’t know . . . I had money then. But I was still tired. But then I remembered these words. There is a verse in the Bible from Mateo: “Come to me all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and put it on you and learn from me because I am gentle and humble in Spirit. And you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Jesus says this. I . . . I . . . came to believe in this. If there are hardships, there are glories. We suffered and then afterwards we saw the glory of God.

In our conversations about her time in the late 1990s, Corazon spoke of her experiences in reference to hardship, surrendering, and sufferance. However, her recovery was not just a turn to an external Christian force, but also a necessity to put across her new self to her husband. Corazon had to appeal to authority not just outside the home but within it too; she turned to her husband, her only confidant at the time.

In 1998 Corazon decided to give herself to a more fulfilling existence and wanted to share her religious changes to her husband. Corazon negotiated the new demands of her faith and tried to introduce it to her husband. However, he balked at the idea of dealing with her faith. A former Soka Gakkai lay member, he was reluctant to go to catechism and, given bitter experiences of his own role in his religion in the late 1970s, was very distrustful of the reintrusion of religion in his life.<sup>11</sup> However, Corazon eventually persuaded Kato to accompany her to church and over a number of years she actively but indirectly appealed to him: by praying in front of him, leaving open two Bibles (one in Japanese and another in English) on the table so he could read what she was reading, and by engaging in long late-night conversations on the nature of her change of heart.

Kato eventually decided to approach and later embrace Christianity due to the strong parallels that he saw between Christianity and Buddhism.

This led him to participate in catechism under the guidance of his wife. This required a reinternalization of her situation and his own place in Japan, which he described as being an “increasingly materialistic faddish society.” Kato often alluded to his growing disillusionment with “the façade of Japanese society” (*shakai-no-uwabe*) to justify his conversion, thus allowing him a new prism to reread his life prior to conversion. As Kato explains:

I don’t want to return to the old days. I was a car dealer and did nothing but deceive people, making money and more money. I never looked back at what I did, I didn’t know about the humanistic idea that is “love thy neighbor” . . . to love all . . . You give because you care. That is the kind of act it is: giving truly and freely . . . Over the three years I took my catechism I fought with myself, I cried, I argued with Corazon, I listened. I went over my previous life. I realized I was full of pride. In this world, it is easy to be deceived and to deceive, so reconciliation is difficult if you just fight with yourself . . . In church I finally learned about this. These lessons are true words (*shin-no-kotoba*) for me.

Kato structures his understanding of Christianity through his own sociohistorical prism, but his wife, the catalyst of this change, wants him to share, learn, and experience it more affectively through her and others. Through her he reevaluates everything, which leads to a revision of how he sees his preconversion self. Simultaneously it tempers his understanding of Japanese society, offering him a new affective layer through which he can appeal to her and to others. An episode when Corazon became sick and had to be operated on highlights an interesting insight into how this layer has taken on a new religious symbolism in his life:

- Kato:   Sickness is not something to be feared, but something that makes you realize what being healthy means. At least sickness gives a couple the opportunity to evaluate their relationship. You need to look behind the meaning of sickness to understand what it means to help each other. It’s a trial (*hitotsu no shiren da*).
- Mario:   Have you experienced this trial?
- Kato:    Well . . . Corazon . . . is also helping me understand the reasons why Christ suffered for us . . . You know we live in

suffering . . . when you are in pain, when you are anxious about something. God bestowed this upon Corazon.

Mario: Suffering, on Corazon?

Kato: Yes . . . she has been tested. I think the Philippines has been tested . . . we . . . me . . . we are just beginners in faith. You compare us. She taught me the meaning behind sickness. You know that is a test. It is a way for her to communicate with me. It is a way for her to share with others when they pay a visit. We are all brothers and sisters. That is why we all share the same causes. It's not just about the façade that you find in society, but real relationships. She never fears these things. She trusts me and believes in God. I think it is because of her approach that I decided to take the plunge, do the catechism and get baptized.

This candid dialogue suggests that Kato has learned to reappraise his wife and her experiences in symbolic terms. The previous allusion to a façade (*shakai-no-uwabe*) suggests a reappraisal meant to place his wife and her experiences in a wider frame of reference. This case highlights the difficulty in generalizing the experiences of Japanese–Filipino partners, especially when the analysis is placed within affective religious experiences that play out over the long term. Relationships between Japanese and Filipinas do not have to be seen in terms of men holding the upper stakes. Rather, through long-term processes some couples negotiate different cultural dimensions that are relevant or deemed relevant to them. This results in a shift in their power relations. The experience has become a form of mutual religious education, in which Kato has given over a very intimate part of himself to his wife and her everyday practices.

