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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Taiko with a Baqueta:
Japanese Percussion and the Politics of Belonging in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

by

Elizabeth Stela McDonald

December 2022

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Deborah Wong, Chairperson

Dr. Jonathan Ritter

Dr. Shanna Lorenz

Dr. Alice Lumi Satomi

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The Dissertation of Elizabeth Stela McDonald is approved:

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For Alvaro

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Taiko with a Baqueta:
Japanese Percussion and the Politics of Belonging in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil

by

Elizabeth Stela McDonald

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Music
University of California, Riverside, December 2022
Dr. Deborah Wong, Chairperson

My dissertation examines music, migration, and belonging in Salvador, Brazil through the lens of two percussion ensembles: Grupo Cultural Wadō and Nataka Toshia. Wadō is a taiko (Japanese percussion) ensemble comprised of both Nikkei and non-Nikkei Brazilians, who are in the majority. In contrast, Nataka Toshia is a samba and samba-reggae group that performs during Carnival and is comprised of Japanese expatriates, tourists, and backpackers. Through oral history interviews, participant observation, and documenting performances and music practices, I explore histories of Japanese migration to Brazil and Bahia, exploring new kinds of migration related to art, music, and lifestyle considerations. I consider how and why Bahians who were not Japanese descendants played taiko, discussing how multiracial Wadō members forged relationships with the Bahian Nikkei community and engaged in body practices meant to mold Japanese bodies and inculcate perceived Japanese values. I consider the possibility of a distinctly Brazilian taiko, noting that playing Afro-Bahian rhythms on Japanese drums clashes with ideas tradition and authenticity in some Brazilian taiko communities of practice, but it also challenges the idea of Nikkei as eternal foreigners in Brazil. I

explore the close relationships between LGBTQIA+ communities in Bahia and Japanese pop culture consumption, showing how Japanese governmental campaigns increased access to anime and manga in Latin America.

I describe collaborations between Brazilian taiko players and Japanese sambistas. I argue that narratives from and about Japanese tourists and expatriates playing samba in Brazil is closely related to anxiety about loss in Japan because of Westernization, as well as widespread discourses about Japanese mimicry and racial hierarchies in both Brazil and Japan. Finally, I analyze intragroup dynamics, considering how group musical practices may contribute to peaceful relations between individuals through intercorporeal relationships. Ultimately, I argue that music practice spaces are utopias and heterotopias; they are spaces apart from mainstream society where communities of practice imagine better worlds and work to create peaceful relationships with one another without denying or erasing difference.

My research contributes to literature on music, migration, and transnationalism, examining the experiences of a migrant community in Brazil since 1908 and its impact on host communities. It is also part of a broader conversation on cultural appropriation, outsiders, and who can play whose music in culturally specific contexts. Further, transcreations (extended interview texts) in my dissertation are an experiment and possible model on how to present multiple voices in a scholarly work, where researchers can highlight life stories of interlocutors and place them in conversation with one another.

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Introduction: Salvador's Bon Odori

The Festival of Japanese Culture in Salvador, Bahia always takes place in August, at the end of the winter. In 2017, it is cold and empty in the morning when I arrive to volunteer. I want to know more about the organization and history of the festival, so I spend the morning bundled up in a sweater, checking in performers, vendors, and other volunteers, handing out water and wristbands, and chatting with other people who are helping. By the time my shift ends in the afternoon, it is hot and muggy and crowded! I don't dare go near the "pop culture space," where adolescents squeeze under a tent, waiting in line to try out new video games. There are also long lines for food. I want an okonomiyaki, but I choose yakissoba noodles from the booth with the shortest line. Organizers tell me that the festival has surged in popularity in recent years, along with interest in Japan among people in the region. The festival started as a small Bon Odori put on by and for the 50 or so members of the Japanese Brazilian Association of Bahia, but last year there were 50,000 people at the festival, and there will be more this year.

When it rains, I walk through the various displays under tents, moving slowly among the crowds. You can buy so many things here: mattresses, massage chairs, cars, sriracha, and tutoring sessions at Kumon. Several vendors sell short silky bathrobes with wide matching waistbands they call "kimono." A young woman trying one on lets me snap a picture of her. She flashes me a kissy face, resting a gold parasol on her shoulder. When the rain stops, I go far away from the main entrance where there are exhibits on Japanese communities (colônias) in Bahia. Residents of these communities set up tables displaying maps, photos, and produce they grew. If you talk to them, they will tell you

about their communities and their lives, and they will give cacau, cupuaçu, mangostin, and palmito to sample.

In the late afternoon I go to see a performance on the main stage by Grupo Cultural Wadō, Salvador's taiko ensemble. I am really here to see them. I am early, so I sit in the front row and set up my video camera, first recording performances by the children of the Japanese language school. Parents sitting near me are excited. One of them points out his child to me on stage singing and dancing to *Soram Bushi*, a folksong from the North of Japan. Afterwards, a children's taiko group performs. The crowd loves them, applauding loudly and chuckling at cute moments, like when one child forgets to bow and runs offstage before the others.

When Grupo Wadō finally performs, I feel dazzled by the loudness of the drums and the flashing lights mirroring the sound. I feel my body swaying to the sound of the fue (flute) while I watch the performers dance with fans. I am annoyed when a photographer with the local press stops in front of my camera. The crowd roars after each piece. I think that the baianos watching love all kinds of percussion. I think that maybe they see some aspect of themselves in all drums. Even Japanese drums.

At night, temperatures drop just in time for everyone to dance Bon Odori under the red and white chouchin. The spectacle of a crowd of baianos dancing reminds me of Pagode or Axé shows in Salvador where dancers on stage, performing in front of musicians, lead spectators in set choreography. Here, teachers from the local Japanese school lead from an elevated platform while dancers below pick up the choreography, mirroring the leaders on the stage. In both Axé and Bon Odori, people in the crowd

“mark” the movements at first, increasing the breadth of their movements until they dance with confidence by the end of the song.¹ The baianos dance with their feet grounded to the floor, grooving to the music. I run into Naoya Sawada, a Japanese expatriate who plays Brazilian music and practices capoeira, whom I had met the previous week. He owns a hostel in town and runs Nataka Toshia, a Carnival percussion group comprised of Japanese tourists. He is with his wife and daughters. We watch the dancers together. He tells me that the Bon Odori songs remind him of songs from capoeira, but he can’t explain why.

Eight songs cycle, with more and more attendees participating as the night goes on. The dance space fills with people, filling out the open areas until it becomes crowded. The last song in the cycle, *Ipê Ondo* by Mariko Nakahira, tells the story of friendship between Brazil and Japan using imagery of national flowers, the ipê and the sakura, respectively. “Let’s bloom together,” she sings. The song moves into a samba, complete with cuica sounds in the middle of the song, but no one sambas; dancers continue the Bon Odori movements at the same pace, following the Nihon gakko (Japanese school) teachers on the stage. It seems very proper, very correct to not samba, as if the dancers are saying, “this is a Japanese event. It is not Brazilian,” even as it celebrates Brazilian and Japanese friendship.

¹ <https://vimeo.com/713762196>

This dissertation investigates Japanese cultural practices in Salvador, Bahia Brazil, focusing on Brazilians who play taiko and Japanese who play samba and samba-reggae. I explore ideas about Japan and Brazil through narratives about migration, race, heritage, sexuality, authenticity, community, and mixing. My research focuses on stories from percussion practitioners I introduced above: members of Grupo Cultural Wadō and Nataka Toshia. Most Wadō members are of multiple racial backgrounds who report feeling deeply connected to Japanese culture. Naoya Sawada's group, Nakata Toshia, consists of Japanese tourists and expatriates who play Afro-Brazilian rhythms. I explore what happens to musical traditions when outsiders participate in them. How do ideas and ideals about Japan and Brazil play out in Salvador and in the Brazilian Japanese diaspora?

Grupo Cultural Wadō

Grupo Cultural Wadō was established in 2011 with the purpose of increasing interest in Japanese culture among youth in Salvador, Bahia. Salvador is located in the Northeast of Brazil, and it is famous for its African diasporic heritage, specifically religious practices like Candomblé, along with music, food, capoeira, and dance that are closely related to religious and heritage practices. Japanese migrants arrived in the state of Bahia in the 1950s, occupying mostly rural areas until recently.

Lika Kawano, the youth coordinator of ANISA (Associação Nipo Brasileira de Salvador, or Nipo Brazilian Association of Salvador), helped establish the Grupo Cultural Wadō as part of the organization. When I arrived in Bahia in 2017, there were a total of 19 members in the group. They practiced taiko on the weekends in a practice space in

attached to a public library in the Barris neighborhood. Although the group was intended for Nikkei youth, only five members were Nikkei, with one identifying as “Black Yellow.” Most identified as biracial or multiracial. Most members were in their late teens and early twenties, although some were in their thirties. Most thought of themselves as middle class, although one interviewee pointed out that some are not. As Joyce, a founding Wadō member, told me, “Some of us have more resources than others.” Some members lived in big homes with hired help to cook and clean—markers of middle- to upper-class status. In contrast, others attended public elementary and high school and had parents who worked in the informal economy, which were considered markers of working-class status.

Wadō members spanned a variety of interests in careers. In 2017 and 2018, there were two chefs, a tattoo artist, a speech pathologist, a professor, two architects, several university students in engineering and design, a robotics engineer, and administrators for government institutions and private schools. Some were still “figuring things out,” living at home with parents while taking courses to get into college and looking for part-time work. Many were deeply interested in music and art, including both Bahian and Japanese percussion.

Wadō was most members’ first opportunity to study percussion, usually because of friends or relatives who invited them to the group. Training in Bahian percussion was inaccessible to nearly all members. Percussion instruction was usually integrated into programs aimed at children and teens in working-class neighborhoods to “keep kids out of trouble,” or packaged as expensive lessons for tourists. Many Wadō members

identified as “in between” when it came to class, race, and in some cases, gender. They were not rich enough to afford music lessons, not poor enough to qualify for social programs. Joyce, who identified as Black also told me that she was not “Black enough” to learn to play percussion in a group like Olodum. Most Wadō members also identified as “LGBT,” in the years before the QIA+ were added to the acronym. Some told me that they felt like both a “girl” and a “boy.”

Some Wadō members tended to idealize Japan, often because of the fantasy worlds they saw in manga and anime, stories they heard from Nikkei who had been to Japan, and because Wadō rehearsals and practices were spaces of friendship, care, and love. Many believed that their experience in Wadō would be similar to living in Japan. Goals for music practice varied among members. For the majority, music was secondary to relationships between members who were best friends, partners, and siblings. Some told me that they would leave the group if it became professional; they only wanted to rehearse to see one another. A few others, however, longed for deepening musical knowledge and training, including a former member, Leo Raposo, who left his career as an attorney to pursue a music degree.

Nataka Toshia

Nataka Toshia, which I discuss in Chapter 2 and focus on in Chapter 3, was a percussion ensemble comprised primarily of Japanese backpackers who traveled to Bahia during the summer months to learn Bahian percussion and perform in Carnival. Naoya Sawada was the group’s founder. He traveled to Salvador with the intention of staying for a few days before returning to Japan but ended up staying for three years. He practiced

percussion with local teachers, sometimes playing with Candomblé practitioners, eventually performing with Timbalada, a world-renowned Afro-Bahian samba-reggae group. Carlinhos Brown, the founder of Timbalada, gave his blessing to Sawada to start Nataka Toshia. In 2018, Sawada was also a practitioner of Capoeira Angola. He was deeply dedicated to Afro-Brazilian music and body practices.

In 2018, Japanese Nataka Toshia members were a mixture of male and female, ranging from young people in their 20s to a retiree. The group included long-term travelers backpacking through the Americas, people with remote work options, office workers who recently quit their jobs, and workers in the service industry who had saved up for their first long trip. They had heard about the opportunity to learn to play percussion from Japanese travelers in other places. Non-Japanese members included a woman from Amazonas who recently moved to Salvador, two local percussion leaders helping out, a teenager from the neighborhood where the group practices, and six Wadō members, performing in Carnival for the first time.

Origins of This Project

As a White woman from the United States whose first language is English, my upbringing and personal cultural history differs from Wadō and Nataka Toshia members. However, like many of my interlocutors, I am curious, and I feel a longing to learn about various places and performance practices. Like most, I am an outsider to samba-reggae and taiko. I felt most alike older Wadō members who had opportunities to go to college,

study abroad, and learn other languages.² My extended trip to Brazil also made me feel like Nataka Toshia members and other Japanese expatriates. I felt that as a foreigner in Brazil we had some similar experiences. However, I had less mobility than many Japanese I met who had permanent residency in Brazil.

I came to this research by chance, and this research has changed my life in profound and unexpected ways. I had never heard or seen taiko, also known as kumi daiko (ensemble drumming) or wadaiko (Japanese drumming), until my mid-twenties when I was teaching Pilates classes full-time at various studios in New York. I had recently quit my short-lived dance career in the Martha Graham Ensemble, and to give my life some direction, I started taking Japanese language classes that I saw advertised on a poster outside of the Japan Society when I was on a work break.

In one of the Pilates studios where I worked there was often a single client attending my group classes: Marco Lienhard. Marco is a shakuhachi (bamboo flute) virtuoso and former Ondekoza member who started his own New York-based ensemble, Taikoza, in the early 2000s. When told me about his taiko group's annual performance, I thought I should learn something about Japan other than what I was learning in my language class designed for businessmen ("Tanaka-san, are you going on a business trip?"). I bought a ticket. Taikoza's performance overpowered me. Taiko does this to many people. The sounds of the koto (zither), odaiko, and the groundedness of the

² Many older Wadō members participated in the Ciências Sem Fronteiras program, a public-private partnership started under President Dilma Rousseff in 2011 that allowed young Brazilian university students to spend time in foreign universities. Wadō members spent time in diverse places, including Korea, China, Ireland, and the United States. These programs were not available to younger members, as the program was canceled in 2017 under the Temer administration.

performers onstage was dazzling to my senses. The first time the ensemble hit the chudaiko together, I felt an intensity and energy in my chest I hadn't felt before. It felt something like love. It made me want to be a better person. I decided to pursue taiko lessons with Marco and his group. When I decided to start an undergraduate program later that year, I interviewed Marco and other group members for my class projects and experimented with creating literary monologues and term papers from these interviews.

Later, I started to take classes with Kaoru Watanabe in Brooklyn. Many ex-Kodo apprentices and other players from the West Coast came to give workshops at his taiko center, and I learned more. I attended the 2011 North American Taiko Conference, and I heard Kenny Endo speak about taiko's connection to Asian American activism. I began to appreciate the music's historical and political importance as much as its aesthetic appeal. The North American Taiko community was an amazing place to learn. There were so many kind people ready to help, teach, and share their experiences.

The opportunity to learn about taiko in Brazil also came into my life by chance. One day, I missed the elevator to go to a computer lab at my university, and I saw a poster about applying for a Fulbright while I was waiting. Instead of taking the elevator, I attended a talk that day and decided to apply for a grant. As someone who learned to speak Portuguese through some college coursework including a study abroad, I was limited to pursuing research in Lusophone countries, but I learned that there was taiko in Brazil. I watched YouTube videos of Brazilian taiko, including Setsuo Kinoshita's piece *Taiko do Samba* and performances celebrating 100 years of immigration to Brazil in

2008. I wanted to know more about these ensembles. I went to São Paulo on a Fulbright grant.

When I got to Brazil, I was surprised at the amount of Japanese music and dance one can learn in the Brazilian Nikkei community, or colony (*colônia*) as it is called there. I listened to 90-year-old women sing *minyô* (folk songs), and I watched children and teenagers perform dance, taiko, koto, and shamisen. I started taking shamisen and voice lessons with Tamie Kitahara and Nihonbuyo lessons with Hiroka Matsui, both beloved teachers in the city of São Paulo. When Luci Júdice, a journalist with the Nikkei community newspaper *Journal Nippak*, told me about Grupo Wadō, a taiko group in Salvador, Bahia, I jumped at the chance to see them perform at a festival in August 2011. I attended the Japan festival in Salvador with Luci and stayed in the city for three weeks to interview members of the group.

I noticed immediately that Nikkei members of Grupo Wadō were in the minority, which raised a lot of questions for me. In São Paulo, most young people participating in taiko wanted to connect to their Japanese heritage. When I started interviewing Wadō members, I found their stories profoundly political and hopeful. These were young people who idealized Japan and ensemble drumming as an antidote to individualism and capitalism, which, as some bluntly told me, were influences from the United States. I wanted to know more about Grupo Wadō and their experience playing Japanese music in the state of Bahia. I wanted to spend time with these people.

When it came time to choose a site to research for a doctoral dissertation project, many did not understand my decision to focus on Wadō. Many wondered why I wouldn't

choose to feature taiko in the South of Brazil, where there were more taiko groups with greater technical ability than in Wadō. My answer is that Wadō is special and unique. Wadō was primarily a Japanese cultural group, but I wondered what it meant when several people without Japanese heritage were charged with preserving and disseminating Japanese culture. What did playing taiko mean to politically active and idealistic young people living in Bahia?

Two weeks into my fieldwork, three Japanese people came to see a Wadō rehearsal. I was curious about these visitors, especially when I found out one of them, Naoya Sawada, played samba-reggae, and was a member of Timbalada. He owned a hostel for Japanese travelers, and he taught Japanese travelers how to play samba. I started taking lessons with him, and his group became a second site of my research, located in the same city.

Migration, Asian Music, and Mixtures

Wadō and Nataka Toshia are the results of the movement of people, music, and performance across space and time. Many stories of migration and music focus on loss, recovery, and hybridity. Others consider new kinds of migration that are circular, transnational, fluid, serial, and even temporary. My project contributes to literature on music and migration, with a continued focus on hybridity and mixture in Brazil and the complexity of migrants' experiences and contribution. I highlight the Japanese community's influence on Brazil and on the lives of a group of young Brazilians, focusing on exchanges between host and migrant communities. I also emphasize new

kinds of Japanese migration taking place in Bahia, Brazil that are not (always) based on economic need or hardship.

Diaspora studies emerged in the post-structural and post-modern academic environment of the 1980s and 90s, when scholars noted the significance of transnational processes to the human experience. Diaspora, first associated with the movement of Jewish populations “scattered” throughout the world and originating from a single homeland, generally connotes clear boundaries between homeland and host countries, and the term usually presupposes long distances “and a separation more like exile: a constitutive taboo on return or its postponement to a remote future” (Clifford 1997, 246).

Later, many began to consider differences between migratory experiences and the complex, ambiguous, and ongoing processes of transnational human movement. Reyes (1999) traced the movement of refugees from Vietnam to relocation centers in the Philippines, accounting for intermediate places where migrants stop on their way to final destinations. She also distinguished between voluntary and forced migrations, or immigrants and refugees, noting that not all diasporas are the same. Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* challenged notions of neat boundaries between nation-states and cultural practices, as well as the idea of diaspora as a separation of populations from their communities of origin (1993). He argues that the “Black Atlantic” is a space of transnational cultural construction, and he recognizes the significance of travel to the work of African American writers. Gloria Anzáldua’s first-person narrative of her experience as a Chicana living on the Texas/Mexico border also problematizes the neatness of nation-state boundaries, arguing that borders often break up communities

rather than constitute them (1999). She emphasizes the ambiguity and pluralism of cultural identity that accompanies the movement of people across borders, and she links this ambivalence to *mestizaje* (Ibid., 101). She traces the movement of people to the era of Aztecs, arguing that humans have always been in migration. Similarly, Daniel traces histories of inter-African diasporas, arguing that the exchange of people and ideas has been constant and widespread throughout African history (2005). Related to border theory is the notion of in-country migration, where massive populations, often labeled as “internal others,” move between regions, or from rural peripheries to central cities (Turino 1993; Terada 2005).

Ong’s notion of “flexible citizenship” or “the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions,” further acknowledges complexities in migratory processes (1999, 6). Her ethnography of Chinese migration throughout Asia and on the West Coast of the US tells the story of Chinese families and individuals that hold multiple passports, own multiple properties, and occupy powerful positions in governments and businesses throughout the diaspora. Similarly, García Canclini employs the fluid notion of hybridity, or “socio-cultural processes in which discrete structures or practices, previously existing in separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects, and practices... often an unplanned manner” (1995, xxv). While García Canclini maintains that the study of hybridity necessary puts an end “to the pretense of establishing ‘pure’ or ‘authentic’ identities,” he argues that a theory of hybridity must also consider communities that resist hybridity (ibid, xli). “Globalization,”

he writes, not only integrates, but segregates (ibid, xxxvi). Other scholars have focused on transnationalisms with constant movement, including circular migration between homeland, host country, and back to country of origin (Lorenz 2007; Sasaki 2014); and individual paths of “serial migration,” or multiple dislocations (Ossman 2013). Terada documents musical practices of Okinawans in Osaka, demonstrating in-country diasporas and regional and language differences within the borders of a single nation-state (2011).

Studies of performance practices in Asian diasporas have reflected theories of migration, borders, and hybridity. Dale Olsen’s work, based on research conducted in the 1980s, treated diaspora as a population travelling from one place to another and staying. His work centers on musical practices of communities that migrated from Japan to South America. Olsen argues that second- and third-generation Japanese Brazilians assimilate cultural practices of host nation-states, and they do not practice the art forms of their home countries:

The generation variable... accounts for particular aspects of cultural dissimulation and assimilation... which transfer into forms of Japanese traditional musical continuity and discontinuity, respectively, the latter including different types of musical experimentation... The reality is the most Nisei and sansei are more interested in cultural assimilation than preservation (2006, 277).

Olsen thus disregards musical experimentation as an authentic expression of the diasporic experience. By the 1990s, however, many scholars had begun to pay attention to music making in younger generations of diasporic communities, moving away from facile notions of assimilation and dissimulation, and treating hybridity and new practices as dynamic signs of cultural vitality rather than loss.

For example, Gonzalves researched Pilipino Cultural Nights (PCNs)—thematic theater, music, and dance performances by US college students of Filipino descent (2005; 2010). Others have also taken an interest in hybrid art forms, featuring performers who participate in many kinds of music-making and performance idioms, often forming their own styles from homeland, host country, avant garde, and classical genres (Wong 2004; Shapiro-Phim 2008; Lorenz 2007; 2011). Reyes (1999) documents Vietnamese music throughout the migratory process, also noting musical practices in refugee camps and processing centers. She observes Western, sacred, and secular music practices, a recording industry in Orange County, and the presence of other refugee groups, acknowledging porous boundaries between refugee populations.

The notion of flexible citizenship can be found in stories of circular migration between Brazil and Japan. Ilari notes that musical listening practices of Brazilian Nikkei in Japan often reflect both Japanese and Brazilian national identities (2006). Lorenz argues that the movement of migrant workers between Japan and Brazil has changed musical practices in the Brazilian Japanese diaspora, allowing for fluidity and mixing (2007; 2011). Hosokawa's research on Japanese singing in Brazil focuses on resistance to hybridity in a country that is proud of its mixing, where Nikkei have imposed a traditionally formal *iemoto* system on karaoke and view Brazilian karaoke as "badly behaved" (1998).

My research aims to build on research on music, migration, diaspora, and hybridity, exploring the complexities and contradictions. I specifically explore music in new kinds of migrant experiences, based on leisure and lifestyle considerations. I also

focus on how migrant performance practices impact host communities by considering how and why non-Japanese individuals have become practitioners and leaders of a Japanese diasporic performance practice. I discuss how ideas about Japan and Japanese values may have radiated to wider Brazilian society, and I relate discussions of Japan and taiko to narratives about race, class, gender, and sexuality in Brazil.

Outsiders, the Music of “Others,” and Belonging

In addition to diaspora and transnational studies, concerns about authenticity, otherness, and outsider/insider-ness undergird my research. Migration and travel inevitably result in outsiders watching or participating in performance practices of others. The presence of outsiders in non-Western musical traditions suggests issues of cultural appropriation, which have been widespread in the recording music industry. Taylor traces the history of “world music” and its connection to recording technologies and the rise of media conglomerates (2016). He critiques shifting concerns about “authenticity” its tendency to put “others” into “small boxes” (Ibid., 93), arguing that collaborations between wealthy and famous musicians with musicians who are less wealthy and famous, such as Paul Simon’s *Graceland*, are related to dominant ideologies that others’ musics are “a kind of natural resource available for the taking” (Ibid., 99). Widespread sampling and the marketing around projects such as Deep Forest show the “other” musicians as “wild” and “primitive” (Ibid., 103). Taylor also interviewed several White and US American musicians who imitate a variety of languages and compose in “world music” styles for commercial purposes, indicating the discomfort of these musicians who make a living making music for large corporations.

