Conclusions
A review of the American and Japanese financial crises reveals similarities and differences. The two cases seem to have been similar in the following areas. First, in both countries, the crisis developed through macroeconomic conditions beyond the control of the financial institutions under analysis; inflation in the US and international economic policy coordination in Japan. Second, deregulation of interest rates and business lines in particular, and intensified competition by various categories of financial institutions contributed to the development of the bad loan crisis. Third, real estate loans played a central role in the development of the crisis. Fourth, negligence or inability on the part of relevant public authorities to monitor closely financial institutions' activities after the deregulations also contributed to the development of the crisis. Fifth, the government delayed actions or took piece-meal actions in fear of taxpayers' possible outcries against bailouts of failed financial institutions with public funds. Sixth, the above-mentioned behavior of the government contributed to the worsening of the crisis so that drastic surgery was required later on.

The Japanese case seems to have been different from the American experience in the following areas. First, the Japanese loan crisis engulfed virtually all segments of the financial industry, ranging from large commercial banks to small non-bank lenders, as compared with the US case that mostly involved thrift institutions. Second, the magnitude of the Japanese crisis has been far greater, involving the largest amount of bad loans in the history of the world. Third, the real sector and monetary sector interacted in the development of the crisis much more in Japan than in the US. Fourth, the practice of Japanese banks to purchase and own stocks greatly contributed to the disaster. Fifth, the Japanese practices of preparing financial statements regarding a valuation of assets as well as a separation of subsidiaries' accounts led to the development of the crisis. This was not a factor in the US because US financial statements are prepared on the basis of present valuation and consolidated statements. Sixth, in Japan, a relative lack of disclosure and transparency of facts contributed to the cover-up of the crisis by industry and government officials and delayed appropriate actions. In the US there was some amount of cover-up, but it was not as far-reaching as it was in Japan. Seventh, the Japanese crisis has been substantially linked to international developments, including the Plaza Agreement of 1985, Louvre Accord of 1987, BIS rules of 1989, and Asian currency and economic crises of 1997. At the time of their crisis, the US was not being impacted by such international developments. Finally, Japanese policy-makers could have learned lessons from the US experience of the S&L crisis, but they apparently did not.

JAPANESE RELIGIONS AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN BRAZIL

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This article discusses the present situation of Japanese religions within the Brazilian religious context, as well as the state of recent scholarship. In the first section, religiosity in Brazil is characterized as pluralistic and syncretistic, with the Catholic element being predominant. The second section shows that Kardecist-Spiritualism (Espiritismo-kardecista) and various esoteric traditions have contributed to the diffusion and acceptance of eastern religious concepts such as karma and reincarnation. In this connection, Japanese religions will be depicted as being prominent among the various Asian religions. Although the number of religious groups from Japan (Shintō, Buddhist, Christian, and others) has grown considerably in Brazil, only some of them – particularly those which are classified under the category of “New Religions” (shin shak'yō) – have been able to spread successfully among Brazilians of non-Japanese origin. Finally, it will be shown that Eastern religions are growing and are also being more intensively studied in the past few years in a context of the trans-nationalization of religious communities in Latin America.

Religious Diversity

Even before the Portuguese colonization, one may find pluralism in what came to be Brazil’s religious culture. By the time the Portuguese arrived in the year 1500, there were hundreds of indigenous groups, each with its own language, habits, and religious practice. Later, the Portuguese started to exploit their new colony through developing sugar plantations, which were worked by African slaves. Catholicism as the religion of the dominant white people eventually became prevalent in a context of unequal power relations.

The Catholic Church was not the only manifestation of sacred power in colonial Brazil, but it used its alliance with the political-economic power

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structure to perpetuate its hegemony and impose its faith, often resorting to violent methods such as the Inquisition.² If, on the one hand, indigenous peoples and Africans were “the pagans” and “idolaters,” and thus had to be converted, on the other hand, Jews and Protestants were “the heretics,” whose presence and activities needed to be controlled. Therefore, under this political-religious orientation, the various Indian faiths remained marginalized; Black slaves had to disguise their beliefs in orixás (African gods) and in Allah (as was the case of the Black Muslims called malês) under the maquilhage of the cult of Catholic saints; Jews were forced to be baptized; and Protestants received official permission to come to Brazil only after the separation of Church and State in 1891. However, it is known that, as early as 1839, a Methodist pastor – Daniel Kidder – was carrying out religious activities in the Amazon area.