This intimacy has extended beyond their personal relationship and into her family. Although Kato is not the biological father of Corazon's only child, he has accepted the role of father and now helps her not only to pay for her child's education but also to build a house for her family in Manila.<sup>12</sup> Her experiences in Japan and the Philippines and her sharing them with her husband have created conditions where conversion is but one phase in how they are reworking each other's lives. Corazon's practices have introduced him to novel ways of interpreting categories that initially were alien to him. Kato feels that some of these categories have become clear to him only through constant dialogue with Corazon. As Kato stated:

I started to study through Corazon . . . she introduced me to topics I never thought to deal with in the Bible. Sickness, death, fraternity, brotherly love. When we read, we meet on Wednesdays, about three or four of us (Filipinas) and she chooses a topic that we read and study. So recently we are studying sickness and miracles. You know, when, for instance, a friend gets sick with cancer . . . and you ask why does this happen? Why him? What I have learned is to ask what is the meaning behind such an illness. I read the Old and New Testament and in many places you read about sickness and sin. You read about their relation. You learn that sickness is a test, a trial that teaches you to endure. And, it is also something that teaches you the value of help. Help from your fellow brothers. Love. This is God's contract of salvation, our salvation . . . it not only teaches us about death and suffering, but about brotherly love. The path of love . . . that is how I understand it.

Corazon often guides her husband as to how to read the Bible, directing him to biblical passages that deal with matrimony, love, suffering, and adultery.<sup>13</sup> In sharing her gendered understanding of her faith Corazon brings her “self” to interact with her husband to varying levels of success, along with help from other Filipinas (and to their envy, too). Her patient guidance feminizes and partly emasculates her husband in the sense that he comes to reinternalize her in pre- and postconversion terms. What this couple's experience suggests is that, over the long term and at different stages in their life cycle, their practices create ways of embracing and reconciling their mutual differences and make them mutually understandable to each other. These changes can take place across a number of other levels, some of which are highlighted in the next section.

### **Appealing through Form: Sanctioning Religious Bodily Practice**

Faith can also function as an antagonistic divide that must be breached in order for some Japanese partners to enter their wives' affective domains. Angel, who was born in a suburb of Metro Manila, is a housewife in her early forties who runs a children's day school. She came to Japan in the early 1990s as an entertainer together with her sister (who is married and lives close by in an adjoining prefecture). Angel's husband is five years her junior



and owns a recycling company that employs a staff of over thirty and enjoys a modest turnover. The company is located in the medium-sized semirural town where the couple also resides. Angel travelled to Japan on eighteen short-term contracts before meeting her husband in 1991.

After an intense relationship with Fukuda, whose parents refused to acknowledge his romance with her (a Filipina), he tested their resolve by secretly moving out of his parents' home without telling them, much to their consternation. He rented an apartment with his own money and waited for them to relent to his demands, which were soon heeded. Angel, was, by her own accounts, someone who practiced her faith frequently when she lived in the Philippines, and right from the beginning of their marriage, she insisted on going to the local church. In the first years of their marriage Fukuda grudgingly attended mass with her; at first waiting outside the church, and then eventually going inside with her. Narrates Angel:

Over the years he had come to church with me and then with our children, but you know he never really understood what it was all about, even if I tried to explain it to him. It seemed such a mystery to him. But, one day the priest started to explain to him the benefits of believing and slowly he started to read the Bible.

This beginning was not without a reaction from Fukuda's mother who, on hearing that he finally showed an interest in catechism, got a Buddhist priest from her local temple to come over to lecture him on the virtues of Buddhism. Angel threw all the literature on Buddhism into the bin. Angel endured a struggle with her mother-in-law over how she and Fukuda would develop their relationship. This persisted for a number of years before her mother-in-law started to accept her as a permanent member of their family.

During the initial years of their marriage, Angel slowly coaxed Fukuda to step into the more intimate realm that she actively shared with and promoted to other Filipinas in her local area. However, her initial sharing of experiences with her community, through a Bible sharing group that she started up, was not straightforward. As she came to terms with her life in Japan and with the other wives and husbands in her community she became uncertain and anxious. To cope with her anxiety, Angel reached out beyond their town to establish a network through her sister's contacts in Fukuoka prefecture, where she created a group with thirty to forty members who regularly attended the meetings they held. However, even these meetings

could not alleviate the anxieties of her and their presence in Japan. In her case, her anxiety revolved around intimate bodily struggles within the home as she came to terms with her husband's declining interest in her:

The members who attended the Bible sharing group didn't know I was facing many personal problems in my life. I dared not show them. Because I was standing before them, talking before them, because I wanted them to feel that there is a God here . . . whatever trials we face, I wanted to give them more strength. I wanted them to know that God is there. I wanted to give them courage and I didn't want them to give up. But, eventually after the meetings I was always crying . . . in my own world. *Kase* [Because] Daddy and I weren't on good terms . . . I had no knowledge of what was going on . . .