Others have written about outsiders participating in music and dance practices as a form of personal liberation. Several have focused on Japanese dancers and singers, especially women. Gulati notes that large numbers of Japanese women practice flamenco to explore emotions in a socially acceptable way, and Kurokawa and Kaeppler argue that hula practice satisfies feelings of nostalgia and yearnings for otherness in Japanese women practitioners (2008; 2004; 2013). The authors also note that the longing to connect with “others” music have contributed to tourist industries that uphold hula and flamenco. Savigliano explores the authenticity of Japanese performing tango, noting that many practitioners claim sameness with Argentinians rather than difference (Savigliano 1992). Bigenho notes that Japanese who practice Andean music “play Indian,” thereby enacting nostalgia for an Indigenous world and producing the “racialized imaginary” of an imagined common prehistoric ancestor between Japan and Native peoples of the Americas (Bigenho 2012).

Other scholars have specifically documented non-Asians playing taiko and other Japanese musics. In the United States, Ahlgren explores feelings of ambiguity and anxiety of White women playing taiko (Ahlgren 2018, 83–110). She notes that spaces of taiko practices are one of the few areas where White women are racially marked. Taiko practice also offered these women the freedom of a wide range of gendered expressions. Ahlgren also interviewed Black women who played taiko in the United States, noting that audiences viewed them with curiosity and as markers of “Americanness,” interrupting their expectations of “authenticity” (Ibid., 100). Wong, noting increasing numbers of White practitioners of taiko in North America with a ratio of 4:3, wonders if taiko can be

a place for them to learn about Asian American history (2019, 202). Otherwise, she wonders if over time taiko as an Asian American tradition would be forgotten, “a triumph of the most predictable neoliberal multiculturalism” (Ibid.). Non-Japanese and non-Nikkei are also practitioners of Japanese music practices in Brazil, and several scholars have noted their activities (Satomi 2004; 2018; Fuchigami 2014; Rodrigues 2020). Fuchigami’s work focuses specifically on relationships between Nikkei and Non-Nikkei practitioners of shakuhachi in Sao Paulo, with non-Nikkei imagining past life connections to Japan and prioritizing solo rather than ensemble shakuhachi flute works (2014).

My interlocutors, especially those in Wadō, were critical of large corporations seeking to create “exotic products” from the performance practices of “others.” Some Wadō members were outraged by then-recent “cultural appropriations” in the media, such as Scarlett Johansson playing the lead role in the film *Ghost in the Shell*. When a Japanese traveler from Nataka Toshia dressed as an “Indian” for Carnival, many said it was disrespectful to the struggles of Brazil’s Indigenous communities. Similarly, they were deeply concerned about cultural appropriation and very concerned about their authority and authenticity playing taiko while identifying as Brazilians and living in Brazil. Brazil is country with nationalist narratives that pride the mixing of racial groups, food, and music traditions. Could mixing musical genres still respect taiko? This is one question Wadō members explored deeply while composing a piece mixing taiko and Afro-Bahian rhythms.

Some Japanese members of Nataka Toshia, on the other hand, mirrored scholarship on Japanese practicing tango, hula, Andean music, and flamenco, expressing

feelings of nostalgia for pre-Meiji Japan through practicing the music of others. Through practicing the movement of others, they said they were connecting to a “lost” part of themselves and of Japanese culture. Others, however, articulated anxiety about playing samba-reggae, identifying it as “Black people’s music,” and questioning their right to play it. My project deals with the questions above. I ultimately focus on relationships between insiders and outsiders, as well as the hopes, dreams, ideas, and anxieties that surround the practice of outsiders playing music and the worry about respecting the traditions they play in body practices.

Deeply connected to the ideas related to playing the music of others is the hope of creating a better world through music and performance practice. Using Wadō’s taiko practice as a model, I argue that performance is a tool to create peace and tolerance, thinking about the body as a site for mutual understanding. Peace studies, an interdisciplinary endeavor that “grew out of a concern about modern warfare,” aims to understand causes of violence and peace by studying successful cases of conflict resolution (Harris 2004, 8). Many of these cases focus on dialogue groups, particularly in scholarship from the 1990s. Recent research in the field, however, has considered music and performance as tools for conflict resolution (Lederach and Lederach 2010; Väyrynen 2019a; 2019b). Building on this scholarship, I discuss how the body in taiko practice informs dialogue, consensus, and peaceful relationships in a small and racially diverse community, ultimately arguing that we share bodies through sensory input. Further, I discuss Wadō as a heterotopia, or a place that stands apart from mainstream society and disrupts it in some way (Foucault 1984). Music practices in both groups are utopian

projects, helping members to feel union and enact peaceful worlds for themselves and audiences (Dolan 2001).

Methodologies

Fieldwork

In 2017 and 2018, I spent a total of 13 months participating in Grupo Cultural Wadō and Nataka Toshia. I set out to conduct fieldwork by emphasizing work and music practice, or the participation in “participation observation” – as a crucial part of fieldwork methodology due to the possibility of intensifying cultural understanding through bodily participation (Conquergood 2006, 180–82). As an Ethnomusicology student, it never occurred to me that I wouldn’t participate in a music ensemble where I was studying. I had deeply internalized the idea of using my own body to play music and work with interlocutors, since so many ethnographers of music do the same. Methodologically, playing music made sense to me. As a non-musician, I hoped that playing with Wadō and Nataka Toshia would highlight that I was there to learn from and with my interlocutors and break down power dynamics that may have come from my age or my affiliation with a university. Further, like many ethnographers and oral historians, I also had concerns about reciprocity and responsibility to interlocutors who were spending time with me, speaking with me, and patiently allowing me to learn their music. I aimed to use my own body in fieldwork to experience, feel, listen, and learn, and ultimately contribute to the well-being of their communities.

I started out as an observer in Wadō. I took notes at rehearsals, recorded performances, and helped to clean spaces and move drums in and out of storage for

practices and performances. I became an official member of Wadō after participating in public workshops. I learned repertory, practiced with the group, helped with the children's group, and eventually performed fue and Yosakoi Soran dances in the 2018 Festival of Japanese Culture.

My experience with Nataka Toshia was embodied from the beginning. I started participating in the group by accompanying Naoya Sawada and his guests to capoeira practice, taking private percussion lessons with Sawada, and hanging out with him and his family afterwards. When many tourists arrived for the 2018 Carnival, I participated in pre-Carnival practices with the ensemble and performed with the in the 2018 Carnival alongside Naoya, local musicians, Wadō members, and backpackers staying in the hostel. After Carnival, I accompanied many Japanese travelers to the beach and nearby cities in Bahia. In addition to my main fieldsites, I attended seinenkai meetings with other young people as well as other events at ANISA, participated in a Japanese language choir, took Japanese language classes, studied Candomblé percussion at schools for tourists, and regularly accompanied an Issei woman to her Candomblé terreiro (temple, house, or land where Candomblé practices take place) for ceremonies and divinations.

In addition to the observation and participation I describe above, I recorded a total of fifty life history interviews with Wadō, Nataka Toshia, and ANISA members, as well as local percussionists, members of a Japanese language choir, and Issei and Nisei elders living in Salvador. I also drew on 31 life history interviews from a previous research project conducted in 2011 and 2012. These interviews focused on multiple themes with open-ended questions. While there are many works that focus on a few great musicians,

as well as biographies and single-person ethnographies that celebrate the lives of extraordinary people, it made sense to ask many people with many different musical experiences to participate in my project. Wadō and Nataka Toshia are groups that are open to all experience levels, and I was just as interested in beginning musicians as I was in founding members and virtuosos. This project is not about virtuosity, although the voices of excellent musicians appear here. Instead, I have attempted to attend to the multiple voices and experiences that contributed to Wadō, Nataka Toshia, and Nikkei in Bahia. Further, I had internalized the discipline of Oral History's interest in highlighting lesser-known and underrepresented voices that rarely appear in historical documents and dominant media. I wanted to solicit many voices of less-obvious narrators in my own work and write with an awareness of the plurality of voices and the relationships between them where I worked.

Multiple in-depth interviews that veered away from experiences with music were also crucial in my investigation of themes such as race, identity, class, history, Japanese culture, and taiko in Salvador and in Brazil. When narrating their life histories, interlocutors made connections between these themes, events in their lives, and their artistic practices. They explored meanings behind both major and everyday events in their lives. Oral History focuses on finding out about interviewees as whole people, not just as they pertain to the interviewer's interests. I believe that "shedding agendas" can provide more interesting and rich ethnographic material than if I had only focused on themes related to my research (Anderson and Jack 2006, 130–31). Interviewing,

especially when there is time and space for a long conversation, allowed for a deep exploration of many issues, and even more because of follow-up questions.

Deep listening and physical presence were important while interlocutors narrated their life experiences. I was inspired by the idea of the interviewer as a witness, which is a key theoretical consideration of *testimonio*, a Latin American cultural studies term referring to first-person accounts of oppression or trauma, often told in group settings, such as in front of a church congregation. This idea of the interviewer as a witness also appears in literature on Holocaust narratives. The thematic material of my interviews was vastly different than those of Holocaust, civil war, and trauma survivors. However, I believe that as interviewees and researchers, we are called to bear witness to the stories our interlocutors narrate.

I deployed Oral History best practices for interviewing, including recording interviews in as high quality a setting as possible, asking open-ended questions, and soliciting clarification, reflection, and detail through follow-up questions. Interviewees could restrict access to interviews, limit my use of certain themes within an interview, choose a pseudonym, or remain anonymous, if desired. One person used a pseudonym, three people chose to remain anonymous with identifying information omitted, and I chose a pseudonym for a third person and took out identifying information to protect their privacy. Interviewees also had the option to review their interview recordings and/or transcripts before deciding if I could use them in this dissertation.

With few exceptions, my relationships with interlocutors deepened after one-on-one interviews. For example, one interviewee, with whom I felt a contentious relationship

with before an interview, became a friend afterwards, telling the rest of the group that the interview was a great experience. Even those who felt uncomfortable in the interview space and next to a small recording device, seemed to understand my work better after the interview. Interviews built trust and enriched personal connections in a way that was not always possible in group settings. They also allowed me to show acceptance, respect, and support for interviewees' narratives, thoughts, beliefs, and experiences.

Writing: Multiple Voices and Transcreations

Part of the reason I wanted to write a dissertation about Japanese percussion in Bahia rather than simply traveling to Bahia to learn with percussionists, is that I wanted to explore writing styles I admire. In the 1960s, anthropologists started to think about ethnography as writing, and even "fiction," advocating for thick description, writing culture, writing against culture, ethnographies of the particular, and even presenting ethnographic material as poetry. Learning about this textual turn in anthropology made me wonder about the intersection of ethnography, documentary, and literature.

Many of my favorite works of nonfiction juxtapose many kinds of writing side by side, featuring diverse styles of writing and a plethora of narrators. *Jane: A Murder*, is a collage of news and documentary sources, poetry, journal entries, dreams, and interviews that explores the murder of the author's aunt, whom she never met, and the impact of the loss on the family (Nelson 2005). Jean Stein's *Edie: An American Girl* tells the life story of actress Edie Sedgwick by mixing segments of various interviews to tell a cohesive story (1982). Anna Deavere Smith's *Fires in the Mirror* presents a series of theatrical monologues based on interviews with many community members exploring conflict in

Crown Heights in 1991 (1993). Many of my favorite academic sources similarly juxtapose scholarly critique with interview segments, ethnography, autoethnography, and video and photo examples. Featuring various writing styles and multiple voices throughout a work enriches it, not only by bolstering scholarly “arguments,” but by showing multiple voices and placing them side by side. These capture thoughts, details, emotions, and meaning making in ethnographic writing. In *Taiko with a Baqueta*, the multiplicity of voices I use are similar to many ethnographic works. I started drafting each chapter by examining two or three different voices, such as two interview transcripts, fieldnotes, or personal writing and thinking about what kinds of tensions, ideas, emotions, or arguments these juxtapositions evoked. I then paired this writing with literature review, theoretical material, and comparisons with other scholarship, as most academic writing does.

Unlike many ethnographies I have read, I close each chapter with a “transcreation” of a selected life history interview that mirrors, interacts with, and reinforces arguments and content from the previous chapter. I borrow the term “transcreation” (transcriação in Portuguese) from Brazilian oral historian Jose Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy, who features them in his work. Meihy defines a transcreation as an interview transcript that has been “worked over” and made ready for a “phase of public presentation” (2006, 150). His transcreations, which often form the basis of his work, are entertaining to read and add to his own writing in his works, among others, on the AIDS crisis, Brazilian emigration, and Brazilian sex workers in Europe (2006; 2004; 2015). The transcreations featured in *August e Lea*, where he discusses theoretical and

methodological issues in Oral History, are short, punchy, and deeply moving, revealing careful crafting of interviews into published narratives. Meihy advocates for rearranging the order of topics and even changing the language of the interview to establish the “vital tone” of the interview to guide the reader (2006, 151). He recommends starting a transcreation with a phrase or a sentence to establish the “vital tone” in the beginning as a guide to represent a synthesis of the themes discussed in the interview (Ibid.).

I do not know if I have truly established a “vital tone” of the interview. My transcreations are somewhat longer than Meihy’s in his 2006 work, and I often wanted the transcreations to include information unrelated to a central topic. For example, I chose to keep a discussion of Leo’s favorite Japanese architects even though it seemed unrelated to histories of being queer and taiko. Later, I realized that ideas of beauty and place are imbued in that segment of the narrative, which relates to ideas about community in this dissertation. However, I tried to work like Meihy, keeping both the reader and narrator in mind. I started by transcribing entire interviews, rearranging the order of topics for clarity, and then deleting redundancies. I translated interviews to English, removing excessive, “ums,” and other verbal ticks that we use in our speech so regularly, but I did not remove all of them. I aimed to transmit how the interviewee spoke and the messy back and forth of the interview without losing the reader. When I was satisfied with the changes I had made, I sent the results to interviewees for comment and review, although only one responded with requests for minor changes and clarifications.

I chose specific interviews to feature because of the ease of the interviewees when speaking to me or reflecting on the interview afterwards. These interviewees seemed

enthusiastic, open, and secure about making their thoughts public. I did not want to feature an interview with anyone who showed significant discomfort at being recorded or who expressed any regret about sharing personal information afterwards (which is another reason I shared the texts of their interviews with them). I also wanted to represent different voices, and I was careful to not feature people from one race or gender group more than others. The interviewees I feature in order are from Akemi Tahara, Joyce Neri, Take Obuchi, Leo Bocanera, and Marcela Almeida. They are a Nikkei woman, Black woman, Japanese man, and a multiracial and queer man and a queer woman respectively. I feature a founding member of Wadō, long-term and short-term members, and an individual deeply involved with Nataka Toshia. These stories are diverse, reflecting multiple experiences and backgrounds while showing deep commitments to the performance practices and communities they discuss.

Stylistically, the transcreations for each chapter are also different from one another. Each was an experiment. In Chapters 1, 3, and 4, the transcreations are nearly entire interviews that explore narrators' experiences and reflections that are both related and unrelated to the material they follow. Chapter 2, in contrast, features a transcreation that relates directly with the topics in the chapter and is significantly shorter than the others. Chapter 5 is not necessarily a transcreation, but a moment in my interview with Marcela that I wanted to highlight and give the last word. Unlike Sebe's transcreations, I (sometimes minimally) maintain my own voice in the texts I present, to remind the reader that the interview is a co-creation between interviewer and interviewee. I want the reader to know that as an interviewer and a writer, I am moving the interview in certain

directions, even as I strive to give interviewees autonomy to speak about whatever themes they feel are important to their life histories. Ethnographers are not neutral even when we try to be. I also use different fonts to represent each interviewee to remind the reader visually that the emphasis of the text is not on my words, but the words of the interviewees who are also different from one another.

I also wanted to explore using extended interview segments alongside my own writing because of ethical and theoretical considerations. Many ethnographers and oral historians have emphasized that research is inherently collaborative and the result of multiple people, experiences, voices, and opinions. Oral histories are a co-creation and an “intersubjective,” encounter where “the self constitutes the other,” and where the interviewer and narrator interact to produce the interview (Passerini 2007, 3–5; Abrams 2016). By including extended interviews after my own writing, I wanted to experiment with reflecting these collaborations and intersubjectivities in the text of the dissertation. Because the many interviews in this dissertation were so rich, I often felt that this project was not entirely “mine,” and I wondered, as many researchers wonder, what right I had to cut pieces of interviews and rearrange them to support my own arguments.

Transcreations aim to briefly flip the dominance of the voices from author to interviewee, reflecting the shared origins of this project. Moreover, through reading transcreations, I hope that the reader feels more connected to a few of these people through their stories. It is my goal that the interviewee’s words will stand front and center, telling their own stories and creating their own arguments.

About “You”

I briefly want to address the use of second person narrative in this dissertation. I was inspired by Wong’s beautiful use of second person narrative in her work on North American taiko (2004). Her gorgeous descriptions made me feel immersed in her work. Sometimes it made me feel as if I were walking into a place, holding bachi in my hands, and participating with my body. I discuss mirror neurons in Chapter 5, and I can say that reading words in second person makes my mirror neurons fire more than when reading in first or third person. Reading an account in second person can be immersive. It can indicate the possibility of the reader being involved in the world of the words on paper or screen.

I have also noticed the use of second person in interviews and in my students’ writing sometimes indicates a distancing of an experience. I play with this here, sometimes switching to second person when an experience was strong or overwhelming. I also preserve the use of second person in interview segments, with phrases like, “you know?” inviting the reader to experience, agree, and disagree.

Website

Ethnographers, especially ethnomusicologists, do research in sensory-rich environments where bodies live, move, and sweat. We often work in noisy and sometimes crowded spaces, paying attention to sound and sound-body relationships. Using cameras and recording equipment, we document the public and private spaces of our research, focusing on the voices and movement of human and non-human bodies inhabiting them. However, as Wong points out, we tend to produce text when sharing our

work (Wong 2019, 6). Although writing is primary for a dissertation, I also wish to share some of the photos and videos I recorded rather than storing them on a hard drive. Many scholars, aware of the limitations of text, have been sharing audiovisual content for many years by including audio CDs and video DVDs with their books (Shelemay 1998; Hahn 2007) or publishing materials on websites (Olsen 2004; Pilzer 2012; Wong 2019). These examples inspired me to create my own website for my research to share color photographs, music tracks, and video examples. Although websites cannot and are not meant to replace the sensory experiences of the places where I researched, they transmit the sound, color, and movement inherent in percussion performance. For those that read the text, they transmit descriptions and analyses of music and movement. You can find the website here: <https://sites.google.com/view/taiko-samba/home>

On Grammar, Romanization, and Terminology

Throughout this dissertation, I retain grammatical uses of Japanese when using Japanese words, such as anime, taiko, and Nikkei. In Portuguese, these words have been adopted into the language and are made plural in everyday speech. When a person used these plural forms of Japanese words in their interviews, such as “Nikkeis” and “animes,” I preserved that to convey a feeling of the Portuguese language to the reader. In my own writing, I preserve the plural form in Japanese, which is the same as the singular.

Further, I want to address a few terms that appear here in both my writing and in interviewees’ words. First, in Brazil, the words “Japanese,” “Nikkei,” “Nipo Brazilian,” “descendant,” and “Japanese Brazilian” were used interchangeably among my interlocutors. This was likely because Japanese Brazilians are often conflated with

Japanese in Brazil (although they were called Brazilians in Japan) due to their phenotype, and because of many Nikkei communities' resistance to Brazilian nationalism. At times, these terms needed context. For example, in one interview, a Nikkei interlocutor made an argument that he was Brazilian and not Japanese, and later, marked "Brazilians" as "others." Many times, I had to ask for clarification about whether an interlocutor was referring to a Nikkei or someone who had arrived from Japan when they told me stories about a "Japanese" taiko player or sensei. Throughout this dissertation, for clarity, I use the term Japanese Brazilian, Nikkei Brazilian, or Nikkei to describe Japanese descendants in Brazil. I do not include the hyphen, following Asian American politics arguing that the hyphen is othering and even limiting. However, when omitting the hyphen is marked as a grammatical error, as in Afro-Bahian or Afro-Brazilian, I use it. At times, I opt to use the Portuguese term Afrobaiano. I use "Japanese" to denote a Japanese person who was not Nikkei and did not have an intention to settle permanently in Brazil or who were unclear about their intentions to stay in Brazil. For those who had an intention to settle in Brazil, I used the term Issei, or "first generation." When quoting interviews, however, I allow certain clarifications to slip, sometimes highlighting when a Nikkei calls non-Nikkei "Brazilian" as a way to other them.

I also quote interlocutors when they use terms that have started to fall into disuse among younger generations, such as "olhos puxados," or pulled eyes. In older writings and conversations among older Brazilians, both Nikkei and non-Nikkei, describing an Asian person as having "olhos puxados" is normal. The youth in Wadō, however, rarely used this term.

I do not use italics for foreign words because I feel it “others” certain languages, separating words that are assumed to be familiar to English readers with those that are not. Italicizing makes judgements about what is “othered” and what can be included in the English language, which I want to avoid. I also find italics distracting; I sometimes “hear” the words I read on the page, and italics sound louder and more emphasized than the other words. They do not fully integrate into the rest of the sentence, further othering non-English words. Finally, unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

Chapter Overview

In Chapter 1, I explore histories of Japanese migration to Brazil and Bahia. I problematize narratives about Japanese emigrating to Brazil because of the abolition of slavery in Brazil and a population explosion in Japan, highlighting other histories, such as the Brazilian government’s project of “whitening” Brazil through immigration and its attempts to occupy land. I explore the role of the Japanese government in sending migrants to Bahia. Throughout this chapter, I weave personal stories with historiography, exploring the idea of Japanese occupying lands that were “abandoned” while also writing about the spaces and places migrants lived and worked in Salvador. I also discuss new forms of migration based on lifestyle considerations, which contextualizes material in later chapters.

Chapter 2 explores the idea of Bahians and non-Nikkei playing taiko, relating ideas of Nikkei as model minorities directly to ideas about Japan in Wadō. I discuss how Wadō members adopted habits considered Japanese, forging relationships with the Nikkei community and engaging in body practices meant to mold Japanese bodies

(Bender 2005). Further, I consider the possibility of a distinctly Brazilian taiko. I contrast narratives from those who want to keep taiko as Japanese and “traditional” as possible, with those who want to mix genres, considering that mixture is part of Brazilian nationalist narratives. Focusing on mixtures between taiko and samba, I explore how performance reconfigures ideas of belonging in Brazil. I argue that performances mixing taiko and Afro-Bahian rhythms challenge the idea of Nikkei as eternal foreigners.

I focus on Nataka Toshia in Chapter 3, examining new kinds of Japanese migration to Brazil and placing the group’s activities into literature on cultural tourism. I analyze narratives from members in 2018, demonstrating that reasons for Japanese playing samba stem from anxiety about loss in Japan because of modernity and Westernization (Ivy 1995). I also relate ideas about cultural appropriation to widespread discourses about Japanese mimicry, and finally, I explore ideas about foreigners belonging (or not belonging) in the Afro-Bahian music scene.

In Chapter 4, I connect consumption of Japanese pop culture in Bahia to taiko practice and LGBTQAI+ identities. I discuss how Japan and Brazil are contradictions when it comes to the safety and rights of sexual minorities, and I argue that Japanese cultural activities, where queer people gathered, was a necessary safe space where they could be “out” without fear of ostracism, disrespect, or violence. First, I discuss how the Japanese government deployed pop culture as part of campaigns to increase its soft power, leading anime to become widespread throughout Brazil and Latin America. I analyze stories from manga and anime that have gender fluid and gay characters, showing how these cultural products normalized same sex partnerships and gender fluidity,

eventually increasing fandom in Bahia among LGBTQAI+ youth. Further, I explore gender roles in Wadō, contrasting it with taiko groups in the South, and finally, I discuss instances of homophobia in Wadō, but also how homophobia is decreasing in the group and in the Nikkei community in Bahia.

Chapter 5 explores peacebuilding and utopian possibilities in taiko, using Wadō as a case study. I explore the relationship between dialogue and bodily practices in Wadō, comparing their practices to dialogue groups in Peace studies literature. I argue that performance allowed members to practice empathy through connecting to one another literally through touch, sound, and mirror neurons. Music practices, in turn, enhanced monthly meetings where members often resolved conflicts through dialogue. Additionally, I argue that performing peaceful relations onstage through pieces such as *Himawari*, which tells a story of peace after war, allowed members to imagine and enact utopias onstage, imagining what peace feels like in everyday life (Dolan 2001).