Brazil’s status as “the biggest Catholic nation in the world” must be understood in the context of European maritime expansion, and, above all, in terms of shared objectives between the Portuguese Crown and the Vatican, as Carmen Cínira Macedo accurately points out: The union of State and Church in the origin of Brazil was characterized by the institution of patronage (padroado). This consisted specifically in the right to manage ecclesiastic matters received by Portuguese kings from the Popes. It made the Portuguese sovereigns the real chiefs of the Church in Brazil, thus adding the force of spiritual power to the material power they already held. All this caused colonization in Brazil to be marked by Christianization and, moreover, established a strong relation between the idea of evangelization and “Portuguesation.” This conception, that to colonize meant spreading the Catholic faith, brought about a rejection of indigenous and African religions, which were considered “deviant” practices that should be eliminated. In return, all Catholic action was committed to the colonization project, which did not prevent eventual conflicts between administrators and priests. Thus, the economic and political spheres mingled with the religious one, and there is no surprise that the “expansion” of Catholicism in the country has been so intense (Macedo 1989:30).

Until recently, it was mainly Catholic and African religious traditions that marked the Brazilian popular religious field. Indigenous traditions have also made their contribution, though not as pervasively as the former two traditions. The influence of indigenous traditions is more localized, such as a

² It is known that members of the Portuguese clergy came to Brazil between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in order to control the work of evangelization and to detect the “heretical” people, who were taken to the metropolis in order to be judged by the Holy Office. The ones accused of practicing “witchcraft” and “sorcery” were submitted to violent torture, and quite frequently were burnt.

special category of spirits in the Umbanda cult, in some practices in the newly established Santo Daime cult, or even in the Amazon Region’s faith healing practices called pajelança.

From colonial times up to the beginning of the twentieth century, it was almost a crime not to be a Catholic. According to data provided by the Brazilian official institute of statistics (IBGE), in 1872, 99.7% of Brazilians declared themselves to be “Catholic.” But, from this time on, the decline of Catholicism in terms of percentage has been steady. The manifestation of other religious trends was made possible, though still not well tolerated. Kardecist-Spiritualism (Espiritismo-kardecista) was introduced in Brazil from France in the second half of the nineteenth century. Also, immigrants to the southern and southeastern parts of the country did not fail to bring in new creeds: Protestantism, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Shinto, and others. To add to this ever richer religious pluralism, at the beginning of this century a new religion was formed. Because it combines and reworks elements of indigenous and African beliefs, as well as Catholicism and Kardecist-Spiritualism, it is considered “a Brazilian way of religious expression” par excellence. We are referring to Umbanda.

According to what has been stated, the Brazilian religious scene has never been static. On the contrary, there have been many messianic movements, new sects and schisms within and without the Catholic Church (as, for instance, the establishment of the Igreja Católica Apostólica Brasileira, or Brazilian Apostolic Catholic Church by “Dom” Carlos Duarte da Costa, in 1945). In the past forty years in particular, groups of all kind of creeds both in the rural and urban areas have appeared, competing with each other in the “market of the sacred.” The present proliferation of new creeds suggests a change in the Brazilian religious scenery, in which the fragmentation of the hegemonic power of the Catholic Church becomes evident. This, however, does not mean that the Church will lose its social prestige soon, as is shown in a survey made in December 1990, by agency Ibope about the credibility of institutions among Brazilians. The Catholic Church ranked first with 78%, followed next by the radio (58%).