Angel was situating this story in a wider narrative I only learned about after earning the trust of the couple two years into our communication: Fukuda had cheated on his wife with another hostess (a former Japanese girlfriend) who worked at his mother's snack bar. When Fukuda's father passed away, he inherited the family company and a debt of ¥10 million, a fact he hid from Angel. This became an issue that created distance between them, which could not work its way out even in the comfort of friends. Angel related her story emotionally in the context of the Bible sharing network she had helped set up:

Sometimes he came home late, I never asked him "did you eat already?" because it was late and I was tired too. So in the morning you know I would pester him, you know, *urusaku suru diba* (be noisy right)? But, I would always show a *genkina* (happy) Angel-san to my sisters. Then, we got into the Gospels and mastering the texts, discovering the words of God and you know *fukuaku fukaku jibun no me ga sameta* . . . (deeply, deeply, then suddenly I awoke). There is something wrong with me. I am lacking. I really started to think about that. And you know . . . Fukuda-san . . . well his past girlfriend . . . she kept calling over and over . . . I thought it was all business. *Anshin shita* (I felt relieved) you know . . . I was so cold at that time . . . I wouldn't have sex with him. Even on Sundays he was working and I was busy with my community with the children . . . my students.

Angel finally found out that he was seeing a former girlfriend who was working at his mother's snack bar. While waiting for him to come home that night she discovered he was talking to her in the kitchen. She confronted him and elicited the truth; she appealed to him in the way that was most familiar to her:

I went straight to *Oto-san* (husband) and I did this [Angel gets off her chair and kneels on the hard kitchen floor, joins her hands in prayer, and lowers her head, then looking up at me says]. "Let's start again." He looked at me and commanded me to "stand up!" (*tatte!*). I challenged him *kase* [because] *what* is wrong with doing this? I was so glad that I met this woman . . . if I had not . . . I would never have seen my overconfidence that Fukuda loved me so much . . . at that time I wanted the light of Jesus . . . so at many prayer meetings, through counseling I asked people to pray for me [raises her voice] . . . I confessed everything! To many fathers I confessed and regretted my actions and I prayed to Saint Paul. And my husband . . . he too returned. God is very good and compassionate and everything you know . . . it returned . . . he too, it returned to how it was. If we had not been tested . . . God is very compassionate. Even me, I am not worthy of everything I have, but I want them [her family] to know that God is good. Confess your sins, beg forgiveness for your sins, realize your mistakes, but not just for me, but for him too. Through these processes I won, and I am what I am now . . . I am not a perfect wife, but I struggle every day.

However, what her husband and another Filipina had confided afterward was that for weeks she had knelt in the kitchen, praying to the point that her knees turned black and ached. This caused Fukuda to seriously reassess his life. When asked about this event, Fukuda spoke of the *henna puraido* (conceit) that he had built up within him. Meeting his wife, her culture, and especially her faith made him realize what a journey his marriage would become. Fukuda shared his feelings on this episode. Although I chose not to raise the issue with Angel around, she nevertheless brought it up and talked about how much he had changed, to which he replied:<sup>14</sup>

I think I had a lot of *henna puraido* . . . this stopped me from talking . . . pride gets in the way of people just being themselves. We should be

more open. By showing ourselves openly we relieve so much stress. All I can do now is share the path I have trod and this is thanks to Angel and the children. Yet, more than anything else it is due to God and his presence here. Before you talk, before you speak, we must be thankful, but first by appealing to God and praying. No man is an Island. Me, me, me . . . just me, this is a wrong way to see yourself. It is not me, but others around me. It is because others have been there, that I realized they are there . . . that I have come to realize I am here too.

A number of important points are worth highlighting here. First, Angel's faith operates as a necessity for her. Her petitions are a form of eliciting change in terms familiar to her. Her faith antagonizes (in the sense of at first creating divisiveness between them), to which the husband eventually reciprocates. This process relies on affective, bodily manifestations of a deep commitment to her faith and compels him to not only reciprocate, but also gradually extend their encounter to others in his immediate community. Angel's antagonism can be considered a legitimate response to his infidelity and failure to respond (spoken in terms of lack of affect), which challenged him on her own terms. Although Fukuda eventually accompanied Angel to the church, he did not convert to Christianity until seven years into their marriage, and after an affair. His decision to convert has wider ramifications in that he has become prepared to travel to other local communities to testify about his conversion and how it can help other couples who face difficulties. At a more subtle level it emasculates his pride, a potent expression of his masculinity as well as a reflection of how he develops a religious self in tandem with his wife. At the time of our interview, one husband of a Filipina with three children in the community had gone to the nearby hills and committed suicide. When asked about this painful rupture in the community Fukuda stated:

He had a chance then . . . but didn't find it. What I mean by finding a chance is that you don't realize they exist. Those like him facing terrible troubles end their lives at this point. They couldn't find a chance to change things. Because it is a dilemma, there has to be a chance for change. Finding that change will definitely lead to it. That's all it takes . . . to change your vision. You'll then see what is not only there but also *that hidden from view*.