My research in *Taiko with a Baqueta* is a contribution to music and transnationalism in Brazil, focusing on collaborations between and convergences of Nikkei, Japanese, migrants, tourists, youth, LGBTQ+, and others. I place histories about Japanese migration into broader frameworks about race, class, gender, sexuality, recent migrations, and belonging. My research is ultimately an exploration of outsidership and insidership in communities that are in constant movement and flux. I focus on influences Nikkei had on Brazil and Brazilian youth, and on the hopes and dreams of many who entered other worlds. Longing for otherness and belonging, the limits of belonging, the

creation of new musical initiatives and pieces, and ultimately the peaceful relations between individuals and groups are major themes in this project. It is about utopian possibilities of harmony and union in settings of difference and otherness.

Moreover, my work is a person-centered ethnography in both research and writing. Through highlighting multiple voices, including beginner musicians and experts, I bring forth a plethora of voices that comprise the communities where I worked. By featuring the personal stories of several individuals in transcreations, the writing here is an experiment with collaboration, while revealing the collaborations, showing how ethnography is inherently a shared venture.

Chapter 1: Japan in Bahia

The first Japanese arrived in Juazeiro in 1945 or 46, almost at the same time that the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan. His name was Kanishi Hirata. He lived near Salvador, but then went to Juazeiro. He said that at the time, people there had never seen a watermelon, so he planted them there, and the people were asking what big fruit that was, and then he cut the watermelons in half and the people there said that it was delicious, and it was a huge success. I don't know what year this happened, but I think it must have been fifty years ago since he was the first Japanese to go to Juazeiro. He would walk fifteen kilometers to the market to sell his merchandise every day, and he was one of the pioneers.³

*-Ossamu Ivama, President of
the Japanese Association of
Juazeiro*

Nowadays, people here conflate all Asians. K Pop is confused with J Pop. And then, my face is Asian, and when I go to any rural area, like Tancredo Neves, people stop to stare at me. They pinch me to see if I really exist. There are kids there that have never seen a Japanese person. They yell, "Mom, Dad! There's a Chinese man here." They think I'm Chinese. And they stare. I'm still a rare bird after all these years. The number of Japanese descendants in Bahia is growing, but only by a little.

A really common thing that people say is, "Are you Japanese?"

"I'm Brazilian," I say.

"No, you're not Brazilian." Once in a while, I can talk with people about this. I say, "If I didn't know you, I would say you are African. But you're Brazilian, right? Maybe your great-grandfather was from Angola. But I'm Brazilian. I was born in Brazil." People don't understand this. They say, "You're Japanese. You can't be Brazilian." It's a kind of racism. How can this person be Brazilian and not me?

At the office, the people should know better. They tell me, "Do you practice karate?" I say, "Do you play capoeira?"

"Don't all Japanese people do karate?"

"Oh, I thought that every Bahian does Capoeira." You know? I have all of my responses ready. Because I'm used to it.

"Do you eat sushi every day?" I say, "Do you eat moqueca every day at home?" And people get quiet and look stupid (com cara de bobo) because they know they just said something stupid. And sometimes they say, "It's just a joke." I know it's a joke. But to me, if it's a joke, it's even worse. Because it demonstrates racism. I play with this now because when I was a child, I suffered a lot. When we

³ Ivama, Osamu. Recorded interview with author, Akemi Tahara, and Eduardo Almeida. August 25, 2018. Salvador, Bahia.

*lived in the interior. It's not in every city that there are Japanese people. I was always different. But it's good. I like being different.*⁴

- Hernesto Miyamoto, from Una,
Bahia

In this chapter, I trace the history of Japanese migration to Brazil and the state of Bahia, highlighting personal narratives from migrants and their descendants who live throughout the state. I juxtapose these narratives with secondary sources, reflecting on how narratives on the history of Japanese migration in Brazil reflect ideas about race, Japan, Japanese, and Nikkei in Brazil. I argue that histories of the Japanese migration circulating in Brazil attributing Japanese migration to a population surplus in Japan and empty land and labor shortages in Brazil after slavery was abolished are incomplete and uncritical. Instead, I examine how governments in both Japan and Brazil disseminated discourses about race to encourage Japanese migration for their own purposes. The Brazilian government intended to “whiten” Brazil and occupy land in its territory through migration, and the Japanese government disseminated discourses aiming to increase the Japanese population abroad.

Using frameworks of “phases” of Japanese migration (Saito 1980; Nagatomo 2015), I discuss conditions that migrants faced before, during, and after World War II, highlighting difficulties early migrants in Bahia faced. I also explore recent flows of people to and from Japan, addressing new kinds of transnationalism not always based on economic need, highlighting the stories of shin-Issei, who moved to Brazil after the turn

⁴ Miyamoto, Hernesto. Recorded interview with author. December 15, 2017. Salvador, Bahia.

of the millennium. I show that Japanese and Brazilian Nikkei transnationalism is constant and in flux. Lastly, I discuss population declines in rural Nikkei communities, as well as a perceived decline in Japanese cultural values and practices among young Nikkei in those areas. Discussions of population decline intersect with how Wadō members fulfilled the needs of Nikkei communities in their efforts to “maintain” Japanese culture in Brazil and “not let it die,” which I discuss in the next chapter.

The personal narratives I deploy throughout this chapter begin in the 1950s and both challenge and support official narratives. I am interested how lived stories, alternative histories, personal narratives intersect and conflict with official histories taken for granted. Through these stories, I aim to convey diversity in age, generation, life experience, and identity in the Nikkei community in Bahia and other parts of Brazil. I will draw repeatedly on Hernesto Miyamoto’s memories and personal history because his vivid storytelling of his personal and family histories color to many key historical events discussed in this chapter, such as the end of World War II in the Japanese Asian colonies, Japanese migration within Brazil, the education of young Nikkei in Bahia, and challenges that migrants encountered in rural areas of the state. I met Hernesto when I volunteered to work at the 2017 Festival of Japanese Culture. He was born in Amazonas, and his family migrated to Bahia when he was a child in the 1970s. Through his story and others, I show how the Nikkei I came to know had deep personal and family histories shaped by immigration policies and national needs, and their day to day lives in Brazil.

Japanese Globalization

Histories of Japanese migration directly impact ideas about race, culture, and identity in Brazil. The metanarrative of Commodore Perry sailing into Tokyo harbor in 1843 and demanding the emperor to “open” Japan to trade with the United States often opens stories about Japanese migration to the Americas. It is, however, also the story of Asia as feminine, the West as masculine, and Japan and Japanese, as naturally “closed” and in need of opening for their own good. These ideas, embedded in this metanarrative, undergird race relations in Brazil and stereotypes about Nikkei as closed, quiet, and feminine.

There are, however, alternative histories and lesser-told stories that complicate dominant narratives. Befu, for example, argues that Japan’s globalization began at the same time as Western globalization, at the end of the fifteenth century. At that time, Japanese merchant and pirate ships began to frequent China and Southeast Asia (2002, 5). Comparing Japanese merchant sailors residing in Sakkai with the merchants of Venice, he notes that traders from Japan established coastal communities throughout the region, and the remnants of these settlements still exist today. Diverse groups of people lived in Japantowns (*nihonjingai* or *nihonmachi*) set up as trading networks, including Catholic refugees, masterless samurai, merchants, prostitutes, and sailors that had been blown off course, that Massarella calls effectively a Japanese diaspora (1990, 135; Nagatomo 2015, 48). Befu calls the *sakoku* era that spanned the 1600s-1800s, when trading with Chinese and Dutch was confined to Dejima Island in Nagasaki, a temporary “interruption” in Japanese globalization (2002). Nagatomo, in contrast with dominant

narratives that frame the opening of Japan as triumphant, argues that isolationist policies of the Tokugawa Shogunate benefited Japan, allowing its domestic economy and culture to flourish, and safeguarding the archipelago from Western imperialism (2015, 49–50).

The new Meiji government did not allow its citizens to emigrate until 1885. The first group of Japanese citizens traveled to Hawaii for temporary work on sugar cane plantations following a visit from the Hawaiian King Kalakaua in 1881. Most Japanese who migrated during the late nineteenth century settled in the United States; the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 increased demand for Japanese laborers, with the first Japanese colony in the United States established in 1869 in California. A smaller number migrated to Pacific countries such as Australia⁵ beginning in 1881, and the Philippines in 1903 (Hamano 2019; Goodman 2011).

The first Japanese settlement in Latin America was in Mexico, and it was established before the United States, Canada, and Australia enacted racist policies, such as special taxes, exclusion acts, and alien land laws designed to deprive Asian migrants of legal rights. Takeaki Enomoto, minister of foreign relations for the Meiji government from 1891-93, argued that ideal migrations were permanent and worked to set up a Japanese colony in Mexico to not “lose the opportunity to form bases of colonization in various parts of the world” (Mita 1999, 28). The Japanese government chose land for a Japanese colony in the state of Chiapas in 1893 with the intention of establishing a coffee plantation. In 1895, the first migrants arrived with five-year contracts, but the colony was

⁵ The first official Japanese immigrant to Australia arrived in 1871. Early Japanese immigrants in Australia worked in the pearl and sugarcane industries. Most were impoverished farmers from the Wakayama coast.

abandoned six years later, because of lack of capital, crop failure, and workers fleeing. Nikkei communities in Mexico were established in the following years despite the failure of the first colony, although numbers were small, particularly compared to those of other Latin American countries such as Peru and Brazil. In Latin America, the order of countries that received Japanese migrants after Mexico is as follows: Peru 1899, Chile 1903, Cuba 1907, Argentina 1907, Brazil 1908, Panama 1915, Bolivia 1916, Colombia 1921, Uruguay 1930, Paraguay 1930, Venezuela 1931 (Befu 2002). Japanese settled in Latin America, including Brazil with support from the Japanese government. However, the interests of migrants were not always aligned with the interests of the governments supporting their migration, a common theme in histories of Japanese migration to Brazil and the memories of migrants, including those I interviewed for this project.

Japanese Imperialist Migratory Politics

Nikkei live in Brazil because of governmental policies to serve the needs of Brazil and Japan during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is also noteworthy that Japanese migration to the Americas surged during a period of colonial expansion in Asia, as Lu argues that Japanese emigration and imperialism are deeply intertwined (2019). European settler colonialism and imperial expansion inspired Japanese intellectuals who came to view emigration as a way to expand Japanese territory while “relieving overpopulation” after a population explosion on the archipelago in the late 19th century (Iju Shicho in Mita 30). Shigetaka Shiga, a writer and intellectual at the time, identified three additional reasons for the Japanese government to stimulate emigration: to increase capital for Japanese businesses, since Japanese products would be sent to

places where Japanese migrants would settle; to learn new ways to work in the host country, which would positively influence Japan upon the migrants' return; and to increase recognition of Japan in foreign countries (Ibid., 23).

Overpopulation is cited in most historical summaries as the central reason that Japan sent so many citizens to live and work abroad. Lu, however, argues that the Japanese government “claimed” overpopulation as a reason for emigration, but that overpopulation is much more complex (2019). Rather than finding ways for all Japanese to thrive within the archipelago, the emigration of “surplus people” would do the work of helping the Japanese empire acquire land and increase its wealth during the late 19th and 20th centuries while alleviating social tensions. Possible emigrants were “troublemakers in the overcrowded archipelago” who could be useful subjects who would acquire wealth for Japan abroad (Ibid., 17). These “surplus people” at first were declassified samurai, who had lost all their social and economic status as the Meiji government abolished the Tokugawa political hierarchy, who went to Hokkaido and Manchuria. Later, many emigrants were youth with few opportunities or poor farmers suffering from rural economic depression who went to Latin America (Ibid., 18). Japan’s racial hierarchies did not regard every ethnic group as ideal for migration. Colonial subjects from Taiwan, Korea, and Okinawa, as well as outcast groups such as the burakumin, “were generally excluded from the pool of ideal subjects of emigration” (Ibid., 7).⁶

⁶ Although the Japanese government felt that Okinawans were not ideal migrants, there are many Okinawan communities in the Americas, especially in Brazil. São Paulo has a vibrant Okinawan community (Satomi 1998; L. Mori 2018).

Lu identifies four foundational discourses for Japanese settler colonialism in the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries. First, European ideas about population and land ownership were circulated among Meiji era intellectuals. These included Malthusian theories, which claimed that the land on Earth could only support a finite number of people, coinciding with a population growth of 30 to 40 million people in the span of a decade due to institutionalized hygiene practices and the introduction of modern medicine. Meiji intellectuals, alarmed at this increase, looked to justifications of Western imperial projects in Western literature as models for their own expansionist desires, and in particular, ideas of “reason” and “progress” as justifications for taking Indigenous land. Second, emigration was designed to relieve social tensions and problems such as poverty, economic inequality, and crime that resulted from the introduction of capitalism which created problems of land distribution. Elites viewed these problems as the result of overpopulation.

Third, the Japanese state did not necessarily want to contain population growth domestically. Lu points out that the word used for colonization, *shokumin* (植, *shoku*, to increase, and 民 *min* “people”) literally means to “increase people,” or grow population. Migration was seen as a tool to increase the Japanese population, and the term often appeared with *shokusan* 殖産, meaning to develop the economy, or *takushoku*, combining *shokumin* with *takuchi* 拓地, meaning to explore land (2019, 15). Indeed, the Japanese Meiji government was not interested in curbing the Japanese population, but rather increasing it. Abortion was outlawed during the Meiji era, and midwifery began to be

regulated by the state. The Japanese government only legalized contraception in 1999. Instead, migrants were viewed as a way to increase the Japanese population without having to resolve problems domestically. Further, eugenics was gaining traction in Japan, and migration would strengthen the Japanese empire's "racial stock," with the goal of "aiming to both permanently maintain a high birth rate and improve the physical quality of the Japanese population" (Fujime in Lu, 21).

Lastly, European imperialism, British settler colonialism in the United States, and the US's expansion into the American West inspired Japanese expansionists to compete against the US and Britain, creating their own version of settler colonialism. Indeed, the Minister of Foreign Relations from 1891-1892 declared, "At the moment, the main countries in Europe are starting emigration and colonization activities, and through this, they are developing. Our country also needs to adopt these policies and accomplish these activities" (Iju Shicho, no 2, p 3 in Mita, 28).

White Racism, Migration Companies, and Cooperatives: Brazil as an Ideal Destination

Like colonization in parts of Asia, the Japanese government sponsored and subsidized migration to the Americas, as emigration benefited the nation. Mita traces subsidized migration to Japanese laborers in Hawaii who worked temporarily on sugar cane plantations and bought imported Japanese products and sent money to Japan. The Japanese government noticed that it economically benefitted Japan, where the "success of the migrants exceeded the expectations of the Japanese government. In one year, \$700,000 were sent to Japan, and Japanese exports also increased due to the necessity of Japanese products" (Iju Shicho no 4 in Mita 23). As a result, the Japanese government

began to play a major role in placing migrants outside of Japan, often sponsoring migration, looking for land to set up “colonies”, and even creating guidebooks orienting emigrants about the places they planned to travel.

At first, private Japanese emigration companies, which proliferated in the mid 1890s, experimented with ways to support emigration and colonization in Asia, Hawaii, and North America under the supervision of, and with support from the Japanese government (Dezem 2011; Lu 2019, 150).⁷ The Tokyo Syndicate, one of the first companies to support migrants to Brazil, negotiated directly with the São Paulo state government, who paid a part of the migrants’ passage. The other part was paid for by coffee plantation owners who would take the price of the ticket from the migrants’ salaries.

As migration benefitted the Japanese government, and later, empire, the Japanese government began to subsidize migration directly. Maekawa notes that the Japanese government began to subsidize emigration directly in 1926, although Lu identifies the date even earlier as 1923 through the Ministry of Home Affairs, resulting in a surge of Japanese migrants from 1926-1935 (1999; 2019). In 1928, the Japanese government encouraged each prefecture to begin migration programs and build communities abroad.

At first, Japanese intellectuals and officials viewed the American West as the ideal place for Japanese emigrants. Japanese labor emigration provided migrants with employment opportunities on the US west coast, as in Hawaii. Later, the Japanese

⁷ Numbers of companies actually diminished during the first decade of the twentieth century because of complaints to the Japanese government regarding dishonest promises made to migrants, as well as the restriction of numbers of Japanese immigrants in North America (Dezem 2011, 4).

government invested in a model of farmer migration, which would also provide opportunities for migrants to work on and own land. After a tour of the Gulf Coast in 1902, two Japanese businessmen, Saibara Seito and Kishi Kichimatsu, successfully set up rice colonies in Texas, bringing their families and other tenant farmers with them, and later helping other Japanese citizens establish rice farms in the state until the rice market collapsed after World War II. White racism, however, alarmed Japanese officials and stopped plans for other Japanese to emigrate to the United States. Racist policies included the California Alien Land Law of 1913, which barred Asians from owning land, laws declaring Asians ineligible for citizenship, and the Gentlemen's Agreement, which effectively closed the US to Japanese migration in 1907. Australia's "White Australia" policy, similarly, forbade Asian and Pacific Islanders from migrating to Australia starting in 1901.

As a result, the Japanese government began to look to Latin America as a solution to accommodate its "surplus population." Brazil became an ideal destination because of policies designed to populate rural areas. In the years before the first Japanese migrants arrived in Brazil, other Japanese officials were working to establish a class of land-owning farmers rather than contract laborers. In 1908, the government of São Paulo donated 50,000 hectares of land in the Iguapé region of the state to the Tokyo Syndicate. Racist laws making citizenship and thus land ownership impossible in the United States had made the Japanese government realize how important land ownership was for permanent settlement, so they took advantage of Brazilian laws providing subsidies and land grants in order to introduce agricultural settlers who would fulfill the federal

government's mandate of occupying "empty" areas of the national territory. The Tokyo Syndicate, in return, was obligated to bring 2,000 families to the area within four years to work on the land, although all but three of the families brought to the region came from the city of Sao Paulo who had previously worked on coffee plantations (Dezem 2011, 8; Lu 2019, 170). The company passed the lands to the Brasil Takushoku Kaisha (Company of Brazilian Colonization), and later, it acquired more lands in the region of Gipovura, which was named Katsura Colony after the prime minister who had encouraged emigration to Brazil. Other successes followed, with the company acquiring lands in the Registro region, recruiting 99 families in 1917 and 150 families in 1918 to work on the land.⁸ Japanese migration to Brazil was supported by private companies acting in their own interests. In the early years of migration to Sao Paulo state, the support the migrants received contributed to their success. Their success contrasts with other racial groups in Brazil that did not receive the same support, putting forth ideas about Japanese migrants as hard-working model minorities. Moreover, the relative isolation of the colonies described above contributed to ideas about Nikkei communities as "closed" and Nikkei as eternal foreigners.

⁸ Like other regions, which I discuss below, not all the land that the Brazilian government sold to Japanese settlers was "empty." An article published on the website of the National Diet Library of Japan states the following about the history of the Registro region in São Paulo state: "the land which the (Brazil Colonization) Company had believed to be unsettled (state-owned) was found to actually include privately held land and land occupied by prior settlers, therefore it took time and patience to clear encumbrances of the land" ("Chapter 3 Establishment of Japanese Settlements (2) | 100 Years of Japanese Emigration to Brasil" n.d., 3).

Because of the success of migration companies in acquiring land for Japanese owner-farmers, Japanese governmental officials began to promote immigration to Brazil because of its “vast land.” Japanese intellectuals published magazine articles reporting that North America was populated by white racists and Manchuria by Chinese bandits (Lu 2019, 197). In contrast, the Natives in Brazil were “few in number and docile” (Ibid.). Brazil was so “ideal” that the Japanese government began to pay the steamship fare and handling fees for Brazil-bound migrants. In 1932, it started paying start-up funds for them. It also halved the train fare for migrants to make their way to ports of exit from their prefectures.

The Japanese government also presented itself as a contrast to White racist governments in Europe and North America. In the 1920s and 30s, Aliança, a land area in São Paulo state, became the first Japanese colony in Brazil established under the principle of “coexistence and coprosperity,” which was a counterpoint to Western Imperialism. The Japanese government’s mission was to bring peace and happiness to the world, but also justified Japanese expansion. Aliança was established through a cooperative model, where migrants would move and resettle in groups with others from the same prefectures. Overseas organizations from Tottori, Toyama, and Kumamoto prefectures acquired land adjacent to Aliança to establish their own farmer cooperative colonies (220). The Imperial government passed laws to facilitate the formation of Overseas Migration Cooperative Societies in each prefecture. Agricultural cooperatives began to be formed in Japanese settlements in the late 1920s and 1930s, as the Consulate General of Japan in São Paulo encouraged the formation of cooperatives on a model of agricultural

cooperatives in Japan and provided grants for forming them. In 1927, the Cotia Cooperative was formed to organize potato producers in Cotia, near São Paulo city, and sell their products at a higher price. The Cotia Cooperative later acquired lands throughout Brazil and focused on organizing Japanese Brazilian farmers throughout Brazil, eventually operating in the state of Bahia beginning in the 1970s. In Brazil, ideas about Japan as organized and Japanese as community-focused is closely related to the government's efforts to sponsor migration and support cooperative models.

"Whitening" Brazil

Japanese migration not only benefitted the Japanese government. It also contributed to Brazilian governmental policies to occupy land and render it productive for agriculture in rural areas of the country. Moreover, to some Brazilian elites, Japanese migrants contributed to the "whitening" of Brazil. The foundation of immigration to Brazil was anti-Black racism. In the middle of his interview, Hernesto Miyamoto, who I introduce at the beginning of this chapter, told me, "The majority of people who came to Brazil came to do agriculture. Many went to cities and did other things, but the immigration was agricultural. It was because Brazil needed agricultural workers to substitute [for] slaves. You know that, right?" Indeed, apart from the Brazilian government's push to occupy the national territory through immigration, after the abolition of slavery in 1888, the main motivation for late nineteenth century immigration to Brazil was "cheap and good" immigrant labor to satisfy São Paulo's elite coffee plantation owners (Petri 2005; Dezem 2011). Abolition had already started by the mid-nineteenth century through earlier laws such as the 1850 Eusébio Queiroz law that

prohibited the traffic of slaves to Brazil and the Free Womb Law of 1871, also known as the Rio Branco law, which gave freedom to newborn children of enslaved people.

The Brazilian government, however, did not grant the same rights to the formerly enslaved as they would to immigrant laborers. Nascimento argues that “Blacks were literally expelled from the system of production as the country approached the ‘abolitionist’ date” (1980, 149). Severe underemployment and semi-employment became a reality for Afro descendants and continues into the present day. Santana Filho et al. argue that immigration politics was one of the first steps in the project of constructing Brazil as a nation with Eurocentric values (2013). The decision to bring in immigrant workers is directly related to the political view of Africans and their descendants as members of an inferior race (Ibid.). African descendants could not be a part of a system where labor would become paid, and labor rights part of the nation state (Ibid.). The authors highlight the Brazilian Land Law of 1850 as a principal factor that impeded the emergence of an economic system capable of absorbing formerly enslaved people as free laborers. The law would not recognize land acquired through occupation, making purchase from the state the only means of acquiring lands, effectively disenfranchising quilombolas, or communities of escaped slaves and freed people who lived and worked on the land. The law ended the possibility of future recognition of freed people to have access to land and the legalization of quilombolas. As Santos writes, the law was designed so that freed slaves, without the means to purchase land, “would have to continue working in the plantations for their masters, who were also free of having to maintain slaves,” that is, house, clothe, and feed those working on their lands (1994, 7).

Instead, Brazilian landowners brought immigrants to work on the land, first prioritizing European immigrants starting with those from Italy with Spain, Germany, and Portugal following.

Lesser's detailed historiography on immigration in Brazil follows discourses on race among Brazilian elites, who viewed national identity as a Black-White continuum (1999). He traces immigration to influences from European eugenicists and 19th century Brazilian elites sought to bring "pure" European immigrants to labor on Brazilian plantations to "whiten" and "de-Africanize" Brazil. Beginning in the 1870s, Brazilian landowners encouraged the government to prioritize European immigrants. Brazilian planters, however, were disappointed with their European replacements for slaves and experienced labor shortages, as "European wage laborers were neither economically cheap nor socially servile" (Lesser 1999, 12). Also, because of exploitation, poor working conditions, and practices of selling land to immigrants at excessively high prices, which sent immigrants back to Europe with debt, Germany outlawed migration to Brazil in 1859, Italy in 1902, and Spain in 1910, increasing the need for migrants from other countries (R. B. Santos 1994, 13, 24).