Many reasons have been given to explain the decline of Catholicism and the boom of new sects. This phenomenon could be related to radical changes suffered by the nation as a result of urbanization, rural exodus, the impact of mass media, democratization, and other factors. Another element might be the political interest in manipulating non-Christian groups (such as Umbanda) as a reaction to the “laissezfaire” of some sectors of the Catholic Church, especially during the military regime (1964-1985). No matter which specific factors determined the increase and diversification of the Brazilian religious universe, the introduction and growth of Asian religions must be understood in this historical context.
To sum up, the Catholic hegemony – almost a monopoly – in Brazil is very much evident and can be explained in terms of historical and political reasons. This hegemony would also appear to indicate a religious homogeneity, but the basic pluralism of Brazilian culture has been perpetuated in the religious field since colonial times. Even in the interior structure of the Catholic Church one may find evidence of diversity, or of a more popular, little tradition coexisting with an ecclesiastic, great tradition. With the process of globalization, this syncretic orientation has become more complex, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Finally, it is important to state that Brazilian pluralism has developed a peculiar kind of syncretism, in which each of the primary cultural forces operating in contact with other cultures has been experienced by a bigger parcel of the population than the specific social group of the particular culture (Segato 1997: 236).

The Diffusion of Asian and Japanese Beliefs
The diffusion of Asian religious traditions in Brazil began in the second half of the nineteenth century. In legal terms, this was made possible with the separation of Church and State after the establishment of the Republican regime in 1889. A few decades before, the introduction of a great contingent of immigrants in the southern and southeastern parts of the country brought in new creeds, including Protestantism, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Shintō. With respect to the spread and acceptance of Asian beliefs, the role of Kardecist-Spiritualism (Espiritismo-kardecista) and various esoteric traditions must be mentioned. Spiritualism is a religion that was codified by Allan Kardec in the nineteenth century. In an attempt to synthesize religion, science, and philosophy, it holds spirit-mediumship – communication between spirits and humans – as a central aspect. It was introduced in Brazil from France soon after its codification and has spread throughout the country, at once exerting a great influence on Brazilian religiosity (for example, it constitutes part of the Umbanda cult) and being influenced by Christianity (in Brazil, it became a Christian teaching that a Spiritualist era will prevail after the Hebrew era of the Old Testament and the Christian era of the New Testament). Many esoteric traditions were introduced in Brazil at the same time as Spiritualism. Some of these traditions, particularly the Theosophical Society, permeate the Brazilian religious universe, and play a significant role in the diffusion, understanding, and acceptance of Eastern religions, especially the Hindu tradition (Carvalho 1994:75). In fact, many Eastern ideas such as karma and reincarnation were widely popularized through

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1 Founded by Madame Blavatsky (Helena Petrovna Blavatsky) and others, in 1875, advocating an eclectic religion based largely on Brahmanic and Buddhist teachings. In Brazil, it was introduced in 1919.
The great majority of these religious groups have built their headquarters in São Paulo, with certain groups scattered throughout Brazil. The numbers presented do not reflect the total number of followers, as many individuals may have more than one religious affiliation.

In the cities of São Paulo, as well as in the countryside, traditional Brazilian religious practices continue to thrive. Many individuals continue to honor ancestral spirits through offerings and rituals, while others may participate in more modern religious activities.

Religious diversity is a hallmark of contemporary Brazil, and this document highlights just a few of the many different groups and practices that exist within the country. As Brazil continues to evolve, it is likely that these religious communities will continue to grow and adapt to the changing social and cultural landscape.
This is also one of the reasons why they have had problems in maintaining or increasing their membership numbers, even among Japanese descendants.

Zen Buddhism, especially the Sōtō sect or Sōtō Zen-shū made the first steps toward growth in Brazil during the wave of the counter-culture movement – precisely, in the 60s and the beginning of the 70s – as also occurred in the US and Europe, where large meditation centers (dōjō) were established. Although there was no real Zen boom in Brazil, there is some indication of the existence of a vigorous movement at present. This is due mainly to the work of the Japanese monk Tokuda Ryotan, the creator of zazen meditation groups in the States of Espirito Santo, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, Goiás, Minas Gerais, and the Federal District. Here, it is interesting to note that – in marked contrast with other Japanese religious groups, which started their activities among immigrants and later made use of the descendants (nikkei) as a bridge to reach non-descendant Brazilians – the present renewal of Zen Buddhism has occurred without this kind of “bridge.” On the contrary, lay and non-descendant Brazilians are in the front line of the diffusion of Zen meditation practice.