Fukuda here refers to his own experience in alleviating his own anxieties. During one particular interview he surprised me with a sudden open confession of his own attempt at suicide, something Angel had spoken about cryptically in previous interviews. The suicide of the Filipina's husband had made him relive his own anxiety at the death of one of his company employees, a 23-year-old who hanged himself.

At that time, I cut my wrists thinking I could bring this person back [shakes his head]. I really thought that [laughs]. I nearly lost consciousness. But, I was there, in the hospital knowing that help was at hand . . . I knew that there were people there who would look out for me. I wouldn't die. I was so full of regret at this time. What I didn't succeed in doing . . . actually let me see . . . I think it is a line from a TV commercial, but in my own words, *more than regretting what has been done, regretting what wasn't done remains as a scar*.<sup>15</sup>

Of interest here are the themes of obligation, regret, and guilt that manifest themselves. Fukuda explains these past episodes in a confessional mode; his guilt can find expression (even if it remains as a residue within himself and his company) through confessional sharing, a practice he picks up at gatherings. The symbolism of the scar that he referred to and his actions toward his wife showed the extent of her influence. In effect, he has picked up new practices that provide him with a certain language to articulate his self, family, faith, and communal obligations. What can be seen through this couple's experiences is a reorganization of their life space as it becomes sensitive to external factors introduced by Angel.

Accessing the faith that has travelled with Filipinos, a faith that for some can play an important role, suggests that Japanese nationals can traverse their national boundaries without possessing the same type of transnational mobility as their partners.<sup>16</sup> Domestic relations in the home can be transformed through religious interactions that occur without the Japanese partner's physical movement across national boundaries. We see the restructuring of specific practices (Angel's faith) asserting itself through a challenge to her partner to believe and that their *mutual practice* can beneficially restructure domestic relations in the home. Angel's long-term strategy influenced her partner through her persistent and abrupt penetration into her husband's intimate realm, which ultimately paid off. Her most explicit bodily acts

infused him with an uncertainty that requires serious appraisal. This asks us to seriously consider how power in these contexts can be underwritten by the religious capital that manifests itself in the home. Within this line of reference, I turn to another couple who share similar intimate encounters.

### From Hearth to Community

This final couple shares some similarities with the previous couples, but unlike the others', their intimacy stretches beyond the confines of the home. Yamauchi, 60, has been married for over fifteen years to his wife, Joanna, a licensed secondary school teacher in her early forties from the Bicol region. Together with their two sons they live in a hamlet in a rural part of Kumamoto, southern Kyushu. Twenty-two years older than his wife, he was introduced to her by her cousin, who was then already married to a Japanese national. He had been a long-haul truck driver most of his life and eventually set up his own national delivery service, which required him to live in his truck for long periods of time. Yamauchi met Joanna in Manila, with nothing more than a dictionary and a bouquet of red roses. Three days after they met, he presented her with a note that had, "Will you marry me?" scrawled on it.<sup>17</sup>

Joanna, a devout Catholic, practiced her faith openly without hindrance. Over the years such practicing of faith within and outside the home made Yamauchi decide to embrace the same faith. Joanna had never forced her husband to participate in her faith, but it was around 2004 when he started to take an interest, which again was rooted in the openness and sociability of her everyday practice:

When my eldest son received his communion my husband said "You are so lucky . . . you are always together." So I said to him, "Why don't you join us?" But every time he would just wait outside in the car for us . . . then one day, he said . . . "I think . . . I think I want to be a Christian too."

Yamauchi, who I had first met in 2005, was at the time (and still is) a member of a local ethics group that met regularly.<sup>18</sup> Throughout his life, he had pondered what it meant to be human, searching for answers out of an anxiety he could never name. On a separate occasion Yamauchi openly shared his story with Joanna present and reflected back upon their first encounter saying, "It was the guidance of God. It was our destiny."<sup>19</sup>

What is interesting to note in Yamauchi's observations is how, in our initial encounters, he framed his conversations on life in a bricolage of Christian/Buddhist terminology that intersected within his life. However, by our fourth encounter (six months before his christening and two years after we had first met), the language he used had become more inflected with Christian terminology and symbolism. His life became richer as he searched for some kind of guidance, which finally presented itself in his marriage when he gradually shifted toward his wife's faith. This took place somehow not only due to her affective power inside and outside of the home, but also to his own intimate inner search for a bedrock of faith:

Since I came here back to Kumamoto [they previously lived in Shikoku] . . . I have been taking Joanna to the church for over ten years, but I had no interest. I was just a spectator in all of this. Up until now, I just thought, "Oh well, there is Buddha, Christ, Mohammed" . . . that is all I thought. But, I never *felt like believing*.