Lesser argues that non-European migration in Brazil challenged the Brazilian elite's ideas about national identity as a Black and White continuum, bringing 19th and 20th century Middle Eastern, Jewish, and Asian migrations into focus and into conversation with elite discourses on race (1999). Some feared "social pollution," while others were enthusiastic about the influx of a "servile yet nonslave class" that could be deployed to "de-Africanize Brazil" (Lesser 1999, 14). Abolitionists were worried about

the creation of a new slave class, and pro-Asian intellectuals argued that Chinese were of the same racial groups as Indigenous people at a time when the figure of the “Indian” was becoming important to an emerging national identity.⁹ Despite several visits from Chinese officials, companies set up to encourage Chinese labor in Brazil, and laws redacted that prohibited Chinese immigration to Brazil, relatively few Chinese laborers actually arrived in Brazil. Debates about Asians, however, impacted future Japanese migrants, as these arguments laid the groundwork for thinking about the influx of populations who were neither black nor white. Debates about whether Asian immigrants could be considered “White” or rather, a third racial group preceded the arrival of Japanese in Brazil, who met “a language of both inclusion and exclusion in place” (Lesser 1999, 38).

Debates about how Asian migrants would impact race in Brazil continued as diplomatic relations opened between Brazil and Japan during the Meiji era. As Japan was becoming increasingly powerful and influential, intellectuals promoted it as a “white” country, contrasting it with China and other Asian countries, which piqued the interest of Brazilian elites (Lesser 1999, 152). Racist discourses and warnings of a “yellow peril,” however, continued in popular discourse (Ibid.). Later, Japanese laborers, like Europeans, did not meet the expectations of landowners. Many escaped plantations and poor working

⁹ Poetry, romance novels, and operas telling the story of Brazil as a mixture of European and Native were created in the 19th century in spite of Brazil being founded on the removal of Indians. Many of these works are currently required reading in Brazilian high schools. *Iracema*, a novel published in 1865 tells the story of an Indigenous woman, Iracema, who falls in love with Martim, a Portuguese colonist. Their son is the “first Brazilian,” and Iracema dies at the end. *O Guarani*, by the same author, tells the story of Peri, a Guaraní Indigenous man described as “ignorant” and a “slave friend” saves the life of Ceci, a woman he serves, by becoming Christian. An opera by the same name was composed later during a period of music seeking to establish Brazilianness in musical works.

conditions. Moreover, the Japanese government protected Japanese migrants, who, as discussed earlier, became owner-farmers, and independent of the Brazilian landowning elite. Nikkei I spoke with during my research were aware of how structures provided by the Japanese and Brazilian governments and private companies supported Japanese migration to varying degrees. One, who had traveled to Japan and received scholarships from the Japanese government, told me that he was aware of Japan's ongoing interests in supporting Brazilian Nikkei for its own purposes. "The Japanese government did not help Nikkei so much just to be 'good' (bonzinho). It was interested in money and land." Another told me that Japan was small and was interested in food production on a scale not possible there, so Brazilian migration supported agricultural endeavors. Some Nikkei compared their situations in Brazil to those of other groups, implying and sometimes claiming that declaring "personal responsibility" was at the root of Black poverty. However, Fuuka Sunano, a young Nikkei feminist and activist, emphasized the difference between the situations of Japanese migrants and other migrant groups at the turn of the 20th Century.¹⁰ She criticized the idea that Afro-descendants had the same opportunities as Nikkei. "It's a false comparison," she said, deeply aware of unequal histories.

Phases of Migration: Migrants' Experiences

Hiroshi Saito's historiographic work on Japanese migration to Brazil is useful for this chapter because he differentiated three phases of migration based on distinctive conditions and migrant experiences in the following time periods: Pre-World War II, Post

¹⁰ Sunano, Fuuka. Recorded interview with author. September 10, 2017. Pituba, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

World War II, and the 1960s-1980s, when temporary migrants from Japanese companies traveled to Japan. I outline histories of Japanese migration to Brazil and Bahia during these three periods, highlighting differences between the state of Bahia and the rest of Brazil. I weave personal histories into official histories, highlighting the uniqueness of Nikkei experiences in Bahia.

Pre-WW2 Migration

The first phase of Japanese migration to Brazil took place before World War II from 1908-1941, when about 190,000 Japanese migrants arrived in Brazil. The largest number of migrants arrived between 1926 and 1935, with more than 133,000 migrants arriving around this time (Saito 1980, 83). In the 1930s, more Japanese citizens arrived in Brazil than any other immigrant group. This phase was characterized by agricultural work, originally in coffee plantations in São Paulo and Paraná, although some migrants also went to the Amazon region to set up agricultural communities. Migrants from rural communities in Japan with agricultural expertise predominated.

Japanese immigration was restricted to families of at least three people during this time, per laws imposed by the state of Sao Paulo. The reason for this was related to the idea that at least three people would be able to work, rather than anti-miscegenation laws, as in the case of the United States. Therefore, it was common for people to “form” families with members of extended families and children of family friends who traveled as an “official” nuclear family.

Saito argues that migration during this phase was characterized by an assumption that it would be temporary. While the Japanese government pushed for permanent

migration, migrants who expected that they could easily return to Japan planned to work in Brazil temporarily in order to accumulate money. Many Nikkei in Brazil that I met verified Saito's assertion, telling me that their parents and grandparents planned to return to Japan. "In the early days of immigration, it was like being a *dekassegui*," or guest worker, who would work in Brazil temporarily to earn money. *Dekassegui*, which translates literally as "migrant worker," or "economic nomad" was a term that was originally applied to farmers from rural areas who traveled to cities during the winter in search of work in factories and would return home in the springtime.

Hernesto Miyamoto told me, "People thought they were going back to Japan" like *dekassegui*. According to Saito, socio-economic success turned the migration to permanent, with migrants abandoning original plans of returning. However, many Nisei and sansei told me that their grandparents dreamed about returning to Japan but passed away without returning, and many, due to poor economic conditions, were unable to return.

Lesser notes that working conditions were difficult and salaries on the coffee plantations were low, and many immigrants felt tricked by emigration companies who facilitated their move to Brazil. Many escaped exploitative plantation labor by moving to urban areas, or by moving into underdeveloped areas of São Paulo state to form their own "colonies" (1999: 89). Lu notes that Japanese laborers never earned enough money to return to Japan, but instead were forced to focus on improving their conditions in Brazil. Since many had experience in agriculture, they bought small plots of land while working

on coffee plantations and produced crops such as rice and cotton, and they were able to save money almost immediately from their wages.

The Brazilian government tried twice to send Japanese and Nikkei migrants to the state of Bahia before World War II (Maekawa 1991). In 1937, five families from São Paulo and Pará went to Simões Filho, North of Salvador, to inhabit and cultivate the land, but due to an outbreak of malaria, only one family remained. Other families arrived in the area in the following years, but the numbers remained small. In 1939, a community called Núcleo Gustavo Dutra was established inland with the goal of cultivating tomatoes, peppers and cabbage. Very few workers stayed on the land long term due to the expropriation of lands by the Brazilian government during World War II.

World War 2 and its Aftermath

In the 1940s, migration from Japan halted due to Brazil's alliance with the United States during World War II, even though the Vargas government had been sympathetic to Nazi Germany before Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor. Diplomatic relations between Brazil and Japan ended, and the Japanese language was essentially outlawed in Brazil: speaking Japanese, possessing books in the Japanese language, and Japanese language newspapers were outlawed during these years. While the Nikkei community was shielded from racist policies such as incarceration and deportation as in the United States, Canada, and Peru, many suffered as communication with relatives in Japan was cut off (Masterson and Funada-Classen 2003, 136). In São Paulo, some Nikkei who were children during the war told me that they blamed Brazilian laws for their inability to speak Japanese and connect with others in their communities. Japanese language schools were also closed

during this time, and rituals such as singing the Japanese national anthem at the start of the school day, and bowing to the image of the emperor were prohibited (Matsubara Morales 2009).¹¹ Ossamu Ivama, who was born in São Paulo and moved to Bahia as a child, told me:

I don't know how to speak or write Japanese. I only know how to write my name badly. I put my grandson to study Japanese. I was born in '42, and the war ended in '45 and I wasn't allowed to speak Japanese. It was prohibited during that time, so the school was also halted.

After the War, the Japanese Brazilian community experienced internal turmoil incited by the Shindo Renmei, an ultranationalist secret society who believed that Japan had won World War II, and that the news reports that Japan lost the war were a conspiracy propagated by the United States and the Vargas government. Violence between the kachigumi (those who believed Japan won the war) and makegumi (those who believed Japan lost the war) resulted in 23 deaths, 150 wounded, 381 prison sentences, and the deportation of 80 members of the Shindo Renmei (Morais 2000).¹²

Post-World War II: 1953-1962

The second phase of migration included families who came to Brazil “animated by their intention to stay permanently” (Saito 1980, 83). Saito argues that the second phase of migration, or postwar migration of Japanese citizens to Brazil, included

¹¹ Before the war, the Japanese language was treated as a “mother tongue” to students, as it was taught in Japanese colonies in “community schools,” or full-time schools with instruction in Japanese. After the war, Japanese was treated as a heritage language, with classes taking place on Saturdays or after Brazilian school. Books and other didactic materials were developed in Brazil by various organizations active in Brazil (Matsubara Morales 2009).

¹² This story, although it involved a relatively small number of members of the Nikkei community, is highlighted in most summaries of the history of the Japanese presence in Brazil, showing its impact and possible collective trauma. It was also highlighted in a work of literary journalism and a resulting movie.

individuals who were colonists in the Japanese empire. This was the case of Hernesto Miyamoto's family on his mother's side who migrated to the Amazonian region after the war. He told this story about his family and their migration:

My mother always tells this story. My grandfather has never said anything about it, but my mother was born in the Philippines. He was an agricultural worker there. When my mother was two years old, I think the United States started to retake Japanese territory. So my mother and my grandmother had to leave everything behind. They had to flee. My mother was very small. And girls weren't very valuable, and it was difficult to flee with a young child. So what they did at the time was that they would pay Japanese soldiers to kill children so that the native people wouldn't take them. So my grandfather contracted the soldier to kill my mother, but the person he contracted was killed in fighting. So my grandfather said, "I'm not leaving my daughter alone." And with her, he went back to Japan. They stayed a while. My mother went to school. They were probably there for about five years. And while he was in the Philippines, he lost all of the land belonging to his family. He started fighting with his brothers. He realized he didn't have anything so he went to Brazil, to Pará.

Lu argues that Japanese settler colonialism with Malthusian justifications reemerged in the postwar era. Reviewing a postwar era pamphlet on migration, the Japanese government lamented overpopulation in Japan and contrasted the crowded archipelago with the vast and empty spaces of the Americas. Emigration was especially a solution for second and third sons who had no claim to family land, as in Miyamoto's family (Lu 2019, 238).

Saito highlights Cotia-Seinen, a group of young people that went to work in post-war agricultural cooperatives around the country through the Cotia cooperative. Migration began to decline in the 1960s due to growing industrialization in Japan. Many migrants went to isolated communities throughout Brazil, and some moved around before settling in one area, at times due to precarious living conditions (Saito 1980, 84).

The history of the second wave of migration coincides with the start of Japanese migration to Bahia, which began in 1953 with a surge of agricultural workers arriving to produce food on “unproductive” land. Japanese Brazilians began to organize and come together to engage in activities such as Obon festivals, undokai (sports days), and other events at Japanese schools through Japanese Brazilian Associations in their communities. Later, the organizations united and became the Federation of Japanese Brazilian Associations of Bahia, which began as a way to help young people from Japanese colonies attend schools in the city. Common themes in the history of Japanese migration to Bahia included agriculture, the movement of young Japanese engineers to Brazil through the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), difficulty for early migrants because of lack of infrastructure (roads, housing, running water, electricity), and failure to make many of the communities permanent.

Japanese Migration to Bahia in the “Second Phase”

The Association and the Federation: Japanese Colonies in Salvador and Bahia

The second wave of Japanese migration in Bahia coincides with the memories of many Nikkei I met in Bahia and saw the construction of spaces where many work to sustain Japanese language and culture in Bahia. The building where the young people from the Japanese colonies in Bahia lived and studied is in use today as a Japanese school and administrative offices of the Nipo Brazilian Association of Salvador, the Federation of Japanese Associations in Bahia, and the Japanese Consulate. If you didn’t know to look for it, you wouldn’t notice these buildings. You may expect to see a huge and beautiful sign in Japanese calligraphy and matching Portuguese text marking the place,

like many kenjinkai, or regional associations you can visit in São Paulo, but instead, there is a ten-foot-high white wall with circular barbed wire at the top which prevents you from seeing inside. There is a No Parking sign, a buzzer, and “104-E” attached to a metal gate that blends in with the wall. When you ring the buzzer on a weekday morning, you’re asked to state your name, who you came to see, and why you came to see them, before waiting a while until someone buzzes you in.

On Saturdays, however, the center teems with Japanese language students, and a man with a scowl on his face who is sinking into a white plastic chair will open the door for you without any questions and reluctantly wish you a good morning if you wish him a good morning first. The driveway packed with teachers’ cars spreads out in front of you, and to your left, there is a thin pitanga tree. You can pick the pintangas off the tree and eat them, but you do so stealthily because you’ve never seen anyone else do that. The children’s classroom is closest to the entrance, and inside, you see colorful books and decorations on the wall, explaining colors, numbers, and seasons in nihongo. If you visit in the month of June, July, or August, you might see a group of students and teachers practicing Bon Odori dances in a courtyard. Sometimes you see children line up to get a drink of water after practicing taiko on tires and learning to bow to an imaginary audience.

The second building in the compound is three stories high, and it belongs to the Federation of Japanese Associations in Bahia, the organization that unites the Japanese Associations in cities across the state. The building has a kitchen with two refrigerators stuffed with food and condiments. Sometimes members sell pasteis (fried pastries filled

with meat and cheese) and yakissoba noodles to the Japanese language students who eat in the nearby meeting room at a long white plastic table in front of a white board and more stacked white plastic tables and chairs. Elders often gather in that room to play mahjong after the Japanese language lessons are over. The entire place is breezy and cool with shiny tile floors and bare white walls that echo.

On the second floor, there are classrooms with dusty shelves and books neatly lined up and bathrooms with showers, and at the top of the building, there is a small makeshift auditorium with mattresses stacked in the back corner, far away from the stage. I couldn't figure out why there were showers and mattresses in a building designated for a weekend Japanese school, but in the 1970s through the 1990s, the building was a dormitory for Issei and Nisei youth to study in the city, since some of their rural communities didn't have high school or even junior high. Hernesto Miyamoto tells me that the structure was the "home of Japanese students" and in fact, *his* home while he was in high school and college. He told me:

It was built with funds from the Japanese government. The idea was that children of Japanese migrants who lived in rural areas (interior) didn't have a way to send their children to the city to study because they didn't have funds to rent an apartment. And it was expensive to send their children alone, especially if they didn't have any relatives in the city. So they constructed that residence. It had a capacity of 30 people, 15 boys and 15 girls, more or less. Each room had two bunk beds, four people. Collective showers and bathrooms. Cold showers. There was no hot water. There was never hot water. Always cold water. And there was a person, a man and then a woman that took care of us 30 kids. Young men and women, adolescents. And we had a maid who cooked and another that cleaned, but that got expensive, so we ended up doing the cleaning ourselves. We said, "everyone has to clean."

Apart from everyone having to clean their own room, we divided everyone into two shifts with teams of four. Depending on how many people we had either three or four teams. So you ended up cleaning once a month, but you had to clean three

times per week. The girls swept and the boys dusted. This was the division. Or vice versa, so you had to coordinate with the other team. And you had to clean the bathroom, throw out the trash. And on the weekends, we didn't have a cook, so you had to cook. Usually, the girls would cook, and the boys would buy bread for everyone. It was a lot of bread. And everyone had to wash their own clothes. There wasn't a machine. We would all wash our clothes by hand in tank in the back yard.

But it was fun. A lot of fun. We had people of all levels, from elementary school to those who were studying to get into the university.

The Federation structure, which began to support young people from rural cities, unites Japanese colonies and Associations in Una, Ituberá, Juazeiro, Barreiras, Juscelino Kubitscek (JK), Luís Eduardo Magalhães, Posto de Mata, Salvador, Taperoá, and Teixeira de Freitas. All of these colonies, with the exception of Salvador, were created as agricultural communities.

Early Communities in the 1950s and 60s

Nikkei I met whose families had migrated in the 1950s shared memories of the early days of migration, confirming Maekawa's historiography. The first Japanese group of Japanese migrants who formed lasting colonies arrived in Bahia in 1953, aboard the *Amerika Maru* (Maekawa 1991, 25). The Japanese government paid for their tickets as a loan which was later forgiven. As part of their contracts, they had to stay in Brazil for at least three years, with three members of each family working. Further, they had to have five years of experience in agriculture, although most of them had experience working on small plots rather than the big farms, which may have contributed to "unsucces" (Ibid., 31).

They set up a colony in Santo Antônio da Barra do Una, near the Southern coast in an area known for its Cacao cultivation. There were 38 families, with fifteen traveling

to other areas of the country after three months. Those that stayed planted cacao, rubber, rice, fruits, and vegetables (Ibid.). Two more colonies followed shortly thereafter: Ituberá, in the same year, with 15 families from Una, and Juscelino Kubitschek (JK) in Mata de São João in 1956, also located near the coast, with 172 families.^{13 14} All three of these communities were created by the Bahian government with the objective to develop “unproductive and abandoned areas” (Ibid., 25).

The idea of “unproductive areas” was a common theme in many of the interviews with sons and daughters of Japanese migrants who settled in Bahia, and in particular these communities. Many told me about the difficulty of moving into areas with no electricity, water, housing, roads, schools, or social services. Ikuku Sasaki Britto, who arrived at the age of 7 in the colony of Juscelino Kubitschek, remembered that there was very little infrastructure upon her arrival (Figure 1). “There was nothing, nothing, nothing. We had to open the forest to build our house,” she said.¹⁵

Nobutoshi Yamaguchi¹⁶, who also migrated from Japan to JK, said that his earliest memories of the colony were difficult:

¹³ Brasil notes that JK was the first to benefit from both state and federal policies with the goal of creating a “green belt” around the city of Salvador to meet food demands of the city and surrounding areas by introducing both Brazilian and Japanese agricultural workers (Brasil 2004).

¹⁴ The growth of the population of JK was gradual and eventually was one of the early colonies with the largest population. According to Maekawa, the first migrants arrived in 1956. More arrived in '58, '59, and '60. From 1959-62, 117 Japanese families came from the Dominican Republic, which was categorized as a “failed” migration, and the Japanese government publicly apologized to the emigrants (Fujikuro and Funaki in Maekawa, 31).

¹⁵ Sasaki Britto, Ikuku. Recorded interview with author. November 29, 2017 in Salvador, Bahia.

¹⁶ Survey developed by Akemi Tahara. August 2018. JK, Bahia.

When we arrived, there was nothing like running water, electricity, telephones, transportation. You had to open a road with access to the lots, and it took a long time to get a stove, refrigerator, and kerosene. It was like we were in the Meiji era. We missed the food that we were used to. We were afraid of the wild animals, shocked at the hot climate, that lack of conveniences in transportation, leisure, and we had to get used to not having electric light.... We also felt the lack of communication from Japan. Letters would take a long time to arrive. But we also liked to ride horses, and we were curious about the tropical fruits and Portuguese language.



Figure 1: Family photos of Japanese migrants in Colônia JK in the 1950s

Photos from Ikuku Sasaki Britto. Left, with her family before leaving Japan, and right, with her mother and sister in front of their home in the JK colony, years after “opening the forest” to build it.

The lack of infrastructure was also felt by internal Nikkei migrants. Hernesto Miyamoto was born in the Amazonian the state of Pará, but moved to Ituberá on the Southern coast of Bahia as a child because of a virus that was killing his family’s main

crop, pepper (pimenta do reino).¹⁷ His father and uncle said, “Let’s leave. Let’s look for somewhere else to plant pepper. So we came to Bahia, to Ituberá.” He continued:

I remember coming to Bahia. I was four years old. I remember because we came by plane. My father had money at the time because he had just sold his land in Pará. We stopped in Recife, then Salvador. And from Salvador to Ituberá, the roads were bad. So my father rented a teco-teco, a plane with a single engine... I remember flying over the trees, over the jungle.

The lack of infrastructure, however, did not mean “emptiness” or that there was “no one.” Contrasting narratives of emptiness and the “abandonment” of lands, Sasaki Britto said that there were local people, sertanejos, who helped her family.¹⁸ “We ended up hiring workers to help us,” she said, “Sertanejos. Sertanejos. They were strong!” Sasaki remembers the workers helping her brother to learn to eat jackfruit. “The worker showed us what part was actually food.” Another person who lived nearby showed her family where to get fresh water. “We didn’t know where the water was, so a neighbor showed us a stream. There were people living around there.” As a child, she understood that these neighbors were “expelled” from the land. Although she was unsure of these distant memories, Brazil reported that expropriation of lands was part of the establishment of JK (2004, 35). The area, owned by five landowners, with mostly subsistence farming activities, was converted into smaller properties with the goal of commercialization of fruits, vegetables, and flowers through “expropriation” of lands

¹⁷ Pimenta do Reino is a crop that Japanese migrants brought with them to Brazil. Japanese migrants are famous for introducing the crop to the country.

¹⁸ It is not entirely clear if these “sertanejos,” a term that is often translated as a country or rural person, were Black, White, or Indigenous. Considering the histories of slavery, settlement, and Indigenous populations in the region, they were likely multiracial.

(Ibid.). In the South of Bahia, Maekawa reports that before the Japanese “Colonization” in Ituberá, “The area was inhabited by Indians, Portuguese, and Mamelucos,¹⁹ that planted mandioca, coffee, and cacau primitively” (1991, 47).

The Japanese cultivation of land in these early colonies had mixed results. Although the colonos suffered at the lack of infrastructure and being cut off from Japan, many Japanese and Nikkei migrants succeeded in agriculture. In Una and Itubera, community members organized and joined with agricultural Cooperatives based in the South of Brazil. In 1974, they convinced the government to construct a major highway, BR101, and then became one of the largest producers of papaya in the state (Ibid, 52).

Third Phase of Japanese Migration: 1963-1980s

During the Brazilian military dictatorship and during a period of industrialization and economic success in Japan, Saito argued that the decline of agricultural immigration gave way to a Japanese immigration characterized by a “capital-technological-business trinity” where investments and business transfers to Brazil by Japanese companies brought more than 300 Japanese companies to Brazil between 1969-1973, a period of economic growth called the “Brazilian miracle” (84). After the 1973 oil crisis, the government sponsored projects and exchange programs “giving way to a form of exchange between the two countries that had never been seen before” (Ibid.). According to Saito, community cohesion was not as much of a characteristic during this phase as much as others due to the temporary nature of the migrations. Corporate workers, who

¹⁹ In Brazilian Portuguese, a person who is part Native and part European.

came to work in white collar jobs rather than in agriculture, stayed in Brazil for only a few years before returning to Japan.

In Bahia, interviewees from the “second phase” of migration told me about acting as culture brokers for migrants from the “third phase of migration.” Ikuku Sasaki reported that her family, who had immigrated to Japan to work in agriculture in the 1950s, benefitted from the wave of temporary workers in Japan when her older siblings began working for Japanese companies who had set up branches of their companies in Camaçari. As the youngest sibling, she also wanted to contribute to the family income. “I taught Portuguese to housewives. I also accompanied them and translated when they had to go to the doctor or dentist. So, I made a little business with that,” she said.

Shigeki Nishimoto told me about class-conscious interactions between the children of Japanese businessmen and the children of colonos, such as himself. Nishimoto’s family was from Una. Nishimoto said that the children of the Japanese businessmen were “elites.” There were two *seinenkai* in the Japanese colony during the 1980s: one consisting of the children of the “elites” who could afford more expensive excursions, and the other made up of children who had left home to pursue high school in the city, who lived in the dorms together.