However, the Japanese religions with the highest rates of growth in Brazil are the so-called New Religions (NR), which include all the Japanese religious movements (Shintō, Buddhist, and others) that have risen since the beginning of the century. The largest NR in Japan are mostly those which are offshoots of traditional Buddhist sects, especially Sōka Gakkai (Nichiren-shū), Risshō Kōsei-kai (Tendai-shū), and Reiōkai (Tendai-shū), etc., all of which are quite large in Japan. This varied category of religions tends to be syncretistic and non-exclusive. Today, the great majority of the main NR that are present in Japan also exist in Brazil. Some of them have found great success and spread to almost all Brazilian states.

Although statistics are rarely foolproof in this field, it can be estimated that the most successful groups in Brazil are: Seicho-no-ie, Sōka Gakkai, World Messianity Church, Perfect Liberty, Sūkyō Mahikari, as well as Nishi Honganji, which is a traditional Buddhist sect (see note 8 below). These denominations are the largest on the Brazilian religious scene in terms of diffusion, membership, publication, and “visibility.” All but the last one belong to the category of New Religions and have their majority of members outside the Japanese-Brazilian community. In addition, they have other features in common, such as an emphasis on the strength of positive thinking and self-confidence; an interest in promoting meetings of small groups

(generally of neighbors), which eventually perform social and therapeutic functions, so to speak; an ethic or guidance for daily life, which is presented separately or combined with the doctrinal teachings; and an emphasis on the cult of ancestors. Another feature of these groups in Brazil is that communication among them is practically absent.

In terms of numbers, the NR do not compare to the membership numbers of Catholicism or Pentecostalism, in spite of their rapid diffusion outside the Japanese-Brazilian community. In fact, the majority of members of the main NR nowadays are Brazilian, with no Japanese blood. These groups have grown very quickly in urban areas in a relatively short time. Although there are no exhaustive and sufficiently comprehensive studies that provide conclusive data, many researchers believe that the biggest NR have been growing mainly among the middle class and/or people with a minimum level of education (for instance, Paiva 1990:182). It seems that they have made a division of the religious market with the Neo-Pentecostal sects, which have been spreading chiefly among the lower classes.

It must also be noted that Brazil is the country which currently experiences the largest growth of Japanese religions outside Japan. This has developed to such an extent that some groups are building the South American “Sacred Land” in Brazil (for instance, the World Messianity Church and the Perfect Liberty Kyōdan). In general, Japanese religions have not yet been a target for radical confrontation with other religious denominations, though there is a frequently remembered unfortunate incident involving Oomoto members in 1932. They were almost lynched by zealous Catholics in the state of Minas Gerais. In my research in the state of Pará (1991), I was told about Protestant pastors who took part in Seicho-no-ie meetings in order to find out about it personally so that they would be able to depict it to their faithful as “a thing of the Devil.” Also, I heard about a Catholic priest who used to write against the Seicho-no-ie in a newspaper from Belém City. But it does not match the actual “holy war” carried out by certain Pentecostal churches against Afro-Brazilian religions, which sometimes

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8 Parenthetically, a top Brazilian Zen leader, Cláudia Coen Murayama, did her initiation in a Zen center at Los Angeles, before living in Japan for some years.
erupts in an invasion of the latter’s sacred places in order to “expel the devil” from them (cf., for instance, Soares 1990:93).

Finally, it must be pointed out that many Christian (Catholic and Protestant) churches carry out specific missionary work within the Japanese-Brazilian community. It has been estimated that 60% of Japanese and their descendants have been baptized in the Catholic faith, although only 10% of them may be considered “practicing Catholics.” This pattern is not much different from the general situation of Catholics in Brazil. As for Protestants, we have information on about at least 14 different denominations which work within the Japanese community (Mizuno 1978).