In part, his perception of this lack of faith in Japan gave way to an anxiety that set him off on a journey as a salesman for his company. This anxiety was alleviated in part by his earlier search for a partner. Yamauchi related his trajectory:

I tried to search somewhere for what the source of my worry was . . . for maybe twenty years. Then I found myself in Shikoku one day. I was selling there. I had a friend there married to a Filipina, and Joanna was her relative . . . then on getting married, half my worries fell away instantly. Why? Why do we live? Why do we die? I got married, and we had children. We are here to leave our offspring behind. I am part of a relay race. My life is part of a relay race. Something happening for millions of years . . . This is what I felt when we got married.

At first this story might seem to point to dominant relations whereby Yamauchi's priorities are to provide assurance for his home and close kin. However, Joanna has already ensured what his priorities ought to be by walking out on him when she got pregnant with their second child. When he accepted all her requests unconditionally Yamauchi's anxiety at this time was alleviated. This encouraged them to restart their lives away from relatives

and family, prompting Yamauchi to reflect more profoundly on how faith could support them by meditating on the Buddhist symbolism that played a strong role in informing how he dealt with his anxiety:

When you have no relatives, family, or friends to look after you, then the *muenbotoke* [a spirit with no link to the living] . . . you know . . . they are small stone guardians who are there . . . they comfort you.<sup>20</sup> You find them at graves. When I was in Shikoku, I met a pilgrim. There was an untended grave off the side of the street and I put my hands together and prayed in front of an image of Buddha. It was there I discovered myself. On my own lost journey, I had turned 47.

This image of the *muenbotoke* taunted him throughout their marriage, only alleviated by what he claims was the tenderness of his wife and love for his two children. However it was the symptomatic recurrence of anxiety after an invitation to a lecture on a new religious group (*shinshukyo*) that sent him to search for a release. Yamauchi eventually decided to seek advice from a Catholic priest at a church after a long discussion with his wife:

I went off my own back to ask for help. The priest listened to me and accepted me into a study group. I started to learn about fear and anxiety. These are not what belief is about. Belief is something you practice as best as possible . . . this will alleviate anxiety and worry. Everyone has his or her own worries as individuals. What should we do? Make an effort and put everything in the hands of the Lord. I am doing this now. There is nothing for me to worry about now (*Omoiwazarau koto wa mo nai*) . . .

This (existential) anxiety, a theme often broached in our interviews, also resonates in the other couples presented in this article. It is possible to consider that "transcending" anxiety alleviates material concerns and motivates some to live in the present, appreciating whatever lessons they learn from their encounters with their wives.<sup>21</sup>

Yamauchi was baptized in early 2009, but only after he and his wife decided to share their experiences in the style of a "testimony" at a gathering of 300 Filipinos who meet once a year to share experiences.<sup>22</sup> As with the first couple, Corazon and Kato, Joanna's faith stretches far beyond the intimate confines of home and hearth, and her children and husband. It stretches

through him and links their testimonial experiences of their everyday lives to a wider community (something that the two other couples have also started to do). The final and most symbolic expression of conversion in the home rested in the placement of the statue of Mary where previously a small Buddhist shrine lay in place—showing how the slow penetration over the years has rewritten this intimate space of interaction.<sup>23</sup>

### Progressive Transnational Entanglements

A focus on faith as an additional analytical category to those used in studies on Japanese–Filipino marriages can clarify some of the more complicated and lesser-known spaces that some couples navigate over the course of their lives. However, a number of points must be stressed here.

Firstly, the narratives presented in this article are not testimonies to a large phenomenon within Japanese–Filipino marriages. Neither does this article claim that the Filipinos' faith is *the* principal articulator in marriages. But, if we are committed to examining subjects' experiences we should not regard theirs as anomalies. Research into this intimate area is sparse, giving only fleeting glances in this highly intimate and sensitive area of life practices; a microlevel long-term ethnographic commitment to subjects is necessary to understand the diversity of experiences that Filipinos have in Japan. At the end of this author's fieldwork in 2009, eight other men considered their wives' requests to take catechism, but felt the timing was not right.