In the state of Bahia, however, the “second phase” of migration, characterized by agricultural work, a “spirit of colony,” and plans to stay in the area and set up communities for the long term did not end in the 1960s. Instead, agricultural migration both from Japan and from other regions of Brazil, such as São Paulo and Paraná, took place well into the 1980s and 1990s. In 1970, the colony of Taperoá was established and

had considerable success cultivating cacau, latex, clove, and cupuaçu. The influx of Japanese into the Juazeiro-Petrolina area started in 1983 and gave way to the successful cultivation of grapes and other water-intensive crops, as the area is close to a major river, and is often described as an oasis in the middle of a desert.

Migrants to Barreiras, an arid region closer to Brasilia than the capital of Bahia, began to arrive in 1984. “Barreiras used to be part of the Cotia Cooperative,” said Ichiro Sawada,²⁰ a trained agronomist engineer who came to Brazil in 1991 through JICA, eventually settling in Luis Eduardo Magalhães where he was president of the Japanese Brazilian Association of the city. Adilson Suzuki²¹ and his family also settled in Barreras, in the West of the state, around the same time:

I went to Barreiras to work in soy production. My family is from the region of Ribeirão Preto (in São Paulo)... I came in 1987, and I came to benefit the area. I went through a project to develop the Cerrado Brasileiro. This project existed in various regions of Brazil. It was called PRODECER, which is Projeto de Desenvolvimento do Cerrado (Project to Develop the Cerrado region), and it was a cooperation between Brazil and Japan. Half of the funds were from Japan and half from Brazil. This program doesn't exist anymore. It was a project by the Japanese government, and the intention of the Japanese government was to produce food in Brazil because the area in Japan to produce food is very small. I think that even today Japan thinks of producing food in other countries. So, this was an investment that Japan made. And I'm still there! After 31 years, we are still here. The majority of us descendants are from the state of Paraná, although I am from São Paulo.

These programs continued into the 1980s and 1990s. These decades also saw a mass exodus of Japanese descendants from Brazil. They returned to Japan in search of

²⁰ Sawada, Ichiro. Answers to interview questions transmitted via email. January 2019. Part of a larger project supported by CEAO (Centro for Estudos Afro Orientais).

²¹ Suzuki, Adilson. Recorded interview with author, Akemi Tahara, Eduardo Almeida, and Lika Kawano. August 25, 2018. Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. Part of a larger project supported by CEAO (Centro for Estudos Afro Orientais).

work, and this movement affected newly formed colonies in the state of Bahia, which became depopulated because of the dekassegui movement. It also highlighted feelings of being an “eternal foreigner” among these workers and other Nikkei, who reported feeling Japanese in Brazil and Brazilian in Japan.

Dekassegui: Circular Migration, Transnationalism

The experiences of dekassegui complicate and further narratives about belonging and/or not belonging in Brazil and Japan. Since the 1980s-1990s, when Brazilians and other Latin Americans of Japanese descent began to travel to Japan to work in factories, circular migration has become a defining characteristic of Japanese transnationalism in Brazil, with migrants traveling back and forth between the two countries.²² Most Nikkei I spoke with had family members in Japan, with many living in Japan permanently and helping other Nikkei adapt to life in Japan. Due to grim economic prospects in Brazil and opportunities to earn and save comparatively large sums of money in Japan, Brazilian Nikkei were able to obtain visas to work in Japan starting in the late 1970s, and thus relieve labor shortages in the Japanese economy. Known as dekassegui, or guest workers, these Brazilians sent home an average of US\$2 billion every year between 1985 and 1999 (E. Mori 2002). Mori describes Brazilians of Japanese descent as one of Brazil’s most valuable exports, generating an influx of capital on par with coffee and iron ore (ibid, 238). The dekassegui phenomenon is due to profoundly unequal economies in Brazil and Japan. In the mid-1980s, at the start of the phenomenon, Japan was experiencing high

²² There were a small number of Nikkei from other countries such as Peru, Bolivia, and Paraguay who were also dekassegui in Japan.

economic growth and unemployment, but acute labor shortages. In contrast, Brazil was experiencing an economic crisis, where unemployment was at record numbers and inflation was in the triple digits. Japanese Brazilians that Tsuda interviewed would calculate the amount of money they could make in Japan versus Brazil, particularly accounting for the hypervaluation of the yen and the devaluation of Brazilian currency, and eventually make the decision to migrate in spite of difficulties they would face in Japan (1999, 3). Tsuda argues that the relatively privileged position of Nikkei in Brazilian society eventually contributed to their decisions to migrate. He argues, “Because the Brazilian Nikkeijn had enjoyed a comparatively privileged and high standard of living and had developed higher expectations about the quality of life, they were less willing than others to let their deteriorating wages lower their living standards during the economic crisis” (1999, 5). Instead, Brazilian Nikkei often used migration to improve their economic status. Some would invest in “luxury” goods, such as cars and appliances, and others would use their wages to buy homes and start businesses. Tsuda believes that in different circumstances, Nikkei would have migrated to other countries, such as the United States and Canada in response to the economic crisis. However, it is clear that ties to Japan and the ease of travel were great motivations for working in Japan, and these ties did not exist with countries such as the US and Canada.

Governmental policies between Brazil and Japan, as during the early days of migration, contributed to Brazilian Nikkei transnationalism, where Brazilian Nikkei and their families would travel back and forth between Japan and Brazil, or sometimes decide to settle in Japan permanently. The Japanese government had been very restrictive of

issuing visas to foreigners. However, Brazilians with relatives in Japan could obtain annual permanent resident visas beginning in 1985, and in 1990, all immigrants of Japanese ancestry could get a permanent resident visa for up to three years, as could spouses and children, regardless of background. An ideology of allowing Japanese descendants to experience their homeland by visiting relatives was part of Japanese ministry bureaucrats' justification for easing restrictions for Nikkei to work in Japan. According to Tsuda, "Nikkeijin would have cultural and ethnic characteristics similar to the Japanese and would assimilate smoothly into Japanese society in contrast to other foreigners" (1999 12).

Dekassegui ultimately worked to relieve labor shortages in factories, construction, or service industries in tasks designated as the three k's: kitanai (dirty), kitsui (difficult), and kiken (dangerous). "These 'three k's were later joined by what the Japanese-Brazilian workers would label 'the additional two k's': kibishii (demanding) and kirai (detestable)" (E. Mori 2002, 240). The work that many of these Brazilians performed did not require Japanese language proficiency. Although Mori argues that no data exists comparing salaries of Japanese citizens with Brazilian dekassegui and other foreign workers, there are indications that they were paid considerably less, and that certain bonuses such as pension plans were not extended to these foreign guest workers. Japanese businesses economized by hiring Nikkei Brazilian workers.

Kely Kanazawa, an occupational therapist in São Paulo, told me about her life as a factory worker.²³ She narrated the difficulty of working in factories, as well as difficult relationships with her Japanese bosses. She said:

I worked for about four months in a bento-ya, a factory where bento boxes are prepared. It's like this: each person has a job, from putting the plate on the conveyor belt—Because it's like this: there are vats of noodles that people put into a machine. And from the machine, an exact portion falls onto a plate on the conveyor belt. So there were jobs to do—from setting the plate to adding spices—wasabi and these little things.

Honestly, I couldn't stand working in a bento-ya. I thought it was a very bad job. Sometimes we would work on our feet for up to sixteen hours. You only have one 45-minute pause, which is your lunch break. If you need to go to the bathroom, it is really difficult because someone has to substitute you so you can go. And also the Japanese are very severe. They scream a lot at the workers. I think it's a very oppressive environment, you know? Because the only thing that matters is the client. The only person who matters is the one that is paying me. The person who is working next to me—not so much. So I think it was very oppressive because of this. Because it didn't matter if we as workers were doing okay. What mattered is that the bento had to be beautiful. It had to be perfect. Only this mattered in that environment. So it was a difficult time for me.²⁴

Mori notes that upon returning to Brazil, many dekassegui ended up starting small businesses because as white-collar workers they did not learn anything new or acquire skills in their positions in Japan. Therefore, they were unable to return to their same positions that they left when they went to Japan (Ibid., 248).

The difficulty that many deskassegui experienced working in factories extended to their children. As parents were gone for many hours during the day, there was very

²³ Kanazawa, Kely. Recorded interview with author. August 16, 2011. Santa Cruz, São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil.

²⁴ Kely Kanazawa is a koto practitioner. To watch a clip of a longer section of this interview along with her ideas about her koto practice, see: <https://vimeo.com/39846381/9f7a963633>.

little supervision, and many children felt marginalized for being “different” among their Japanese peers. Ninomiya argues that in the beginning of the Brazilian Nikkei dekasegui movement, many Brazilian children suffered discrimination in Japanese schools, and that students who arrived after elementary school suffered more (2002). High school was sometimes inaccessible to students from Brazil, since high school is not included in free public education, and some families cannot afford it. In 1999, there were 40,000 Brazilian children under 15 in Japan but only 7,500 registered in public school (Ibid, 253). Some, with their parents in the factories all day, did not attend school, as it was non-compulsory for Japanese citizens (Ibid.). Some were neither proficient in Japanese nor Portuguese. Literacy in both languages continues to be a problem among children of Brazilian dekasegui, and these young people are negatively impacted. Hernesto Miyamoto told me about the experiences of dekasegui with children through his own experiences in Japan and those of his sister, who works at a non-profit supporting Brazilian children living in Japan (children of dekasegui):

People that go to Nihon, in the beginning, and even today, they think that they are coming back to Brazil. Then they have a child, and they have a dilemma. “Do I teach him Portuguese or nihongo? If I teach nihongo, when he goes back to Brazil, he’s going to have problems.” But it’s hard to teach Portuguese in Nihon. You know there are Portuguese language schools for Brazilians. But then, the parents stay in this dilemma for so long, that the child doesn’t learn Portuguese and doesn’t learn nihongo. And two years pass, then three years, and then ten. The child has grown. And he hasn’t had instruction in either of the languages. He’s illiterate. And then the kids get involved in crimes. They are marginalized. It’s sad.

Not all Nikkei I spoke with had negative experiences in Japan as workers. Those who went to Japan because of study opportunities or who started working in factories and ended up in advocacy, education, and business industries reported positive experiences.

Many reported connecting with homelands and relatives. Others, however, told me stories of fractured families. I have met many Nikkei with families on opposite ends of the world. Some siblings chose to stay in Brazil, others worked in Japan temporarily, and some ended up permanently settling in Japan, marrying Japanese citizens, and eventually becoming Japanese. Miyamoto, for example, is the only of his siblings who decided to stay in Brazil:

I have a sister that went to Japan as a dekassegui. She went in her early twenties. And then it was like this: she married a Japanese. And my nieces and nephews are nihonjin. And then she became a Japanese citizen. She had the advantage of being able to speak nihongo because that's what we spoke at home, so she went over there, worked in a factory. And then married a nihonjin. But she was able to get away from working in the factory because she spoke Japanese. She now works as a teacher in a Japanese school. She's a public worker (*funcionária pública*²⁵). She's a teaching assistant and a consultant who helps foreign students. My other sister too. She's single, but she is also going to stay in Nihon. My two sisters are naturalized Japanese citizens. They're staying there. *Pronto!* Right? My nephew just graduated from high school there and my niece will soon. Nihonjin, nihonjin.

It's interesting that your parents have Japanese grandchildren. They came to Brazil to stay and—

Exactly. It's ironic. My father was from Hamamatsu where there are a lot of Brazilians. I always tell my father, "It's so ironic that the city you left is now the city where there are the most Brazilians! The most Brazilian city in Japan is the one that you left to go to Brazil!"

Migration between Japan and Brazil became constant and fluctuating mid-1990s and continues to be fluid today. Moreover, new Nikkei in small numbers continue to arrive in Brazil to make lives for themselves, or sometimes travel between Japan and Brazil, taking advantage of financial, artistic, and professional opportunities in both countries.

²⁵ In Brazil, being a public worker gives a person status, job stability, and usually tenure.

Some told me they needed to travel to Japan periodically to earn money. Others told me they may end up moving “back to Japan” permanently in the future. The dekassegui phenomenon highlights feelings of Nikkei belonging or not belonging in Brazil and/or Japan and compounds the issue of Asian Brazilians feeling like and being treated as eternal foreigners in both countries.

Recent Migrations

Contrasting dekassegui, many shin-Issei, or new Issei that arrived in Brazil after the 1980s, often expressed feelings of belonging in both countries. Recent migrations to Brazil and Bahia from Japan continue to take place well into the twenty-first century, although migrants are different from the agricultural workers who came to Bahia during the post-war era. Because many hold both Brazilian and Japanese passports and speak both languages well, they were “flexible citizens” (Ong 1999) of both countries, sometimes with shifting identities. Further, most shin-Issei I met in Bahia did not travel to pursue agriculture or settle in rural communities as the pre- and post-war Nikkei did. Instead, they migrated for a variety of reasons, including marriage, artistic pursuits, and opportunities to volunteer in the Brazilian Nikkei community. A few shin-Issei, including Hirosuke Kitamura, have established themselves as Bahian artists.

In the photography museum at the Espaço Pierre Verger da Fotografia Baiana, the names of local photographers, including Hirosuke Kitamura, are projected onto the wall near the entrance in a rotating slide show. Hirosuke has won critical praise and several international awards for his work. His pieces are restricted to those eighteen and over and can only be viewed through VR goggles. He is well known in Brazil for his images of

bordellos, and although the images of sex workers are blurred, they are nonetheless marked “explicit.”

I asked him what attracted him to photographing bordellos. As one critic wrote, “Hirosuke’s work presents a singular capacity to accentuate certain day to day aspects of life that are often invisible to our eyes.” Kitamura said that some people may see his work that way, but it is not his intention to show an “underground” world. Rather, what interests him is the passage of time that he sees in the person and in the buildings.

There are things that indicate time passing. The wall has mold or a crack in it. This tells the story of the passage of time. The women who work there have scars, and that marks the passage of time in their lives. The walls are painted with bright colors that sometimes is fading, and this is also aesthetically interesting. There is something sad about it. There is sadness, loneliness, and suffering, but not only that. It may not show in the photo, but relationships between people in these worlds are complex.²⁶

Kitamura began studying photography in Bahia after he had lived there for several years through an extension course at a cultural center in the city and while working as a guide for a Japanese journalist reporting on Carnival. Later, he won the Bahia de Todos of Anglos award, which paid for him to travel throughout Brazil to meet photographers and attend photography festivals. Now, his work is iconic of Bahia, and many people from Salvador know of him and his work.²⁷

Kitamura arrived in Bahia for the first time through an exchange program in 1990, shortly after he graduated college. He worked in a bank in Salvador as an intern for one

²⁶ Kitamura, Hirosuke. Recorded interview with author. August 6th, 2018. Salvador, Bahia.

²⁷ Hirosuke Kitamura’s website contains more information and examples of his work: <http://hirosukekitamura.com/>

year and conducted an independent research project on NGOs helping street children.

The second time he traveled to Brazil, he volunteered with the Japan International Cooperation Agency, where he worked as an administrator for the Federation of Japanese Associations of Bahia for three years. After an additional year on a student visa, an amnesty law for immigrants allowed him to stay longer.

Others shin-Issei I met moved to Brazil to be close to a partner, but later discovered love for an artistic practice or a talent for teaching Japanese language to Brazilians. Erika Sato, for example, was a private Japanese instructor who also operated a Japanese language choir from her home once per week for other Nikkei, especially elderly Issei women, her students, and other foreigners living in Salvador. Other spouses of Brazilian men included two teachers who were working at the Japanese language school. Ako, one of these teachers, was also a part-time tour guide who helped Japanese tourists navigate Salvador. She bought property near a capoeira school in her community, where she is active. Her migration, however, was like Brazilian dekassegui who depend on jobs in Japan's service industry to support living in Brazil. Sometimes she would travel to Japan to visit family while working in food service to save money in order to live in Brazil and help people in her neighborhood.

Many long-term Japanese residents in Bahia were volunteers for JICA who helped the Nikkei community with various endeavors, such as establishing a youth baseball team in Salvador, teaching children Bon Odori dances, and teaching Japanese language classes. There were always one or two volunteers at ANISA, usually teaching

Japanese language. While most of these volunteers would return home to Japan, others stayed longer.

Many shin-Issei are what Nagatomo describes as “lifestyle migrants,” or Japanese migrants who move abroad because of lifestyle considerations, such as leisure, climate, and educational opportunities (2015). As I stayed longer in Bahia, I met many of these migrants, such a Japanese woman who was in Salvador pursuing capoeira and another who migrated to Brazil for marriage but wanted to stay after divorcing her partner because of the “freedom” she felt in Salvador. Friends who traveled to Lençóis in the touristic Chapada Diamantina area of Bahia enthusiastically told me about a Japanese couple who made a living by performing in a reggae band and selling homemade tofu. Japanese people living abroad for a variety of reasons unrelated to economic hardship is a widespread global phenomenon (Aoyama 2009; Befu 2002; Kurokawa 2004; Kaepler 2013). Citizenship and identity are flexible for many who travel back and forth between Brazil and Japan (Ong 1999).

Other migrations of Japanese and Nikkei to Bahia are internal to Brazil. Many Issei, Nisei, and sansei from the states of São Paulo, Paraná, and Amazonas, told me of their families’ migration to Bahia, motivated by family connections and professional opportunities. Luigi Kawano, who moved to Salvador as a child told me, “My parents were born in Paraná. My father is an acupuncturist, and he studied medicine. A cousin of my mother invited us here, and we came to visit. My father decided to move here for a better life.” There were few acupuncturists in Bahia and a high demand for them. Akemi

Tahara, whose family came from Manaus, settled in Bahia because her mother decided to attend the Federal University of Bahia:

My Uncle Hachiro had come here to study economics and my mother came to study nursing. And at the time, my parents were dating. They were living in Manaus. My father at the time said, “Okay, so go to Bahia. I’m going back to Japan.” But in the middle of his trip back to Japan, when he was on the boat, the boat somehow got stuck in the middle of the journey. And months passed without him getting to Japan. So then my father decided to go to Bahia. He came here and proposed to my mother. So my family is from here.

Despite Nikkei and new Issei moving to Bahia, most settled in the city of Salvador, leaving many rural Nikkei communities with a decline in numbers of Japanese descendants. Further, many worried about the future of Japanese culture in Brazil, citing a perceived lack of interest in young people for maintaining the culture, contrasting Wadō members who were deeply interested in Brazil’s Japanese heritage. This “lack of interest” may have opened the door for a majority non-Nikkei taiko group in Salvador.

The Future of Nikkei and Japanese Cultural Practices in Bahia

As Nikkei from rural areas began to settle in urban areas of Brazil and travel to Japan for work, populations began to decline in rural communities. “At the height of migration,” according to Yamaguchi,²⁸ the president of the Japanese Association of Juscilino Kubitschek,

There were more than 100 Japanese families, but today there are less than thirty. There are a total of 27 families, and six with marriage with non-descendants. The main reason is that families left to look for better land in other places. Another reason is the exit of young people for the city and to Japan. The people of the first generation are reduced in numbers because of deaths. Today, most of the Japanese colonists returned to Japan or live in other parts of Brazil.

²⁸ Yamaguchi, Nobutoshi. 2019. Answers to interview questions for CEAO-ANISA project, transmitted via email.

Sasaki, the woman whose family moved to JK in the 1950s, also told me that Nikkei were no longer in the area. Her Presbyterian church, which was started by her father and originally held mass in Japanese had later become “Brazilian,” with masses in Portuguese, so she no longer attends. She told me that the Japanese government wanted the colony to be “like the Cotia Cooperative,” a thriving community that set up colonies throughout the Southeastern region and even in Bahia, “but that it didn’t work out that way.” The same community closed its Japanese language school for youth in 2014.

In the Western part of the state, in Luiz Eduardo Magalhães, Bahia, Ichiro Sawada described fewer people participating in the local Japanese Association’s events since its establishment in the 1990s, and the loss of members. He also noted an absence of young people in the community. He dreams of building a kaikan (meeting house) for the community, but he has “low expectations” for it. However, he hopes that JICA will send a specialist in Japanese Culinary arts to the region, which may help with interest and participation among both young Nikkei and non-Nikkei in the community. Adilson Suzuki, the president of the Japanese association in the far Western city of Barreiras, reported similar losses in his community, impacting youth the most:

There used to be [a Nihon gakko], but not anymore. There aren’t any students or teachers for a Japanese language school. If there was a teacher, we could try to get students, not just from the Association, but from the city at large. But we don’t have teachers, so we can’t do that. It’s interesting that in our region, it’s not so strong in terms of education.

Further, Suzuki described an exodus of young people who travel to the city to pursue their studies, similar to the 1980s and 1990s, when young Nikkei went to Salvador to live at the Student House with other young Nikkei from various parts of Bahia.

The majority of our children, when they get to an age of *seinen* (around age 17), they leave (Barreiras) to pursue their studies. This is a particularity of our region. Sometimes they marry and come back, but we can't really maintain young people or any activities for young people in our region. The sons and daughters of our associates that are around 15 to 17 years old are already starting to leave, and we don't have young people in this age group. In our reunions, we always tell our children that they have to marry and have children. If not, the Association won't have any children, right? This is something interesting and a particularity of our region. It's different from Salvador, the capital. The interior is different. Whomever has the resources to support their children outside of the city to give them better opportunities to study and a better future will do it. So this is something difficult for us.

Barreiras had a taiko group for a while that Wadō helped establish. However, Suzuki noted, "It's interesting that Wadō helped us to create a taiko group, but there are no more students (for taiko) in the region."

In many interviews, both in Bahia and with individuals in Sao Paulo, Nikkei of all ages emphasized the importance of not letting Japanese cultural practices "die" in the Brazilian diaspora. The Japanese Associations in Bahia (and throughout Brazil) aim to teach Japanese culture to local people in the areas they are active and involve young people in their activities. As Suzuki said,

The majority of Association members, and certainly myself, I really worry about passing on what I know about my culture, what we have in terms of customs and knowledge to our children. Because if not, we end up forgetting. So we always bring our children close to the association to show them our customs and teach them.

Some Nikkei elders, however, expressed disappointment in young people in their community. In a survey about the state of the Japanese communities in Bahia, Akahori, the president of the Japanese Association of Teixeira de Freitas, described young people as "individualistic," saying that they "lacked union," and further, many Nisei moved to

other regions of Bahia. The colony no longer has a baseball team, karaoke contests, or festivals.

Other Nikkei simply stated that their children did not connect with Japanese culture as a fact. Nishimoto told me, “My son seeks the Brazilian side more than the Japanese side. It may be because since he was young, he didn’t have as much contact with my family as with his mother’s family,” contrasting sons and daughters of other associates, whose children were fluent in Japanese, and also many members of Grupo Wadō.

Conclusion and Akemi Tahara’s Interview

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that narratives about Japan and Brazil surrounding histories of Japanese migration in Brazil and Bahia frame racial relations in Brazil. The idea of Japanese migrants as “ideal” for Brazil today have deep historical roots, bolstered by anti-Black historical metanarratives and stereotypes of Nikkei as “closed” and model minorities. I show how the Japanese and Brazilian governments were deeply invested in these narratives. I also explore historical conditions that leave dekassegui feeling like eternal foreigners and shin-Issei as flexible citizens. In the following chapter, I further explore how non-Nikkei have participated in the activities of a Japanese association and relationships between Nikkei and non-Nikkei Brazilians.

I end this chapter with my interview with Akemi Tahara, a Wadō member who is a virtuosic player, and whose family was active in the Brazilian Association of Salvador. She is kibeï, having undergone part of her education in Brazil and part of her education in Japan. Akemi was beloved among everyone I encountered in Bahia who knew her.

Although she considered herself a “baiana” and a “foreigner” when among Japanese groups, she seemed to fit in everywhere putting everyone around her at ease: new and established Wadō members, Japanese travelers studying samba, her students, and others. Akemi joined the group in 2010, and this interview was one of the first I conducted with Wadō members in 2011. Since that time, Akemi has had many more professional opportunities than those that she states below. She continued to teach architecture at the Federal University of Bahia, and she started work on projects in rural areas in 2018.

Akemi’s interview shows the movement of her family members to and from Japan and around Brazil, demonstrating circular patterns of migration in the Nikkei community that I discussed in this chapter. Further, Akemi discusses values of discipline, union, and harmony, which she shared with other Wadō members, showing her position as a leader in the group. I also wanted to feature this interview because of Akemi’s focus on connection, community, and collaboration in her career and in taiko, which underpins the values and ideas I explore later in this dissertation.