**Studies of Brazilian Religious Diversity**

The study of religious diversity in Brazil has come to constitute a tradition of scholarship that has given priority to religious groups and themes such as Popular Catholicism, the relationship between the Church and the State, Afro-Brazilian religions, Spiritualism (Espirituismo-kardecista), Pentecostalism, and the like. Some marginal and/or newer groups have been relegated to minor or lesser known studies. Among these groups we may include Asian religions. In fact, the number of scholars studying Asian religions is very small among researchers working on religiosity in Brazil. Moreover, the number of published works on these religions is comparatively small. Furthermore, these studies are not well-known either in Brazilian academia or in society in general, due to various factors.

First of all, the influence of Asian religious groups in Brazil was not felt until recently. On the one hand, this can be related to the relatively small size of the Asian community in Brazil; on the other hand, until the recent process of democratization and modernization of Brazil, the Catholic Church struggled to inhibit the spread of “new sects” in this country. Notwithstanding this Catholic resistance, the counter-culture movement came to exert a significant influence on the diffusion of many religious ideas from Asia in Brazil, as also happened in many parts of the world.

In the specific case of Japanese religions, we can find some additional reasons for the general lack of scholarship. First, some of the texts on Japanese religiosity in Brazil were published forty to fifty years ago in specialized magazines, which are not accessible in contemporary Brazil. Also, a great part of this bibliography is written in the Japanese language and, to a lesser extent, in English. In compiling a bibliography on Japanese religions in Brazil, I have so far found more than eighty books and articles, of which approximately half were written by Japanese or their descendants, and twenty-seven were written in the Japanese language. The number of works on Japanese religions written by Christians (priests, pastors, and laymen) is also rather small. Another reason for the lack of development of this area of study is the fact that Japanese religions first began to cross over from the exclusive concern of the Japanese-Brazilian community to the cultural frontiers of Brazilian society at large just a few decades ago. That is, although the official history of Japanese immigration to Brazil started in 1908, the phenomenon of Japanese religions was noticed just thirty years ago.

The rapid diffusion of Asian religions among Brazilians of non-Asian ancestry is a phenomenon that has not yet received due attention from Brazilian scholars. However, although the number of centers for religious studies and works on the subject of Asian religions is still small, there is definitely a tendency toward growth. Research on Asian religions seems to have started in the form of studies in marginal groups and/or on Brazilian religious syncretism, as reflected in the book Religious Syncretism in Brazil (O Sincretismo Religioso no Brasil), by Gonçalves Fernandes, which was published in 1941 and included a chapter on the Japanese religion Oomoto (Fernandes 1941). These studies increased to some extent after World War II, and then again at the end of the 1950s. The most recurrent topic of research was undoubted the Japanese religious expressions in Brazil. Studies can be found on the social movement Shindō-Renmei10 soon after the war (for example, Willems & Saito 1947); on religion as part of Nippo-Brazilian community studies (for example, Izumi 1957); and, finally, more systematic and intensive research on Japanese religions in Brazil, such as the pioneering thesis by Takashi Maeyama on Seichō-no-ise (Maeyama 1967).

Presently, at least four main university level centers maintain religious studies programs in Brazil: (1) the Center for Religious Studies (CER- Centro de Estudos da Religião “Dugas Teixeira Monteiro”), attached to the University of São Paulo; (2) São Paulo’s Catholic University (PUCESP-Pontificia Universidade Católica de São Paulo) graduate program in religious science; (3) Rio Grande do Sul Federal University’s Center for Relig-

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10 During World War II and the immediately following years, the Japanese-Brazilian community was divided between the “victory group” or kachi-gumi (formed by those who did not accept the fact of Japan’s failure in the war) and the “defeat group” or make-gumi (formed by those who accepted that Japan had lost the war). With the end of the war, the “victory group” radicalized its position through a social movement known as Shindō-Renmei (“League of the Way of the Loyal Subjects”). Vieira (1973:239, note 21) points out a messianic connotation in this movement, which is confirmed by “many references, in this period, to the arrival of ships which would bring the Japanese back to Japan, a victorious Japan, where they would not suffer oppression and ill-treatment anymore.” For more information on the topic see Nakadate’s thesis (1988).
ious Studies (UFGRS-Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul/Núcleo de Estudos da Religião); and (4) the Institute for Religious Studies (ISER-Instituto de Estudos da Religião). In general, these centers sponsor seminars, congresses, research, and publications.