Secondly, this article does not argue that Filipinos actively “evangelize” in Japan. What it does argue is that faith for *some* can become a conduit, which is activated under varying circumstances to overcome difficulties at different stages in their lives. People migrate within specific contexts, and their faith can become active at various points in their lives. The cases presented here show how religion can come to take on a different meaning *postmigration* to Japan and for Japanese husbands who absorb their partners' faith a number of years after marriage.<sup>24</sup> For some, over the course of their lives, religious sensibility becomes an issue of timing, and the examples above demonstrate that Filipino partners' faith can act as a long-term trigger. Ignoring faith, and how it can restructure social relations, can limit the discussion on its role in complementing other analytical categories.

The examples above also do not deny the perspectives developed in other works. Suzuki (2003a) highlights that the process of migration leads to a relocation of practices and a renegotiation of the cultural knowledge migrants have at their disposal. For some Filipinos migration does release

them from the constraints of Filipino society while introducing them to those of Japanese society (*ibid.*). Religious practices do play a lesser role as subjects negotiate and subvert gender roles with their partners. Leiba Faier (2007) shows through her own fieldwork in Nagano how the meaning and force of “love” in the lives of Filipinas in Japan are tied to their positions within global relations of power, a manifestation of modern personhood and part of a repertoire of transnational strategies for making their lives a reality. Love can be a very powerful subject, creating gendered and sexualized subjectivities that do not necessarily rely upon any religious base (*ibid.*, 157–58). My own fieldwork attests to how Filipinos seemingly consider the myriad choices available to them as they negotiate their lives with their partners, and importantly as they *build* them through different kinds of capital that sometimes exclude the practice or explanation of their faith.

However, a number of counterpoints require highlighting. Firstly, faith may become activated at different stages in their lives. The second more important point is that there may be analytical blindspots at work in the field, prioritizing other analytical categories much to the expense of knowing if and when subjects' faith *may be* important in their lives. By inquiring into the subject's relationships to their faith and its meaning for them, we can see not only how the “sacralization” of space occurs (Werber 1997), but also how this may play out in the home.

The cases here suggest how the incursion of faith can be part of a wider dynamic engagement that subtly transforms relations that have arisen between some Japanese and Filipino nationals. In the case of the narratives presented here, some everyday engagements are articulated by migrants' faith and the reactions of families and communities to the affective capital that they invest in as part of their life strategies. This can be a conscious or unconscious long-term effort that is reflexive and uncertain; one that allows partners and families access to alternative selves that transform over the years.

As seen elsewhere, religious practices do become a topic of importance, especially when they cross national and cultural boundaries. Tondo (2010, 238) has highlighted how in New Zealand, fiesta celebrations organized by Filipino communities try to extend their “embrace” to others on its fringes to “make them understand Filipino religiosity.” In Japan other research suggests that Japanese nationals married to Filipinos may gradually enter into their partners' religious sphere of reciprocity (Ogimer and Gatpatan 2008, 54; LeMay 2008).

One reason why previous research may not have chosen to entertain how religious practices might play out in homes is in part because Japanese partners/husbands may avoid discussions that are religious. Yet, this is not the same as asking if subjects have a kind of *religious sensibility* that is not apparent at the outset because it is the religious persuasion of subjects that does affect their partners over time (Da-anoy 2006, 139). In other contexts in Japan, some Japanese have been seen to engage in transnational religious encounters, enter into dialogue with them, and also convert (Kudo 2007; 2008).<sup>25</sup> Migrants can and do rediscover and reinvent their faiths through migration to Japan as is seen in the cases of Brazilian Nikkei (Quero 2008, 57–74; 2010, 37–54). These examples require us to note that the act of migration, and travelling to live in another country, can also serve as a catalyst for practices that may not have had the same premigration relevance.

I suggest that a politics of religious persuasion be made to surface within the framework of analyzing international marriages and that one undertake further investigation than that explored in this article. It can be seen as a “progressive disentanglement” of religious practices in one arena and their deployment in another (Geertz 2005, 11). Geertz uses this term to refer to the movement of religion through global processes. But in this global movement of religion we should also observe that new entanglements have slowly arisen; thus religion may be a complementary category that can help build a more complete picture of international marriages. This is all the more salient when we follow the trajectory of progressive disentanglement in one space (the Philippines and its relation to Christianity) and then the entanglement of persons in others (Japan). Tondo (2010, 239) claims that “diasporic communities aspire to translate home cultural practices and replicate familiar and recognizable homeland landscapes in their places of settlement.” However, I feel that this aspiration is more a result of postmigration settlement rather than a replication of the familiar; it involves the creation of something new and specific to their conditions and circumstances. Migrants’ homes after all can be a place where the religious can also reside and extend its influence to various persons who initially might not be familiar with it. We should be more attentive to the specific conditions that immigrants can forge especially after many years when religious practices can slowly come to play a role in structuring domestic relations.<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusion

This article examines how religious intimacy in the home has played a role in altering some partner’s long-term practices in their international marriages through a dialogue with the Filipino’s faith. It suggests that some Japanese do choose to enter into a dialogue on the meaning of faith in their lives rather than remain passive observers of their Filipino partners’ communicative comings and goings with other Filipinos. For some Japanese husbands, their partners’ faith impels them to be more active when they reorient themselves to personally accommodate their wives’ religious practices. For some this can manifest itself emotively and affectively create initiatives that reside outside of one partner’s realm. Encounters become strategic and operate at a persistent level of everyday practice that set into motion a process of dialogue. That some subjects, in their postmigration phase of settlement, are ready to reconsider faith and develop it in the hope of addressing existential issues must make us consider its impact on the migration process. Beyond what has been presented here, further inquiry is needed to shed light on how some understand and act upon religious practices with partners and families in the multiple experiences of international marriages in Japan and elsewhere.

## Notes

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- 1 Shimizu (1996) has detailed how the Japanese mass media have portrayed not only Filipina women but also the Philippines as a place against which to juxtapose itself; postwar images of the Philippines have been created by Japanese researchers which produced and unreflexively ingrained stereotypes that juxtaposed the innate characteristics of Japanese males to Filipina women. Filipinas have been depicted as cheerful and carefree, sociable, liars, gold-diggers, and free-wheeling whereas Japanese men are deemed benevolent, dutiful, sincere yet introverted, and losers (ibid.). Other ethnographic representations and caricatures of both Filipinas and Japanese that repeat some of the images seen in other media can be found in Fukuzawa’s (2001, 2003) nonfiction work of Filipinas working in snack bars. Replications of these representations can also be found in *Ajia Fuzoku Kenkyukai* [Asian Sex Industry Research Society] 2002.