My name is Akemi Tahara. I am from here, from Salvador. I’m baiana. My parents are Japanese descendants. My father is Japanese, and my mother is Nisei. From the time I was little, I always went to Japanese school. When I was in fifth grade, my mother went to do her master’s degree and doctorate in Japan, and we went to live in Chiba. When I came back, I had to learn Portuguese again. I went when I was eleven and came back when I was almost sixteen. I completed high school here. I did the vestibular for architecture. I finished my course, and I worked for two years as an architect. And then I decided to do graduate school, and I did my master’s in Japan. I spent three years there, from 2006 to 2009. And now I am putting together an architectural practice here in this building. The majority of us here in Wadō are architects. Some are my students at the university.

So, starting with your family: did your parents meet in Bahia?

My father’s family’s immigration was to the colony in Manaus, in Amazonas. My mother’s family arrived in Brazil a long time before his. My mother’s parents came here independently of one another. They didn’t know each other. My grandfather came when

he was sixteen. He “created” a family and planned to get married here in Brazil. It was an omiai, an arranged marriage. My great-grandfather sent my grandfather to marry the daughter of a friend here, except that my grandfather never found that person. And then he met someone else and married her. This was in São Paulo. And in São Paulo, they had children. And that is why my mother’s family—all of my uncles and aunts and my mother were born here in Brazil. They are Brazilians from São Paulo. But then they all had to go back to Japan. To Aomori-ken. And then, they came back to Brazil again, and they went to the colony of Manaus. That’s where my parents met.

My father was born in Japan. He came here when he was thirteen years old, and my parents met in the colony. My mother wanted to come to Bahia to study. And her brother, my Uncle Hachiro, had come here to study economics. And my mother came to study nursing. And at the time, my parents were dating. My father said, “Okay, so go to Bahia. I’m going back to Japan.” But in the middle of his trip back to Japan, somehow the boat somehow got stuck. And months passed without him getting to Japan. So then my father decided to go to Bahia. He came here and proposed to my mother. My family is from here. I have a sister named Miwa. She was born in Manaus because we ended up traveling there a lot during vacations to visit family. I was born here in Salvador.

That’s a lot of movement.

Yes, a lot of movement. My mother’s family, my grandparents, and everyone else who came here came during a phase where there was an incentive from the Japanese government to settle in Brazil. Japan was in the post-war era, and there were a lot of difficulties. There was an agreement between Brazil and Japan. Brazil was in a phase of development, so doors were open for various migrations. Also for Germans, and Spaniards, not just Japanese. And so, my family was like, “let’s take advantage of this.” This thing of, “They are offering land. Let’s go and plant something.”

They were offering land?

Yes. And a lot of people came because of this. This is called the colony, right? Because when they came here, in Brazil, there really wasn’t any infrastructure. There wasn’t a road system or anything else like that. People had to build their own homes and start planting in the middle of the forest. The beginning was very difficult, very hard.

There is a story in my family like this: My mom, she was younger and arrived later. She had already been to São Paulo, since São Paulo was one of the first migrations. There were already things set up here like schools. She had the opportunity to study because of that. And my father came when he was thirteen. He was the oldest of six children, so he had to help my grandparents who were starting everything in the Manaus colony. He had to quit school at thirteen. He’s Japanese, and he has lived here for more than 40 years, but his Portuguese isn’t perfect. He only learned by living here and through conversation, speaking in everyday life. He never went back to school.

So going back to what I was saying before, my family came here with a spirit of adventure.

What kinds of stories do they tell?

Well, for example, My father's family is from Ishikawa-ken, from a city called Suzu. And all my great aunts and great uncles were like, "let's go to Brazil because we can start everything from zero!" And there was one uncle that wanted to come with everyone. There were friends, cousins, brothers and sisters and others. But then his wife got pregnant, and a long-distance journey would have been too difficult, so he couldn't come. Also, he didn't pass a physical exam that emigrants had to take to see who could really come here, so he couldn't travel. So my grandfather came with just one of his brothers. But it was good that one person stayed because now we have a connection to Japan through him. Whenever we go to Japan, we visit him, and he has always supported us, as if his home were our second home. If he had come, we wouldn't have any family there.

Why did your mother's entire family go back to Japan later on?

That is something I never asked about. I'm not sure why. My mother always told me about her experience of having studied in Japan. And then how she had to go back to first grade when she came back to Brazil when she was fourteen. She also has difficulties with Portuguese. Here, everyone goes to school when they are six. And she was fourteen, starting over with six-year-olds from here.

And then about studying in Japan?

She told me that everything was very organized in Japan. I also studied in Japan for four and a half years. We were at school most of the time. And you learn so much. There's even a class on cooking.

A cooking class?

Yes, you start by boiling an egg, then learning to make a hamburger and then rice—gohan. And there is a class that's called gyu-jitsu where you learn how to cut meat. There's also a sewing class. I think that Japanese education encourages artisanal work. In spite of being a very advanced country as far as technology, everything has a foundation of manual work.

There are also classes in sports, music. We learn to play instruments and to read music. You learn to play fue and keyboard. Primary school teaches you everything so that you can choose what you like and learn what you are good at for more advanced study. And there aren't any workers hired to clean the school. There, everyone cleans: the students and the teachers.

And there, school is all day with a break for lunch. You have lunch at school. And it's always group work when cleaning. Always teamwork, everyone looking over everything. So one week, one group has to serve everyone lunch. And that happens in the classroom. The desks change. Furniture is flexible. The desks turn into big tables for a group of six. And the six students who serve everyone go to the school kitchen, they get the pots and pans, bring everything to the classroom, and serve everyone the same

amount. That's part of education too: knowing how to divide the food correctly for forty students. You have to measure so that everyone gets the right quantity. And if there are any leftovers, you can get seconds. Everyone eats together and picks up together. We recycle what we can. Leftover food is given to the animals at the school. We use everything. Only plastic leaves the school, which is separated and sent to companies for recycling.

And after lunch, there is about thirty minutes to play and rest. It's free time. And then cleaning time. Cleaning the school happens in a rotation. One group is responsible for cleaning the classroom. Another group cleans the hallway. Another group cleans the bathrooms. Another cleans the outdoor area. The teacher is also part of a group.

After that, there are two more classes. Classes like math, Japanese language, science, or artisanal work. And then the school day is done, but there are a variety of clubs and sports. I was on a basketball team, so I would go to practice. There are people that don't like sports, so they can do something else. There are reading groups and students who are responsible for the library. There is shodo: calligraphy. There was also a club that was responsible for the plants, the school garden, and animals. Each teacher is responsible for a club. I really liked my elementary school. There was physics and chemistry, and a real laboratory inside of the school. I remember putting weights on a scale and writing down the results of scientific experiments.

Here in Brazil before, there were very few subjects related to art. In Japan, there was music, painting, and even violin at school. There were sports teams. I felt a real difference in Brazil. Here, school is only the morning or in the afternoon. And in Japan, you go to school the whole day. It's the same number of subjects, but with breaks in the middle.

And here, the entire afternoon is free. I used to do ballet. But that always depends on the family, the child saying, "I want to do an activity." The family decides what the child will do in the free time in the afternoon. But in Japan, that isn't the case. The school directs everything, which is good because parents work the entire day. School is like a second home in Japan..

But in terms of education, it's complicated here in Brazil. Public primary and secondary schools aren't at the same level as private schools.

In Japan, there is only public school. And even though children go to school independently, someone is always watching them. You can't stop at the supermarket. If there is an accident that happens to you on the way, the school takes responsibility, so the school really prohibits you from going anywhere else. And the adults, your parents and other parents living in the neighborhood keep watch, and they'll tell on you. "That child there wasn't going to school. They were playing in the park when they should have been in school." Like that. There is an organization in each neighborhood, and there is always a kind of watch going on. Even on school vacations, everyone knew what we were doing.

Really?

Yes. Even during the summer, children couldn't be outside after 10pm. During the summer, we would play with fireworks. And when the vacation would end, they would say in school, "You, and you, come to the principal's office." And they would say, "During the holiday, you stayed out past 10pm." And they would single you out.

Would they punish you?

No. They would just point it out. When there was a punishment, sometimes we had to go to school early to do extra cleaning. But for most children, I think that fact of being called to the principal's office and having adults speak to you in a serious way is effective. Children are like that, right?

That was my first time in Japan. I was 11. And I didn't want to go. My mom was like, "We are going to Japan," and I was like, "I don't want to go." I had my friends here. And I was already going to Japanese school here, which I completely rejected. I didn't want to study Japanese. I didn't want any kind of connection with Japan. The school was on a Saturday. It was at a time I could have been playing. And my mom was like, "you have to go to school." And we had to participate in all the events of the Association here. And I was like, "I'm Brazilian, so why do I have to learn Japanese?" Right? My mother would always say, "That's part of culture. You have to learn. One day, you are going to see the benefits." And we don't understand this when we are little, right?

So, my mom said, "If you don't want to go to Japan with us, you can stay with your grandmother in Manaus." But I was only concerned having to leave my school and my friends. I liked my school. And going to a country I didn't know made me feel insecure. But then my whole family went. My mother went for two years in the beginning to do her master's, but she ended up staying two more to do her doctorate.

And the language? You grew up speaking Japanese at home?

Japan wasn't any kind of shock because of that. Since I was little, my parents encouraged me to speak Japanese. We could listen and speak well because we spoke Japanese at home. Right. But when I got there, writing and vocabulary was difficult. So, when I was in the fifth grade, 11 years old, they put me in fifth grade. The principal was like, "Don't worry. Children learn fast. She can go in the same level as her age." I had to work really hard. During the first tests, I didn't understand what the questions were asking, so I got 0s. I cried that day when I went home.

I'm so proud of my mom. She had difficulties of her own doing her master's. She did everything and even gave so much time to my sister and me, helping us adapt at school. In each book we had, she put everything in hiragana. She put hiragana on all of the kanjis I didn't know, and even translated some parts into Portuguese.²⁹ And every night, we would read together. And, wow, I cried so much. "I want to go back to Brazil. I don't want to be here." And my mother, "No, just sit down here." It was complicated for her. I

²⁹ Hiragana are a phonetic set of characters unique to Japanese. They are combined with kanji, or Chinese characters to form words. Most kanji have two "readings" or pronunciations.

think that during the first year, at the end of it, I was finally caught up. I could finally understand everything. Even the tests weren't a problem anymore.

And you said that when you came back, you forgot Portuguese?

But then, yes, I forgot Portuguese. My sister was nine years old. Very young. And she learned Japanese very quickly. And when she came back here, she had a lot of difficulty with Portuguese. She had to repeat years at school. She had to repeat sixth grade. I didn't have as much difficulty as my sister, but I had to study grammar again. I also had to study the history of Brazil and politics again.

I was lucky to pass the college entrance exam on my first try. I took the test in architecture at the Federal University, UFBA, I did the state university test for urbanism, and then the test in the private university for physiotherapy. To do the vestibular, you have to choose what you want to do with your life, and I was like, "I want to do so many things." I had to decide. But since I got into the Federal university, I chose architecture. The Federal university is the best in terms of research. The others are good, but the federal university is also free.

Did you know you were going to like architecture, or did you just end up liking it?

I always like drawing. I always liked math and science. So I think that everything came together. It really fit with my personality. I don't like to do repetitive things. And in architecture, everything is always new: new research, new knowledge, new challenges. It's a kind of work that requires a lot of responsibility because you don't work just to satisfy an individual person. What you do is part of the entire city. Your work is seen by everyone. You choose the materials, the techniques of construction. All of this encapsulates a certain energy. You take inspiration and energy from nature, from the labor, and from your thoughts too. I think that architecture is a very complete profession.

It sounds like (your love of architecture) comes from a kind of community spirit. You all on the taiko team have that.

Oh, taiko? Yes. Team spirit has to be like this. Everyone must have the same objective. For example, we were recently talking about our group's goals. At first, we got together because we all like taiko. Although everyone has their own reasons for playing, everyone comes to practice because they like it. Maybe they saw a presentation. They were thrilled by it. And they felt that vibration of the drums. They said, "I want to play." But everyone may have a different focus as the group grows. So how is the group going to grow? It's going to grow as each person grows as a group member, right? We all must acquire techniques of playing and techniques of transmitting all our feelings to the audience. We have to be able to do that. Some members have other objectives. Some want the group to become professional. And that, for me—I already have my work as an architect, so taiko is just a pleasure for me. It's the pleasure of being with everyone. If it ends up being something to be marketed, to get money from it, it starts to distort the concept of taiko for me, of being there for the joy of being there. It would start to be an obligation.

I love my work as an architect, and even there, I never focused on making money. It's a consequence of my values. If I wanted to get rich, I could be working in sales. I want each project to have all the requisites and have a purpose. Each construction needs to be beautiful and economic, but also functional. And social. The biggest focus I have is on the social aspect of a structure. If I end up focusing on the housing market, there also is a focus on money. You see that many developers don't spend a lot of time thinking about questions. There is a model they follow that has nothing to do with where they are building. They build homes as if they were making a pen. To sell. A production. But construction is much more than a simple object. Market-oriented work is not what I want to do.

So with taiko it's the same thing. If we start to grow, there may be profit. But the objective of our group always has to be to become better players and to disseminate Japanese culture to the whole world, to people that don't know about it.

The first time I saw a taiko presentation, I was thrilled. The beat, the sound of the taiko somehow gets inside of us. How is it that the vibration of a drum can do this? And the movement is so beautiful. That is what I want to transmit to the whole world. That is my greatest objective. The more people who know what taiko is, the better. Wadō may have financial problems, and we may have to pursue money. We need to buy more instruments, get better at playing, and have clothing that could make the presentation look better. But if we start to pay people, then we may have to charge audiences, and people may start thinking as individuals. Like, "oh, I want to buy a car for myself." They wouldn't be thinking about growing the group. We need transport, so we should be thinking about buying a van to fit all of the instruments to get to the presentations. Not thinking as individuals but thinking about the group.

So you started playing in Japan when you were doing your Masters? Can you tell me about it?

Yes. Before I went to Japan for my Masters, I had been to one taiko performance here in Salvador. I was like, "Wow, it's so beautiful. Amazing. A great performance." And then, when I went to Japan, I decided that in my free time, I would like to do taiko there and learn a little bit about what taiko is. I arrived in Mie prefecture, and at my university, there were clubs and groups. But there was no taiko group. I was disappointed. But then I met a colleague that was also an international student. And he said, "oh, I know a group. They always play here. When they have a performance, I'll let you know." And then, one weekend at a city event, he took me there. I loved the performance. I met the group, and I asked them, "Where do you all rehearse? Can I also come? Is there a way for me to participate in the group?" They said, "You can come." I went there with two other colleagues from Spain.

I was with that group until it was time to come back to Brazil, for about two and a half years. The group was called Kawage Dokonko. Kawage is the name of the city. The group was started by two women from a commercial association. The age range was higher than Wadō's. I think the average was around 39, 40 years old. And it was a small group. At most, 13 people. After I joined, more young people from the neighborhood started around the same time I did.

When it was time to come back to Brazil, I knew that I would miss playing taiko. I had a strong connection with the taiko group. I thought, "When I get back to Brazil, I'm going to suggest opening a taiko team in the Japanese school." But then, everything came together. In 2008, the year of the centennial of Japanese immigration, there was a taiko presentation here in Salvador. Ishindaiko from Londrina came. And a friend of mine sent an email. They said, "Akemi, I found out from your mom that you are doing taiko. We are trying to start a taiko group." And I was like, "Really? When I get back, we'll have to talk about it!" That was something great that happened. It's like all the things you want becoming reality.

I started Wadō a little later. I returned from Japan in 2009. And the group, I think had started meeting after the Bon Odori in 2008 in August. They had various meetings. When I arrived in mid-April, I went to visit the Japanese school, speak to the people that had contacted me about the group and wow! 30 people! I was like, "Wow! There are already so many members in the taiko group? How are you all practicing?" I wanted to know. There were some instruments that had been donated, but people were drumming on tires and bamboo. Just to hear a sound. I didn't want to start with the group right away, because I was still in a phase of adaptation. I had just come back from Japan. I was just coming back, starting things again from zero.

Before coming back, the Japanese government wanted to know if I wanted to continue my research and start my doctorate. They also help you to get into the labor market in Japan. They asked if I wanted to start working in Japan. I had a lot of conversations and a lot of interviews in many companies. "Or do you want to go back to Brazil? The plane ticket is there if you want to go back." And I didn't know what to do. Because whatever I would decide might be for the rest of my life. It would be a choice that could change my entire path.

My objective to go to Japan was to get training to work with social housing here in Bahia. Because here in Salvador, 70% of the population live in informal constructions. There is a great difference between people in terms of economic levels, and this is something you see in housing. The question of housing here in Brazil is very critical. Also, I have always liked the characteristics of information occupations. When people build and occupy buildings and they show their identities and character. And as an architect, I was like, "How can people in this kind of precarious situation live in such an organized way? How do they not interfere with neighbors and also have show their own tastes?" When I went to Japan, besides construction techniques, I was interested in how the Japanese work with minimal and flexible spaces. What could I learn there and apply here?

But if I would stay in Japan, at my age, I felt I would probably never go back to Brazil. I would make a life there. Even if the doctorate would only be three years. Maybe I would end up working there or finding someone to marry there. Also, more work experience there would be good. But I ended up coming back to Brazil to know more about how the labor market was here and how things were. If I wanted to go back to Japan, there would be an opportunity. I could look for another chance and try to go back. So, I decided to come back.

I found work immediately through the secretary of urban development. I worked with special communities: Indigenous communities, quilombolas, fishermen. The focus was on housing. But I was only there for six months because of an opportunity to work with an architect that I admire. He was putting together a practice, and he needed some support, so I started working for him in the Instituto Habitat. I was busy when I first came back, trying to figure out what I was going to do. I couldn't start taiko right away.

I was also having trouble re-adapting to life here in terms of customs and habits. In Japan, I was completely free to do whatever I wanted. The city was safe, and transportation, getting to places was easy. Here, I felt a huge difference. In the three years I was away from Salvador, things changed a lot. There were so many cars! So much traffic congestion! Nossa! And other things... I didn't want to go out much. I didn't want to start too many activities without feeling centered, balanced. After the next Bon Odori in August was when I started the group. I went to all of the practices. I really practiced.

How was the practice for you in the beginning?

Well, when I was in the taiko group in Japan, there was an entire education and way of doing things there. The way people also share their opinions, it is part of the culture to respect those who are older and more experienced. And there was a rhythm to the practice in that group.

Here, it was as if everything was just starting. At the start of the practice, they repeated things they had learned from a teacher who came to give a workshop on the principals of union, of discipline. And every time people came together, we talked about this. So when I joined the group, I started talking about my experience in Japan, and how the practices were. I think it was a very good exchange.

Also, here, something that surprised me was that people really have a lot of musical skill. Right? I don't know if it's something about the culture here in Salvador. It's a city that really encourages music and sound. From a young age, people listen to music and dance. Rhythm. Here, I started to teach a song that I learned in Japan, and they got it really fast. The only question was to discipline the movement. That was part of the education. Also here, as far as rhythm, everything is fast.

When I started the group, it was big. There were around 30 people. But little by little, you start to see things change and see who is part of the group and who's going to bring the group forward. We practiced once per week for four hours of concentrated practice. And if you miss just one rehearsal, you miss two weeks, and you start to lose the rhythm. And if you miss one month, it's a lot. When we want to do a presentation, a good presentation, we have to practice. You can't present a piece that you learned one year ago. No. You have to play with the group consistently. You can't just listen to know if you are on the rhythm or not. You have to be together with everyone. Hitting the drum in the exact moment with everyone. "Bah!" It can't be "burararara." Right? You need everyone to practice together. You can't do taiko alone. Taiko is union. So today, the group really has only 15 members counting Mirim, the children's group.

There was a time when I was working so much that I couldn't go to practice for some months because I would get unfocused. I didn't go. But then, I started again this year. I said, "This year, I am going to discipline myself to put practice in my agenda. I'm not going to miss taiko practice."

One thing I would like to add during this interview: right now, we are in my office. I have my own office. This was always a dream of mine, but I always thought it was something that would happen in the future. Recently, one of my colleagues came to me and said, "I found an office space." And the rent each month was heavy for him. He said, "Do you think you might be interesting in sharing it?" We talked a lot about it, and we decided to get one more person to join us. The space is really big. I teach at the university now, but I want to work on projects that come up, and I often don't have time to work in another company. I often think, "It's too bad I can't attend to this project now." And then my friend came and told me about sharing an office space, and I was like, "hmm. It might be time." Start and save time to attend to clients I consider friends. And with time, maybe expand and even hire other people.

It's beautiful here. And that little model house? (pointing to a model)

Mauricio, my friend, did this model. The project is a house that we are developing. We did a big study to show to a client, and they liked it. And we are seeing if we can finally sign the contract. Right?

What is that? (Pointing to another model structure) Is it a school?

No, it's a worker's forum, connected to the regional worker's tribunal. The worker's forum is already there, and the client is wanting to build a judicial forum in some interior cities, since the cities are growing so fast. Here in Salvador, there isn't a way to attend to the whole rural population. So they are planning one in Itapetinga. Close to Vitoria da Conquista. But I have some designs for this project. We did a study on rooms, and ventilation.

Another good thing is that there is another architecture office here, so we can trade information. Instead of working in an isolated office, offices could work together. They could be cooperating with one another. Creating relationships. I can be a very healthy competition.

We are five people. We are sharing this space. We also all teach at the university. Another is working in the office of the university, and one is working in another private practice. No one is alone. We can ask one another's opinions on anything. We can discuss things.

If I plan to go back to Japan, it won't be soon. It's something I need to think about. I was thinking about doing my doctorate there. I ended up participating in a research group at the university. I am starting to collect information and that may get me toward my doctorate. And right now, my advisor is trying to send me to Germany for my doctorate! I'm really going to have to study English now, and German!

It's a lot of movement!

Yes, it's a lot of movement. But that's my good luck. People tell me, "Akemi-chan. You want to do a lot of things. What is going to happen to your office?" But until that time, you don't know what is going to happen!

Chapter 2: Japonesidades, Brazilian Bodies, Bahian Rhythms

We Bahians get our hands in everything. The way we mix is good, but also a bit of a cultural appropriation that doesn't fit. Like the way that people try to adapt things for Brazilian tastes. Like a stroganoff boat, a sushi boat with beef stroganoff and rice. Or not taking seriously things at should be taken seriously. Like a sushiman. To be a sushiman, it takes a lot of time. A sushiman starts training by cleaning the bathroom in order to someday be a cook. Here, you don't need to have any kind of respect or training to be a sushiman. You just go to the kitchen and make it. So, the value and philosophy of sushi is lost. But, on the other hand, this kind of philosophy doesn't make sense to most Brazilians.

- Joyce Neri,
founding Wadō
member

“Interethnic marriage is increasing every day. Many interethnic hybrids between Japan and Bahia come forth as a main resource of total integration. And the teppanyaki mixed with vatapá, Bon Odori with Carnival, Tenrikyo with Candomblé, Judo with Capoeira are elements of two cultures, put in a blender. The result is a milkshake of dark skin, straight hair, Carnavalesque spirit, and pride of a samurai.”

– Leila Maekawa

Matsumoto and the Seinenkai Revival: Outsiders “Preserving” Japanese Culture, Baianidade

In 2017 and 2018, members of the Nipo Brazilian Association of Bahia resolved to revive its seinenkai, or youth group, ten years after it had dissolved. Community elders worried about the Association's survival, as most members were between the ages of fifty and eighty. The members gathered regularly to play mahjong, organize events, and discuss administrative issues related to the city's Japan festivals. Its activities, however, were dependent on the leadership and presence of the middle-aged to elderly. Shigeki Nishimoto, who was a member of the seinenkai during the 1980s, helped coordinate an

event in February of 2018 to gather young people from Japanese Associations throughout the Northeast. He told about problems attracting young people to the Association:

We are in the third generation of Japanese immigration in Bahia. I was raised by Japanese parents. Our children, however, are more mixed, more Brazilian and they have a different point of view and mentality. They don't always want to come to the Association. So, it's difficult to know if our culture will continue.³⁰

Nishimoto said that the mission of the Association was for Japanese culture to continue in Bahia. Many hoped to attract young people to leadership positions in the Association. Several members of the Nikkei community in Bahia echoed this sentiment in conversations with a sense of urgency. As Nishimoto and others told me, the association needed young people to participate to ensure the organization's long-term survival.

The seinenkai's revival began with a two-day gathering called "Meeting of Young People from the Northeast," which took place the weekend before Carnival. Approximately twenty young people and a few elders from Japanese schools, clubs, and associations from Recife, João Pessoa, Juazeiro, and Barreiras participated in lectures and workshops about Japan and Japanese culture. They learned how to hand roll temaki that they ate together, shared their ideas and visions for their organizations, and discussed what they liked about seinenkai, such as the opportunity to travel to other associations, and the chance to make friends in other cities.