The Catholic University graduate program is one of the most productive in terms of theses on Asian religions, particularly on Japanese religions. As far as I know, this program has produced a master’s thesis on Seichô-no-Ie (Marrach 1978) and three others on Perfect Liberty (Telerman 1990, Fujikura 1992, Gonçalves 1998). The Institute for Religious Studies (ISER) has a solid research team and publishes the journals Comunicações do ISER and Religião e Sociedade, besides the book series Cadernos do ISER. From 1986 to 1987, this Institute was asked by the National Council of Christian Churches (CONIC-Conselho Nacional de Igrejas Cristãs) to develop the program “Religious Diversity in Brazil,” which contains nine studies on Asian religions, including a few Japanese denominations, Hare Krishna, Ananda Marga, Shree Rajneesh’s movement, and others (Landim 1990). This was a very important step towards a wider comprehension of the manifestation of the sacred in Brazil.

The phenomenon of the trans-nationalization of religious communities in Latin America has had a great impact in the field of religious studies in Brazil and in Latin America in general. One of the consequences has been the creation in 1994 of the Association of Mercosur’s Social Scientists of Religion (Associação dos Cientistas Sociais da Religião no Mercosul), which includes researchers from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, and others. This Association has a newsletter (Estudos sobre Religião) and sponsors every year an international congress called Jornadas sobre Alternativas Religiosas na América Latina (“Workshop on Religious Alternatives in Latin America”). Besides traditional research topics (theoretical and methodological aspects of religious studies, traditional Christian churches, popular religiosity, etc.), members of this Association are carrying out comparative research on the expansion of new religions in the Mercosur (South America’s Southern Cone counterpart of NAFTA), the trans-nationalization of Afro-Brazilian religions, and the spread of esoteric beliefs and New Age practices, etc.

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BOOK REVIEWS


Robert C. Angel, University of South Carolina

Edward J. Lincoln of the Brookings Institution is established as the leading American economist writing today on Japan's economy and US-Japan economic relations. A Yale Ph.D. who trained under Hugh Patrick in the early 1970s, Lincoln brings to his analysis two decades of experience in the Washington policy community and two years recent service in the US Embassy, Tokyo, as special adviser to Ambassador Walter Mondale.

In his most recent book, Lincoln again addresses squarely economic problems in the US-Japan relationship. He summarizes in the introduction arguments that economic Japan during the past ten or so years has changed fundamentally, and that Japan has become as open to international participation as any other large industrialized nation. Then he states:

The conclusion of this study, however, is decidedly cautious. A variety of statistical evidence shows that the presence of foreign firms and their products has not increased in Japan very much over the past decade and remains remarkably low in comparison to other countries. Those increases are insufficient to suggest that Japan is no longer distinctive. In many ways the contrast between Japan and the rest of the world remains startling (p. 4).

The remainder of the text supports that assertion through sophisticated application of quantitative and qualitative research techniques. As in his earlier books, Lincoln in Troubled Times proves it possible to discuss controversial policy issues without resort to polemical rant. His conclusions and the policy prescriptions he derives from them are moderate in tone and make political as well as economic sense. His work will please neither those who see Japan's mercantilist foreign economic policy as the greatest threat to Western Civilization since Attila's European excursion nor those who shrink from critical comment on any post-1945 Japanese government policy. We can expect MITI and its American agents to attack this book as vigorously as they did Japan's Unequal Trade.

Twenty-some years of insider observation of Tokyo's policymaking processes have led Lincoln to conclude that self-generated change in Ja-