- 2 For an introduction to rural bride migration, see Shukuya 1988. For a detailed overview of the kind of brokering services that arose as a consequence of the perceived *hanayome* (bride) famine, see Satake and Da-anoy (2006, 59–79). Faier focuses on the multiplicity of meanings forged between persons, and how those meanings constantly change through a politics of everyday encounters. This is in contrast to previous studies which have focused on ideas about flexibility and dynamics which prioritize processes that are shaped within discursive, cultural, or political-economic formations.
- 3 This adaptiveness helps to produce and reproduce everyday relations that change what it means to be Filipino or Japanese. Nagata's (2011) analysis is squarely placed in a postmodern anthropological framework, which focuses on the different truths held by subjects who live in-between groups and the shared cultural values that are created within them. His studies show that subjects (those who have been typified as being subordinate to global inequalities) possess their own agency that they develop in different contexts. This can be used strategically to control everyday life; manipulate cultural resources and values; and find productive spaces that try to balance out, or at least give, opportunities to express their subjectivity.
- 4 Satake and Da-anoy (2006, 157) argue that in Japan participation by Filipinas in the *tinikling* (bamboo dance) is a symbolic expression and reaffirmation of Filipino culture and their agency, and aids in dispelling negative images of female others in Japan. This I also noted in my fieldwork when Filipina housewives were invited to elementary schools to teach Filipino culture and introduce the *tinikling* as part of participatory class activities.
- 5 This has also led to a rise in Catholic rites and rituals imported into churches where there is a high density of Filipinos in the area. See Mateo (2003, 91–124) for a detailed study of how these practices transformed one Catholic Church in Tokyo.
- 6 Cannell's (2007) claim is contentious as religion has been a fundamental staple of anthropology since its inception as a discipline. Religion, however, is also an empirical staple of sociological studies, from Emile Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912/1995) through to Stark and Bainbridge's *A Theory of Religion* (1996). Webb Keane (1997a; 1997b), Gellner (1999), and other anthropologists (Morris 1999) all show how religion has played, and continues to play, a central role in the discipline. However, Cannell's point is that religion should be treated as a cultural fact, an embedded part of the repertoire of practices available within a culture, which should be given ethnographic priority and allow religious belief to be a central analytic category.
- 7 Hagan and Ebaugh (2003, 1147) refer to "two-way processes" between both sending and receiving countries crossfertilizing and innovating religious practices. It might also be constructive to consider how this process pulls in others, such as those introduced in this article, but only over the long term and not in the initial stages of migration.
- 8 Couple 1 were interviewed jointly and separately five times; couple 2, five times; and couple 3, five times. Interviews exclude other numerous encounters at gatherings and meetings.
- 9 This also involves the highly symbolic and meaningful act of joining in the communion line but only receiving a blessing (instead of the host) from the priest.
- 10 Couple 1 have been married for over fourteen years but have been together for twenty years; couple 2 have been married for twenty years; while couple 3 have been married for over fifteen years.
- 11 Soka Gakkai is a Japanese Buddhist organization with 12 million followers worldwide. Kato was an active member in the 1970s but renounced any role in the organization due to its then iconoclastic approach to other faiths.
- 12 Corazon's son is a trained medical physician now working in a hospital in Manila.
- 13 In fact Corazon, when broaching the topic of love, was shy with me at first and gave me a book on theology she had used along with its Japanese translation, which she used to discuss issues with her husband. She gave me her copy along with her notes, page references, and scripture references, telling me I could get to know their struggles better through reading these essential scriptures she shared with her husband. Although she has excellent grasp and command of Japanese, she cannot read Japanese Kanji. She copied out sections from her Japanese/English Bible to memorize the Japanese translations to discuss with Kato. This laborious time-consuming process was something that gradually deeply impressed her husband, and she showed me her file of notes she had created over the years.
- 14 Fukuda shared this episode after a public talk he gave at the second anniversary of the Bible sharing that Angel had organized. Fukuda, along with Kato and another Filipina, shared their life-changing experiences within a Christian context, as requested by the group. Fukuda never directly made reference to his infidelity nor to the crisis he had experienced with his business: Angel had done this in a Bible sharing session after their confrontation and it was open knowledge within the close-knit community.
- 15 In Japanese, やったことの誤解よりも、やらなかったことの誤解が痕に残るんだ (Yatta koto no gokai yori mo, yaranakatta koto no gokai ga ato ni nokorunda).
- 16 By his own account Fukuda, at the time of the interviews, had only gone to the Philippines once early on in their relationship.
- 17 After moving to Japan, this couple lived in different prefectures before settling in Kumamoto, a move that did not come without problems from his family. Joanna's dream had been to build an "open and caring" family free from the interference of his family, who had not fully accepted her when she was pregnant with their second child. Yamauchi, as the eldest son, was obliged to come back to inherit the ancestral home, but this created stress and tension for Joanna, who felt that she was not accepted as a part of the family. Pregnant with their second son, Joanna gave her husband an ultimatum that she would leave him for six months to return to the Philippines to give birth while he decided whether to fulfill his filial obligation or prioritize her feelings. His choice led to the ancestral home he was supposed to inherit be succeeded by his younger brother. He relinquished any claim to ownership of the property and moved to a small *burakumin* (outcast) rural village. Joanna had no knowledge of the history of, nor the social stigma placed on, these areas. After having gained more autonomy in their new home, the force of a community came down upon her and her children, creating a situation that placed her in a double bind: that of an outsider, a Filipina discriminated for having to bear the negative image of Filipinas, and-as non-burakumin, a highly unwelcome presence in the village. It took her eight years to make changes that allowed villagers to accommodate her and the other Filipinas who frequently visited her.
- 18 倫理研究会 *Rinri kenkyu kai* (Society for the Study of Ethics).
- 19 In Japanese, 神様の導きがあるでしょう。それは巡り合わせだったね。 (Kami-sama no michi-biki ga aru desho. Sore ha meguriawase datta ne).



- 20 A *Muenbotoke* (無縁仏) refers to the spirit of someone who has died without surviving kin or without anyone to look after his or her spirit. A dead soul without any *en* (縁) or affinity, angry and suffering because he or she has been neglected, can be seen as cause of problems and unrest for the living. See Reader (1991, 48–49) for an overview.
- 21 See Jaspers (1971) for a detailed philosophical discussion on how the religious can come into play when persons confront existential anxieties.
- 22 Yamauchi asked me to translate his speech for his wife to read. Joanna also spoke on three other occasions in two different prefectures where she asked me to translate for her in front of two audiences of 200 or more people.
- 23 Other Filipinas did not share the same experiences. One Filipina hid her statue in the cupboard and only brought it out when the husband was out. Another Filipina had her statue smashed by her husband early on in their marriage because he felt her practices interfered with his family altar. She eventually left a replacement statue she had bought on a trip back to the Philippines at the home of a friend.
- 24 There are, however, many cases where religious pilgrimage does play a crucial role in motivating some to travel great distances. See Reader (2006) for an example of religion motivating movement in a Japanese context, and the edited volume by Morinis (1992) for an overview of the different cultural contexts in which movement motivated by religion takes place.
- 25 Kudo's (2008) study is that of Japanese women married to Pakistani nationals residing in Japan. She shows how, through conversion to Islam, the Japanese are willing to step into a very intimate religious realm and form new affective bonds. Her research is one of the few in Japan that tries to understand how gender, religion, and nationality are mutually articulated in the self-construction of Japanese women.
- 26 These are not just those that arise out of "distinct historical socio-political and economic settings but also out of divergent religious ones" (Ekué 2009, 393).

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