³⁰ Nishimoto, Shigeki (ANISA Member). Recorded interview with author. July 20, 2018. Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

The gathering opened with a video message from Harumi Goya, the president of the Bunkyo, a large Japanese cultural and social assistance association in São Paulo, destined to be watched at seinenkai throughout Brazil. Over the sound of static, she spoke of the importance of “giving continuity to Japanese culture” which is “in its sixth generation of immigration.” She warned her audience, “If we don’t make an effort, we will forget our culture. We need to honor our ancestors and thank our sempai who came before us” by participating in Japanese cultural activities.

The first speaker, Fernando Matsumoto, a volunteer with the Bunkyo, a major organization supporting Japanese culture in São Paulo, and new father, addressed the racial diversity in the room. He lectured on the idea of “japonesar,” a verb he created from the noun/adjective “japonês.” He said, “Japonesar can mean a lot of things, a lot of actions,” and he invited the young people to define the verb for themselves. However, it was clear that “japonesar” meant to participate in a Japanese cultural practice or activity with one’s body, such as taiko drumming, baseball, or language learning. Matsumoto emphasized that the ability to “japonesar” was unconnected with ethnic heritage. “It has nothing to do with having ‘olhos puxados’,” he said. “There are people who are more Japanese than Japanese by blood,” he added. He highlighted the work of non-Japanese-descended Brazilians who are leaders in cultural practices, such as Monja Coen, a Soto Zen nun of European descent who is known for spreading Buddhism throughout Brazil; and Rafaela Silva, an Afro Brazilian woman who won the gold medal in judô during the 2016 Olympics. Contrarily, he told the audience that his sister feels “no connection

whatsoever” to Japanese culture in spite of her direct connection to Japanese ancestors on both sides of their family.

In a later interview, Matsumoto spoke about aspects that he loved about his heritage: the values that he learned from his grandparents, his grandmother’s gestures and movements that were influenced by her traditional dance training, and the consideration of others his parents taught him. He identified resilience and fortitude as Japanese values that can benefit individuals and societies throughout the world and especially in Brazil, “which is lacking in values at this moment.” Matsumoto wanted to preserve Japanese culture in Brazil so that his daughter would be able to learn about it if she chose to. He also defended his assertion that there are people that are more Japanese than people with Japanese origins due to their activities. “It doesn’t matter what you look like. Being Japanese is in the heart, not in your physical appearance³¹,” he said.

“You said that you wanted to preserve Japanese culture for your daughter. How is it that your heritage does not matter?” I said.

“I want to preserve Japanese values for my daughter not because of her heritage, but because of the values themselves. And these are values that are good for everyone and that everyone can possess.”

Leaders of the local taiko ensemble Grupo Cultural Wadō who attended Matsumoto’s lecture had been thinking about the connection between Japanese ancestry and participating in Japanese cultural practices for many years. Of the current twenty

³¹ Matsumoto, Fernando (Volunteer, BUNKYO São Paulo). Personal interview with author. July 23, 2018. Liberdade, São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil.

members between the ages of seventeen and thirty-five, only five claimed Japanese descent, with one also identifying as multiracial. Weeks earlier, some had heard about the notion of claiming Japanese cultural identity through participating in cultural activities when Fuuka Sunano gave an informal presentation to the group about her recent trip to Japan through JICA. She passed around reports she had written and showed photos from her laptop computer. Her trip was structured as a course where she participated in language classes, visited sites throughout Japan, attended university lectures, and completed short assignments. She also engaged in discussions about Nikkei identity with other Nikkei from Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. Fuuka informed the group that affiliates of JICA, as well as other Nikkei throughout Latin America, were currently reevaluating the term Nikkei in Japanese. She said that some believed that Nikkei may be a term to describe a person who loves Japanese culture and is dedicated to its preservation regardless of ethnic heritage. A person of Japanese descent could be distinguished from Nikkei by being called Nikkeijin instead.³² Fuuka told me that because of her time in Wadō,

I believe that there will have to be an effort to recognize that people who are not Japanese can be great propagators of Japanese culture, even without having any Japanese heritage. We see this a lot in Wadō, for example. These are people—the majority without Japanese heritage—that sometimes carry a love for Japanese culture since childhood. So I believe that they can be characterized as Nikkei, maybe. Because the concept that is being discussed in Japan, in JICA, is that Nikkei may not necessarily be a person with a direct descent from Japan, but a person that participates in the community and identifies as Nikkei.³³

³² Nikkei, and Nikkei-jin literally mean a person “of Japanese descent,” or “connected to Japan” with *jin* meaning “person.”

³³ Sunano, Fuuka. Recorded interview with author. September 10, 2017. Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

She cited population decline in Japan and integration of Nikkei into Brazilian society as reasons to accept non-Nikkei as community members. One member, Daniela, pointed out that she knew many Japanese Brazilians who did not identify with their origins, and that she identified deeply with Japanese cultural practices in spite of her multiracial heritage. Fuuka repeated this idea in an interview, declaring, “There are many Nipobrazilians that do not see themselves as Nipobrazilians. They see themselves as Brazilians. And if they don’t want to be seen as Nipobrazilians, if they don’t want this identity, there are people who do want it.”

Fuuka and Matsumoto’s assertions were the first time I had heard about the possibility of outsiders adopting Nikkei identities on a potentially large and formal scale.³⁴ These assertions were directly related to reports of dwindling membership in Japanese community and cultural associations throughout Brazil’s Northeast, intermarriage resulting in diminished participation in Japanese cultural practices, and a perceived lack of interest among young Japanese Brazilians in speaking Japanese and continuing the traditions of their ancestors. They were accompanied by reports of population decline in Japan, anxiety of becoming subsumed into the Brazilian nation, and the recognition of individuals without Japanese descent in the community who were highly proficient at speaking Japanese and performing other Japanese cultural practices

³⁴ Later, in 2019, I noticed that the term Newkkei was being used to describe such individuals.

such as taiko. One leader in the Japanese Association of Bahia told me, “If we had to depend on only Nikkeis, the Association wouldn’t exist.”³⁵

Most members sat silently listening to this report before beginning to discuss their own racial identities and origins. Joyce told the group that her great-grandfather was a slave. She said that knowing about one’s ancestors is a great privilege unavailable to Black Brazilians. She spoke about DNA testing that some had recently begun using in order to find out more specific details about their heritage. “My God. I need to do this test,” she said. “I need to know what is there.” In this discussion of origins and family histories, no one without Japanese heritage directly mentioned feeling Japanese or expressed any willingness to self-identify as Nikkei. Moreover, the group was already exploring their *baianidade*, or Bahian identities through a new composition which mapped Bahian rhythms on taiko drums, although all group members recognized taiko as Japanese.

Chapter Overview

This chapter explores questions about how authenticity, ethnicity, and citizenship are transformed, maintained, and explored through relationships between Nikkei and non-Nikkei and through taiko practice and composition in Bahia. First, I contextualize the presence of non-Nikkei in Japanese music communities, focusing on the work of Rafael Fuchigami, who deploys the idea of “*Japonesidades*,” or “*Japanesenesses*” to describe multiple ways of being Japanese and practicing Japanese cultural activities. I compare the

³⁵ Kawano, Lika (ANISA President). Recorded interview with author. March 7, 2018. Brotas, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

Japonesidades of his interlocutors, who believed they were Japanese in past lives, and therefore, carriers of a Japanese “essence,” to the Japonesidades in Wadō, which were based on body practices and affective relationships with Nikkei in their community. I also describe anxieties Wadō members had about their Bahian identities and their efforts to train their bodies to perform Japanese gestures, phrases, and movements in efforts to learn taiko “correctly.”

Next, I explore Bahian identifications and concerns about taiko authenticity in Wadō, focusing on the group’s composition, *Irasshai*, where an assortment of Bahian rhythms mapped onto taiko drums both affirmed Wadō’s Bahian heritage and provoked (some) members’ anxieties about not playing authentic taiko. I explore ideas about what taiko is and is not in Brazil through the narratives from the Brazilian Taiko Association (Associação Brasileira de Taikō, or ABT), which trains most Brazilian taiko players, and the first professional taiko group in Brazil, Wadaiko Sho. Questions I explore here include whether there can be a Brazilian taiko, who decides what Brazilian taiko is, and who can be an authority in taiko. In Wadō, even when composing a piece showcasing Brazilian rhythms, Nikkei members and Japanese teachers were authority figures that lent authenticity to taiko performance. Notably, Wadō did not bring in an Afro Brazilian expert when composing a taiko piece featuring Afro Brazilian rhythms. Instead, Japanese and Nikkei teachers led workshops to set the piece, giving authority to the Japoneseness of the piece.

I discuss how and why Nikkei are often viewed as eternal foreigners in Brazil and how the separation of Nikkei from wider Brazilian society mirrors Japanese musical

practices in Brazil. I argue that *Irasshai* demonstrates an affirmation of Nikkei and Japanese music as Brazilian and Bahian. Anxieties about playing taiko correctly and adapting their bodies to play more “Japanese” gave way to experimenting about the possibility of a distinctly Brazilian and Bahian taiko, writing Nikkei into the narratives of belonging in Brazil.

Japonesidades in Japanese Music in Brazil

People without Japanese heritage who practice Japanese music in Brazil have been documented for the past forty years. In the 1980s, Dale Olsen, a US American ethnomusicologist and outsider to the Latin American Nikkei community, positioned himself as a student of the Japanese Brazilian shakuhachi player, Iwami Baikyoku V (Olsen 2004; 1982; 1983). He describes playing shakuhachi for potential interlocutors to build relationships with them, and he includes photos of himself performing at Nikkei community events (Ibid., 2004). In an ethnographic work on koto practice and performance in São Paulo, Alice Satomi highlights the participation of Kitty Pereira, a non-Nikkei Brazilian, as a performer and student in the Seiha koto school. Noting the presence of other non-Nikkei in the music scene, she groups together “descendants” who are “internal” and “external” to the koto community, noting that sansei, or third generation Japanese descendants, and non-descendants play Japanese music for similar reasons, including for fun, art, and therapeutic value (2018, 225, 228). In a 2020 conference paper on taiko practice in the interior of São Paulo state in Atibaia, Flávio Rodrigues describes a multicultural environment where both Nikkei and non-Nikkei insert Japanese words into Portuguese phrases (Rodrigues 2020). He argues that

stereotypes about Nikkei in Brazil as weak and passive are “broken” through the force of taiko (Ibid.).

Brazilian Nikkei ethnomusicologist Rafael Fuchigami focuses further on non-Nikkei who play Japanese music in his ethnographic work on shakuhachi schools in Brazil (Fuchigami 2014). He mentions Danilo Tomic, the Serbian Brazilian president of the Brazilian Association of Japanese Classical Music, and Shen Ribeiro, a White Brazilian who spent years in Japan, as prominent participants in the community. A significant portion of his focuses on the Suizen Shakuhachi Dojo, a currently inactive school in Brazil led by Matheus Ferreira, a Brazilian of European descent. Notions of identity in the Suizen school, which trained many non-Nikkei, were complex due to Kardecian Spiritist beliefs in past lives prominent in São Paulo and the Southeastern region among educated classes.

Allan Kardec developed Kardecian Spiritism in France during the late 19th century. Later, his writings made their way to the Americas, and in Brazil, the religion became widespread in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In the 2010 census Kardecian spiritism was the third largest religion in Brazil with 3.8 million practitioners. Many shakuhachi players in the Suizen Dojo asserted that although they were not Japanese or descendants, they were Japanese in other lives and therefore “carriers of a Japanese spiritual substance (a soul or a something of other lives)” (Ibid., 11). Others described feeling like a Japanese person trapped in a Brazilian body.

Fuchigami reports that although Kardecian Spiritist beliefs were not unanimous, they were “representative” of many players in the São Paulo shakuhachi community

(2014, 11). Because of this widespread belief, ideas about Japanese identity and legitimacy of shakuhachi practice have become “complex,” where ideas of past, essence, and soul superseded ideas about identity in the body (Ibid.). Fuchigami frames ideas about being Japanese in the Suizen Dojo through the lens of “japonesidades multiplicadas,” or, “multiplied/multiple japanesenesses,” a concept developed by Brazilian scholars researching in the Brazilian Nikkei community and among practitioners of Japanese cultural activities (de Renó Machado 2011). These scholars seek to understand multiple ways of being Japanese in Brazil among both descendants and non-descendants, and they explore boundaries multiple concepts about ways of being that constitute the label “Japanese.” They argue that it is not possible to define certain groups as “more” or “less” Japanese, but rather, each person is “Japanese in their own way” in the context of Brazil (Ibid., 15). Fuchigami further defines japonesidades as a “process in which the behavior, sentiment, activities, and experiences of people brings them closer to a Japan, real or imaginary, turning them, in some way, ‘japonesizados’ (‘Japan-ized’).” Since this process is neither linear nor short, and it can describe many ways of being Japanese, he continues to use Renó Machado’s concept of multiplied/multiple japanesenesses. Fuchigami told me that both Nikkei and non-Nikkei can both “japonezar,” deploying the verb version of the word “Japanese.”³⁶ Japonesidades goes

³⁶ The idea of Japonesidades, including the question of who has the privilege to japonezar in Brazil is briefly discussed here, but it is also a rich and complex phenomenon and the topic of future research. This research further explores race relations in Brazil, focusing on relationships between Nikkei and other populations in various regions and online.

beyond narratives about identity, resistance, and assimilation and can be the result of participating in Japanese cultural activities, or, in some cases, resisting narratives about Japanese culture and forging new ways of being Nikkei (Ribeira 2011).

Fuchigami further argues that in Brazil, japonesidades among non-Nikkei are always created through relationships with individuals in the Nikkei community, differentiating these behaviors from objectified orientalism. In places where there is not a Nikkei community, such as the Southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, shakuhachi practitioners do not construct japonesidades, as in São Paulo. While shakuhachi players in the region engaged in Japanese cultural activities, they were merely activities, and they did not carry the same meanings as in São Paulo where white practitioners claimed they “felt” Japanese and interacted with the Nikkei community, asserting their authority over the instrument. Thus, Fuchigami concludes that japonesidades “refers to a new phenomenon between practitioners of traditional Japanese music in Brazil, in which people mutually influence one another.”

In Wadō, concepts of japonesidades contrasted with those created in the Suizen Shakuhachi Dojo. Only one member hinted at beliefs in another life, recounting a trip to Kyoto, where she felt a sense of “*déjà vu*” when wandering into a small Buddhist temple at night. One member belonged to a Spiritist church, and Grupo Wadō regularly performed there, including in 2017 for a Christmas party.³⁷ Beliefs in past lives were

³⁷ **Fieldnotes from a performance at a Spiritist Church. December 2017:** *Wadō performs at a children’s Christmas party at a Spiritist Church, where one member, Joyce, and her mother belong. In the room where the members change into performance attire and put on makeup, there is a whiteboard with notes in black ink: “Techniques for Reincarnation / How to love yourself: How can I love myself? What would I change about myself?” I start writing these words into my notebook. Marcela asks, “what are you*

present among Wadō members, but not representative, widespread, discussed openly, or in conjunction with taiko. In Wadō, instead, belonging to a Nikkei community was not tied to remembering past lives, forming spiritual beliefs, or declaring ideas about the soul. Further, belonging was unrelated to the notion of Japanese or Nikkei identity. Instead, japonesidades centered on lived experiences, including building relationships, engaging in physical training, and performing manual labor with others. Japonesidades directly connected to affect and exercises to train the body. It was an ongoing process and part of continuous relationships with leaders and elders in the Nikkei community.

Japonesidades in Wadō: Affective Relationships and Body Practices

Relationships with Nikkei

In interviews, many Wadō members reported that their relationships with many individuals in the Nikkei community were contentious at first, but today are affectionate. Elders appreciated Wadō members and their efforts to diffuse Japanese culture in Bahia and their dedication to the taiko team and seinenkai. Fuchigami argues that japonesidades may emerge from either friendly or contentious relationships between Nikkei and non-Nikkei. In 2018, Wadō members had deep and sometimes family-like relationships with some Nikkei parents and elders at the Association. Some were named as aunts and uncles, and some hired former and current Wadō members to work as administrators and assistants in their businesses. However, these relationships emerged after many years of

writing?” and I say, “Techniques of Reincarnation.” Later, when it is time to perform, a man introduces Wadō to the audience of 5 to 12-year-olds. He pauses in the middle of his speech to tell the children, “You already know this drumming from past incarnations. Maybe 20 incarnations ago when you all passed through Japan (passaram pelo Japão). It’s possible, yes,” he says.

contentious relationships. In the beginning of the group's history, there was significant conflict between some Nikkei and Wadō members.

Founding Wadō members recalled that many Association members (associados) initially rejected them. Thais, one founding member, recognized that outsiders coming into the Association was difficult for many of the elders:

It was difficult for us at first. And for them. Before we joined the taiko group, the Association was composed of Japanese Brazilian members and their children. Then suddenly there were a bunch of non-Nikkeis using their space. And the Association's members did not accept us at first. Because they didn't know us. They didn't know our parents. It must have been a shock for them.³⁸

Joyce, another founding member, reported still having hurt feelings from what one person said about them years ago.³⁹ "We found out that they said bad things about us," she said, "They called us weird, and they said they didn't want their children near us." Joyce cites both racism and homophobia as reasons for associados rejecting non-Nikkei Wadō members in the beginning. Further, because of the large number of non-Nikkei, many did not want the Association to recognize Wadō as part of their organization. However, she also noted that certain elders defended them and encouraged them to continue playing and learning about taiko.

Shigeki Nishimoto, a long-time Association member, told me about these conflicts. "In the beginning," he said, "there were a lot of Brazilians in Wadō. And the Association was more Japanese. And that influenced many members in not wanting to

³⁸ Karmo, Thais. Recorded interview with author. July 28, 2018. Pituba, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

³⁹ Neri, Joyce. Recorded interview with author. August 17, 2017. Barris, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

support the group.”⁴⁰ These members wanted to “maintain the ethnic and cultural identity of the group.” He contrasted these feelings with his own, telling me he always supported Wadō members. Lika Kawano, Wadō’s founder and current president of the Japanese Association of Bahia, was the person who was responsible for Wadō’s growth. She encouraged anyone to participate in the group regardless of ethnicity, background, or sexual orientation, often inviting new members to the group by making announcements at public events.

As a result of the welcoming environment Kawano created, Wadō members often referred to themselves as a group of related individuals. Many members often told me, “Wadō is a second family for me.” Some members claimed to feel closer to other Wadō members than their birth families. They pointed out that since they practice and rehearse on weekend days in addition to holding parties, attending events, maintaining instruments, and sharing meals, they spend more time with their Wadō friends than with their families.⁴¹ Many members became emotional in interviews when narrating their experiences in Wadō and relationships with other members. Lika identified all Wadō members, past and present as her children, telling me:

Wadō is a second family to me, and I consider every member as my child. People always say that I’m such a Mom. I am, and I make a point of being one. I tell everyone ‘You all, participating in Wadō, this is a second home for you. You have to feel good here.’

⁴⁰ As I discuss earlier, “Brazilians” is a word that some Nikkei use to describe those who are not Nikkei. Sometimes the word “gaijin” is deployed to describe them. Other times, Nikkei identify as Brazilians. The labels “Brazilian” and “Japanese” often depend on context and conversation. Sometimes Japanese means someone from Japan, and sometimes it means Nikkei.

⁴¹ These strong feelings made conflicts with others more painful than if the group were simply a professional obligation or an extracurricular activity.

Other elders came to accept Wadō members later on. Shigeki, noting a contrast between past and present attitudes toward “Brazilians” in Wadō, said, “today the directors are more modern. They are more open-minded than the directors ten years ago.” Furthermore, many Wadō members cited specific individuals who initially complained about the group, but later offered to financially support Wadō, paying for travel expenses to festivals and competitions.

Recently, some Association members noted that it would be difficult for their organization and their taiko team to continue without opening its activities to multiracial Brazilians. “If we had to depend on only Nikkeis to create a taiko team, it wouldn’t exist,” Lika noted, asserting,

If we didn’t open the Japanese language school to Brazilians, the school wouldn’t exist. The same thing with our baseball team... We see that Brazilians can be leaders in our community—of course they have to first like Japanese culture—but they have the capability to bring the Association into the future and strengthen it. They can be successors to our community. We cannot depend on Nikkeis. We have no way to depend on them.

Many associados shared similar observations. As I discussed in the previous chapter, younger Nikkei in Bahia often left their communities to pursue work and educational opportunities in different geographical areas of Brazil or in Japan. Also, older generations reported a perceived falling interest in Japanese cultural activities among youth. Japanese Association membership in the region was falling in numbers, which many attributed to young people not connecting to Japanese culture. As Shigeki Nishimoto told me, “My son searches more for his Brazilian side than his Japanese side... I always wanted him to learn Japanese, but I would have to force him. And that is complicated because no one learns when they are forced to.”

Like Matsumoto at the beginning of the chapter, Nishimoto also emphasized the importance of maintaining Japanese culture in Brazil without placing importance on who does this labor. He told me, “Just because you look like you are from a culture doesn’t mean that you are going to maintain it. Even the current honorary consul is a Brazilian...” he said, citing a White Brazilian as a person of authority that spoke Japanese better than most Nikkei. “It’s best not to restrict things. The most important thing is to show and disseminate Japanese culture.”

In the last ten years, members of Wadō had become a stable presence in the organization. They were regularly present at meetings and events. They volunteered at the Japanese School when it was time to teach children to play drums or perform Bon Odori, and they applied for grants through the Association to support their projects and the material needs of the group. Through work and affective relationships, they became members of the community and worked like Nikkei, even if they did not feel Nikkei.

Cleanliness and Work: “Japanese Values” In Brazil

Lika Kawano’s claim of adopting Wadō members as children extended to teaching them “Japanese values” outside of training and to perform household chores. She took responsibility for activities that she thought should take place “in the house,” saying,

In the beginning, I noticed that the way I teach my children at home is different from the education these other young people had. We would have a meeting and have lunch together, and no one would wash their dishes. Not even their own, and I had to tell them, “Look people, everyone washes their own dishes. Let’s clean. Let’s leave the space better than we found it.” So, from the beginning, we created this ritual. So Japanese culture helped everyone to better themselves. I say that it isn’t just taiko. It is the personal formation of each person.

Firmness, integrity, and team spirit were values that are also taught outside of musical training and of the importance of teaching them “Japanese culture” through the performance of chores.

Further, cleaning and doing chores were related to ideas about Japan as a superior nation. As discussed in the previous chapter, Japanese were hailed as model minorities and as superior to other immigrant groups by the Japanese and Brazilian governments since the mid 19th century. In 2018, many narratives about “Japanese values” praising Japanese and Nikkei as clean, hardworking, intelligent, and organized, were repeated in press releases for Japanese cultural events and mission statements of Japanese cultural organizations throughout Brazil. These perceived Japanese values were also the basis of Wadō’s values of honesty, teamwork, organization, and consideration of others. The idea of Japan as superior, intelligent, and organized also made the local news often. As Hirotsuke, a Japanese citizen turned Brazilian permanent resident, told me,

In the media, there is always some kind of talk about robots. “In Japan, they made this robot.” You always see it in the news. Also, there is a disaster in Japan, and damages are fixed quickly, and that is always a news story. “They fixed everything so fast. Look how they fixed that street. If it were in Brazil, it would take so long.” And then people say, “Look. Japanese people are so organized.” People say these things here.

Non-Nikkei Brazilian friends who knew about my research pointed me to news articles and reports implying the “superiority” of Japanese people, such as when the Japanese soccer team cleaned their dormitories and left thank you notes to Russian workers after they lost the World Cup semi quarterfinals in 2018 (“Após Derrota, Japoneses Limpam Vestiário e Deixam Mensagem de Agradecimento | Japão |

Globoesporte” 2018). “I wish that our society would evolve like that,” my friend told me, adding that Japanese society was “more developed,” and “evolved.”

When I asked Wadō members and Nikkei what they believed about Japan and its culture, many responded that Japan is clean and safe. People are polite to one another, and they do not litter. Many cited social media photos and videos, anime and manga, and word of mouth when explaining their perceptions. Those who had traveled to Japan for short periods of time, often through the Japan International Cooperation Agency, idealized the country and its organization. Lika Kawano, Wadō’s founder told me,

There are little things you see in Japan. Security, discipline, organization, and honesty. This is something that I want to strengthen here. There are little things you see. People wait until the walk sign is on to cross the street. There are no robberies. Politicians aren’t corrupt. You know? Here in Brazil we have to learn to do things correctly.

Correctness, cleanliness, and hard work were “Japanese values” that presumably contrasted with “Brazilian values,” which no one mentioned.

Malandragem, Jeitinho Brasileiro

It is wrong to say that Brazilians, Bahians, and any non-Japanese do not possess the values of correctness, honesty, and solidarity. These are not uniquely Japanese ideals. It is worth noting, however, that very different cultural values are presented in literature, music, and nationalist discourses in Brazil, which contrast with perceived Japanese values. These contrasts resulted from very different historical contexts, as I discuss in Chapter 1, and they are especially true when one contrasts Black communities with Nikkei communities. For many Brazilians, and especially Black Brazilians, official channels were not to be trusted, and things must get done through informal ways, which

historically gave rise to ideals of “malandragem” and the “jeitinho brasileiro,” which can be translated as “trickery” and “a special way of working something out” respectively.

The malandro, or “rogue” who practices malandragem, is usually a masculine figure who survives in Brazil through fluid responses to difficult, and often bureaucratic situations with creativity. It is related to the necessity of being able to navigate such a system comes from a system of slavery and Indigenous massacre when people needed to act with “expertness” and foresight to survive everyday life. Malandragem, according to many historians, is closely related to the abolition of slavery, where many Black workers would no longer submit to unfair working conditions (Machado 2016). In contemporary everyday urban life, malandragem exists because of bureaucracy and power imbalances, and the malandro knows how to weave around them through a *jeitinho brasileiro*, literally translated as “the Brazilian way around something.” A Brazilian *jeitinho* may include bribing officials, cutting in lines, or asking officials to turn a blind eye to rule-breaking or corruption. It can be a fluid response to unfairness in bureaucratic practices (although it can also simply mean a way to get things done despite difficulty).

The *jeitinho brasileiro* and the figure of the malandro are enshrined in the national mythology through literary works such as *Macunaíma*, where the anti-hero hero, who is a mixture of Black, White, and Indigenous. He lacks motivation, goes to sleep often, and avoids “the steadiness, reliability, and goal orientation necessary to achieve the kind of success that depends on hard work and delay of gratifications,” and so “his laziness becomes a challenge to the power that has imposed work and accumulation on those who did not want it or think they needed it” (Mautner Wasserman n.d., 233). The malandro is

closely related to capoeira, and the idea of ginga, or swing, implying flexibility in both everyday life and in the roda (capoeira circle) (Wesolowski 2012, 86). It is also connected to samba musicians and soccer players, who manage to make a life for themselves without having to be subject to demeaning and hard labor. According to Budasz, in many areas of Brazil, working as a musician was a way to escape the racist containment of working in mines, as butchers, or in other mechanical industries, which were both dangerous and difficult (Budasz 2020).

Fuuka: Critiques of Nikkei as “Model Minorities”

In 2018, Japanese were perceived as the opposites of malandros and as model minorities among Nikkei, in Wadō, and in Brazilian society in general. However, Fuuka Sunano, a Wadō founding member, and Asian Brazilian, Feminist, and LGBTQ activist, told me that narratives praising Nikkei as model minorities propagate anti-Blackness while being bad for Nikkei. She started her discussion by criticizing stereotypes of Nikkei and Japanese as intelligent and good at math and then connected these narratives to racism in Brazil:

Forever, since always, we never see any representation of Japanese people anywhere in Brazil. The only representation we see—we are engineers. We are all good at Math. Only these things, understand? Yes, many Japanese people end up going into the sciences, but that has nothing to do with genes...

In my activist group, we study these issues. We see many things that are historical remnants, like slavery, that are very strongly related to Black people and the Japanese community. The idea of the model minority may be seen as good. People who don't understand our activism, even Japanese descendants might say, “I think that it's a good stereotype. It's a good thing that we are seen as clever, intelligent, dedicated, and organized.” But the idea that we are trying to unravel in militant movements is the question of “to whose benefit and to whose detriment are we seen in this way? And when we think of this stereotype, it is being reinforced at the cost of Black people. Because the idea of the model minority, is

that, as the Japanese descendants were able to have success—today they are well-paid heads of companies. Even more well-paid in Brazil, but it’s a culture and a community that was able to enter Brazil in a specific way. And a lot of people think, “if Japanese people could have success, why can’t Black people?” So there is a false symmetry between the history and culture (of Nikkei communities and Black communities). The stereotype of the model minority is strong, and it is at the cost of people that come from a culture that was enslaved and that these people are not making sufficient effort to be successful like the descendants of Japanese.

We debate a lot of things in things group. We debate on how to eliminate the idea of the model minority because this only reinforces prejudice against other people and against themselves. Because for us, it is a lot of pressure. Obviously, we do not suffer from it like Black people suffer. And that is why Asian militancy in Brazil is to benefit other activist groups.

Fuuka’s activism is a generational change in thinking about Nikkei identity in Brazil. However, the idea of Japanese Brazilians as model minorities was prominent in Wadō among new members and among Nikkei elders. Wanting to do things as a Japanese person would and uphold ideas about “correctness” reflected in group values and performances of chores, exercises, and gestures. Further, until the group started exploring more of their Bahian identities, the idea of “correctness” also informed bodily practices in taiko.

“This Isn’t Olodum”: Corporeal Memory, Identity, and Performance as Habitus

Wadō members adopted many corporeal practices that taiko groups from around the world also practice and recognize as distinctly Japanese, even though some in Wadō struggled with these practices. For example, before each class or rehearsal, Wadō drummers would sit in seiza, forming a circle and acknowledging one another’s presence. Seiza literally means “correct sitting.” To assume this position, one must kneel with the tops of the feet on the floor, sit on one’s heels, and then place the hands in the lap. It is

the position that instrumentalists sit in for several hours while singing or playing shamisen in Japanese theater such as Kabuki, Bunraku, and Kyogen. Some Wadō members had difficulty sitting in this position. Instead, they would stand or kneel and slowly practice sitting in seiza over time, or perhaps never sitting in seiza at all.

Wadō members then would bow to one another and recite “yoroshiku onegaishimasu,” which asks permission to practice together. Some new members struggled to remember the phrase, and some had trouble with the correct pronunciation for several months before finally learning it. Similarly, as members warmed up with stretches and exercises, they counted in Japanese to mark repetitions and seconds of holding a pose. Speaking in Japanese enhanced the character of the group and inculcated Japanese cultural habits and language skills, slowly instilling japonsidades into the bodies and speech of performers. In Wadō, performance created kinesthetic memory and molded the bodies of the performers. Japonsidades were rendered alive and present in the blood, muscles, and bones of participants.

In the early days of Wadō, members wanted Japanese performance to overwrite their Bahian body movements. Players were trained to make their body movements crisp, precise and in unison. They practiced stabilizing the pelvis and shoulders, opposing Brazilian music and dance genres and their moleza, or softness, and hip gyrations, though many Wadō members reported that they could not take the ginga, or swing, out of their bodies. In an early interview, one year after the group was formed, Thais told me about efforts of Wadō members to be “correct”:

From the beginning, we had to do everything right. Taiko isn't Olodum. It isn't samba reggae. Taiko is different than Timbalada. We can't gyrate our hips. We

have to hold our bodies. In the beginning we had to imitate movements, but we moved our hips, and we were corrected, ‘no, no’ by our Japanese⁴² senseis.”⁴³

Leo added, “Here in Bahia, we all move naturally, even people who don’t dance. We have inherited softness (moleza) from being born and living in Bahia. We had to relearn everything to control it.”⁴⁴

Furthermore, groups from Southern epicenters of Japanese communities were viewed as models to imitate. “We looked at groups like Ishindaiko from Londrina, and we would be like, ‘man, our movement isn’t at this level. We must get better in this,’” Leo and Thais told me. These teachers from Southern cities cited the height of Wadō members as a defect that could be fixed with new instruments. “They told us, ‘You all are very tall. That’s difficult,’” Thais said. “Last year when they gave us a workshop, they said, ‘It would best for you all to make taller bases for the drums or construct drums that are a little longer,’ so we are starting to make bigger instruments.” Later, Leo Raposo traveled to the United States and took taiko workshops from tall non-Nikkei like Kristofer Bergstrom and decided that taller bases and drums were not needed. In 2018, instead of playing on different drums, taller Wadō members practiced bending their knees more deeply to present a uniform height among group members while on stage. Learning about and visiting North American taiko groups with tall and non-Asian members

⁴² As in most of Brazil and Bahia, “Japanese” and “Nikkei” were often used interchangeably. These sensei were from Londrina, Paraná and members of the Nikkei community there. Wadō members often named Lucas Muraguchi as the first sensei.

⁴³ Karmo, Thais. Personal interview with author. September 7, 2011. Pituba, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

⁴⁴ Raposo, Leo. Personal interview with author. September 7, 2011. Pituba, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

convinced Wadō members that they should adapt their bodies to the drums and bases they had rather than the other way around. Still, their bodies needed to adapt to taiko. Height was a deficiency.

In his ethnographic work on the Kodo apprenticeship program, Bender notes that Japanese participants of the Kodo apprenticeship program also had trouble sitting seiza. They also practiced sitting in the position for long periods to “overcome” their “new style” Japanese bodies that were used to sitting on chairs. In Japanese taiko training, Bender argues that hierarchies that West/East, Superior/Inferior are inverted; “short legs, long waist, and small body size... become the quintessential foundation for taiko performance aesthetics while the often-envied long legs of foreigners and ‘new-style’ Japanese are understood as obstacles to overcome” (2005, 204). Similarly, Bahian bodies were obstacles to overcome in Wadō. Sitting in seiza, bending knees deeply, and reciting phrases in the Japanese languages were all repeated week after week, year after year to discipline their bodies.

Wadō members tried to overcome and discipline their Bahian kinesonic repertoires. Lorenz defines kinesonic repertoires as “embodied attitudes, experiences, and dispositions that players bring to musical practice,” and they include “corporeal technologies associated with genre-specific instrumental practice” as well as “non-musical movement repertoires that come to influence the production of sound” (2016, 7). Wadō members pointed out that musicality was ingrained in members since childhood by growing up in the soundscape of Salvador, where everyone is constantly exposed to the melodies of axé, samba, and samba-reggae during Carnival season, as well as genres and

musical styles like forró, xote, and arrocha during the June Festivals. Members spoke about Bahian heritage as a bodily tendency that could be disciplined by practicing Japanese gestures, phrases, and kinesthetic practices with great effort and constant practice. Until recently, and with very few exceptions, Wadō members did not practice Afro Brazilian music that could challenge the formation of new kinesthetic habits because of lack of access.

Reciting Japanese phrases together and executing movements in unison were meant to inscribe the perceived Japanese value of promoting community over the individual. These bodily practices are viewed as reflective of values such as firmness, integrity, and honesty, and they are understood as the opposite of stereotypes about Brazil such as malandragem and individualism, discussed above. New members of the group were often chosen based on their performance of these values, such as attending all workshops, arriving on time, and helping the group carry and repair drums and clean the space. These behaviors were described as showing the “spirit of the group” and the “spirit of Japanese culture.” While differences of opinion frustrated some, Wadō was decidedly a Japanese cultural group before it was a musical group, and its mission was to teach Japanese culture. Members identified with Japanese culture and its perceived values as demonstrated by gestures, words, and music practice.

Despite these efforts, Bahian taiko could or would not completely overcome its baianidade. Stereotypes about baianidade manifested in members’ habits related to punctuality and doing labor outside of taiko practice, often because of structural issues in Salvador. Members would often arrive to practice late. There was usually a good reason

for tardiness, such as a late or infrequent busses, traffic, or fear of being robbed. One member had been assaulted on her way home from practice, so she was afraid of going to the practice space alone and often waited for someone to accompany her. Some of the women distrusted the security guard working in the practice space who would comment on their appearance, so they did not want to be the first person to arrive. Practice would start one hour after its official start time, something that would not happen in Japan, with its reliable public transportation and public safety. Japan and Brazil were not the same. Japan was not Bahia.

Even members who would arrive earlier than others (usually around fifteen minutes after the official rehearsal start time) would hang out together, beginning practice gradually, slowly moving toward the center of the room and stretching before officially starting practice. Sometimes they would forget to sweep and mop floors, which officially needed to happen before practice. Members would talk and laugh loudly before rehearsal and during breaks, and they would linger during these breaks. These behaviors created affective relationships with one another, but they were not performances of the “Japanese values” of crispness and punctuality. After rehearsal, sometimes members would complain about other members not helping the group, leaving the labor of putting away drums and clearing the practice space to others. During a work session outside of a practice, where everyone was to polish wooden bases and re-string okedo, most members were late, and many did not show up. Joyce sent a voicemail to the missing group members, saying, “where are you all, you vagabundos?” using an insult that means “prostitute,” to warn her group members not to be lazy. Occasionally, however, the group

would strive to maintain japonesidades, sometimes re-correcting after long periods of lateness and absence. Leaders would demand punctuality and attendance at all events and tell other members that they could be removed from the group if they failed to show up for more than one month.

Besides struggling to maintain “Japanese values” and perform them outside of practice, Luigi Kawano told me that Bahian identity was clearly identifiable in Wadō’s taiko technique. He described Wadō’s performances as technically weaker than those of other taiko groups. “You see clear a difference between our group and groups from the South and Southeast,” he said, framing the difference as a negative aspect of Wadō. “I think that sometimes people in Wadō need to give more energy to their playing.” He explained that opportunities to play taiko were more numerous in the South and Southeast, which created more opportunities for advancement and technical progress. “In São Paulo, there are more taiko groups,” he said “Taiko is stronger there. There are more workshops, more activities. And it’s difficult to go there and participate.”

Not all Bahian qualities were viewed as obstacles to overcome, however. Akemi viewed baianidade as a quality that helped Wadō members learn music quickly:

One thing that surprised me here, is that people have a facility to make music. It’s something about the culture here in Salvador. It’s a city that really encourages music and sound. From the time we are children, we hear music. We dance. Rhythm. So here, in comparison with groups in Japan that I know, people learn pieces quickly. Then the only thing they need to do is discipline their movement.

In 2018, however, the group decided not to discipline their movement in a new composition. Instead, they invited Naoya Sawada, a Japanese expatriate living in Bahia,

who started a Carnival group for Japanese travelers in Brazil, to lead Bahian music workshops.

In early workshops, Wadō members picked up the rhythms immediately, only struggling to dance and play at the same time at first, but eventually mastering moving while playing.⁴⁵ They enjoyed swaying their bodies while playing, showing a sense of ease and fun.⁴⁶ Acquiring the habitus of japesidades in one's body became less important than exploring Bahian and multiracial and multicultural identifications through music. While previously, thought to be weaknesses, Bahian habitus became strengths during the composition of *Irasshai*.

***Irasshai*: Exploring Baianidade**

In February of 2018, five Wadō members participated in the Carnival performance of Nataka Toshia, a samba reggae group started by Naoya Sawada, a recent Japanese migrant to Bahia who came to Salvador on what was supposed to be a brief trip and ended up staying for around twenty years. He had been practicing and performing Bahian genres since 1998. While previous collaborations with other groups, such as Quabales and Olodum, resulted in playing some Bahian rhythms on taiko drums during performances and practices, participation in Carnival resulted in the group's most recent composition, *Irasshai*. It was the group's first attempt to compose, choreograph, and

⁴⁵ <https://vimeo.com/673725808/892460236d> | <https://sites.google.com/view/taiko-samba/chapter-2>

⁴⁶ <https://vimeo.com/673724248> | <https://sites.google.com/view/taiko-samba/chapter-2>

perform baianidade on taiko. For a long time, members referred to the piece as “the new song.” Later, when debating about what the name of the piece should be, Akemi suggested “*Irasshai*,” which means “welcome.” She told the group that being Bahian meant being welcoming. Bahians are known for their hospitality and generous spirit. The rest of the group agreed. *Irasshai* took many years to compose, as many players said they were worried about mixing genres and disrespecting taiko by innovating it. The piece was the result of an exploration of how Bahian rhythms may look and sound when played on taiko drums and other Japanese instruments.

The first performance of *Irasshai* in 2018 begins with five members on stage.⁴⁷ Thauan plays a syncopated rhythm on the shime daiko with his hands (rather than bachi), and Ramon plays atarigane (also commonly referred to as kane), a small metal plate, as if it were an agogô, an instrument with (usually) two metal cones struck with a small wooden stick. The agogô is associated with Candomblé and Afoxé Carnival groups. The sound of the atarigane translates well; the two pitches sounding on the plate matches the two pitches of the agogô one may commonly see and hear in Bahia, although with a less resonant timbre. Joyce is kneeling, holding an okedo with her left arm with her hand on the drumhead to muffle the sound intermittently. She is using a baqueta with a pom pom on the head to strike the drum with her right hand. The three instruments form an Ijexá-Afoxé rhythm.⁴⁸ Ijexá, whose name derives from a nation in modern-day Nigeria that

⁴⁷ Like many other videos throughout this dissertation, footage of this performance is available on my website, <https://sites.google.com/view/taiko-samba/home> and in links in the footnote space.

⁴⁸ <https://vimeo.com/673721288/e8ee91a443> | <https://sites.google.com/view/taiko-samba/chapter-2>

venerated the goddess Oxúm, is the name of a rhythm employed in Candomblé, specifically to call the divinities Oxúm or Logun-Edé. Afoxé groups such as the Filhos and Filhas de Gandhi (Sons and Daughters of Gandhi) perform ijexá rhythms during Carnival. Popular artists such as Clara Nunes and Gilberto Gil use these rhythms in songs with Afro Brazilian thematic content. Vini, Luigi, and I play a simple melody on top of percussion.

When the fue melody ends, Fuuka comes on stage playing a yoko⁴⁹ as if it were a repinique, calling the players on three-drum sets comprised of chudaiko, nagado, and okedo on stands, to respond to her. They repeat after one another in double beats until they pause. Fuuka shouts a ki-ai, unifying the ensemble, which explodes into a samba rhythm, as the crowd cheers. The mapping of samba onto taiko drums is not an exact translation. Mid-sized katsugi-style okedo play the rhythms that would normally be on the lowest surdos in samba, matching the odaiko, alternating DO KO DO KO DO KO DO KO. Lower-pitched chudaiko play a more complex “middle” rhythm or doko DON doko DON doko DON, doko DON. The sound of the high-pitched instruments, often prominent in samba carnival groups with entire ensembles of tamborins, repiniques, and pandeiros, is almost lost when the entire ensemble plays. Some players match the bass sounds of the surdo with chappa and naruko, small wooden hand-held clapping instruments performers use in Yosakoi Soran dances. A fue plays a melody over the ensemble, audible thanks to amplification, but it sounds nothing like the melodies I

⁴⁹ I am using the term that Wadō members used to call this drum. It is a small katsugi okedo with a high-pitched sound. It is played with bachi, and not with the hands as a tsuzumi, or small hour-glass shaped drum. I have not seen this drum in other ensembles or for sale in North America.

sometimes hear at restaurants in Brazil on Sunday afternoons. The melody is happy, but almost sounds militaristic. It is square and considerably less syncopated and simpler than some of the virtuoso flute melodies and arpeggios in samba-canção.

The piece transitions into a section that looks more like “traditional” taiko through a series of calls and responses between Fuuka and the players on the okedo, moving into straight beats, while the other players turn around and kneel. They bring attention to Pati, Leo, and Marcel playing on sets of chudaiko, marking a strong, even, and fast rhythms while Aline and Iasmin keep tempo on the shime daiko. Flashing stage lights emphasize the speed and virtuosity of this section of the piece. A ki-ai and straight beats in unison ends the section as Joyce and Lara stand up holding chappa. They play a short duet, which I heard some Wadō members describe as “cute” and more “Japanese” than other sections, until the duet becomes a mock capoeira fight. Members surround the “fighters,” clapping a syncopated rhythm as if participating in a roda de capoeira while the players in the back strike a drum at each measure and then toss their baquetas into the air and toward one another, catching them. Joyce and Lara’s chappa clash together, as the women perform capoeira moves such as the meia lua (half-moon), and the queixada (round house kick). The sequence ends in an au (cartwheel) as the fighters run offstage.⁵⁰ All instruments play straight beats in unison and pause as if it were the end of the piece.

Fuuka emerges again with the yoko, inviting the audience to respond to her calls from the repinique/yoko with claps. The claps come faster and faster until the piece

⁵⁰ <https://vimeo.com/712232625/b542ccd32a> | <https://sites.google.com/view/taiko-samba/chapter-2>

explodes into the same samba section as before, but with a faster tempo. Confetti drops onto the stage and the ensemble moves forward and backward, playing samba. Luigi leads the group, huddling everyone into a corner before everyone runs across the stage several times. The piece ends abruptly with a final and brief sequence as all drums play in unison and members shout “Wadō!” to end the piece. The audience applauds and Wadō members bow, shouting “arigatou gozaimashita,” thanking the audience for their attention and enthusiasm.

Irasshai debuted at the 2018 Japan Festival in Salvador. It was composed to commemorate 110 years of Japanese migration to Brazil and 60 years of Japanese migration in Bahia. The audience erupted with applause and cheers several times during the performance, receiving *Irasshai* with great enthusiasm, recognizing their own Bahian identities performed in front of them. Until its composition, however, attempts to employ Brazilian rhythms and musical genres in Wadō were rare. Only three collaborations with local groups have allowed for musical experimentation, which mostly consisted of accompanying other groups’ rhythms with taiko drums, such as a show with the samba-reggae group Olodum in 2010, or trying to play forró rhythms on taiko drums in practices.

In an interview in 2011, one founding member said that some Wadō members already wanted to experiment with mixing samba rhythms and taiko, but the majority wanted the group to play “only taiko.”⁵¹

⁵¹ Anonymous interview with author. August 2011. Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. Because of other sensitive material in this interview unrelated to taiko, the interviewee preferred anonymity.

In the beginning, some people had this idea: people wanted to mix musical genres. “Let’s mix Olodum beats with taiko.” And the more traditional people said, “No. Let’s just play taiko.” Then a sensei came here. The second sensei we had. He said that a sensei from Japan told him, “First you learn to play samba, play taiko, and play Pagode or anything else. Then you try mixing.” Understand? Otherwise, it isn’t good for the group, and it isn’t good for the music. It won’t come out right.

Is someone in the group trying to learn samba and Pagode right now?

There’s always someone who is, right?

Other members cited “respect for tradition” as a reason to pursue learning and performing strictly Japanese rhythms and genres. Authority to experiment and compose even Japanese-style pieces came slowly, and it was still a concern for the group in the beginning of 2018, at a time when Wadō had only two of its own pieces in its repertoire. Most of the pieces the group performed were either compositions that most Brazilian groups know such as *Kenka Yatai*, or pieces by Grupo Wadan, an ensemble from São Paulo, or Japan Marvelous, a group based in Japan with Brazilian Nikkei members. Further, Wadō members never composed pieces on their own. Instead, the group would invite leaders from Southern taiko groups such as Ishindaiko or Grupo Sansey from Londrina to “help” with compositions. Some Wadō members attributed their compositions to the invited sensei rather than their own efforts and ideas, while others took credit for their part in composing the pieces. I was often confused about who the “composer” or owner of Wadō pieces were and to what extent they were collaborative creations.

Leo, following earlier assertions that musical fusion attempts would be “bad for the music,” noted that *Irasshai* would not have been composed years earlier when

members were preoccupied with correctly and conscientiously presenting a Japanese art form. “There is always a fear of doing something before a Japanese group does it...,” he said, noting anxieties about not playing correctly and regarding Japanese and Brazilian Southeastern groups as authorities. “We went through a period of trying to understand taiko, what it is, and correct methods. There are still people in the group that think that we shouldn’t be mixing genres.”⁵² These ideas about mixing as something that only advanced players do derive from Japanese artistic attitudes about innovation and individuation in Japanese art forms. Yano argues that Japanese arts training views creativity as reserved for advanced artists. Beginners must stick to formulas, or set patterns (*kata*) before individualizing or changing their performances (2002, 50, 90–91). Wadō members had internalized ideas about mixing and creativity as reserved for only advanced practitioners of a music form.

Before composing *Irasshai*, when I asked Wadō members how Bahian identity manifests itself in the group’s performances and activities, many described economic differences between taiko in Bahia and in other regions. Thaís and Leo cited difficulties finding spaces to practice and procuring Japanese instruments. Parents of Wadō members were not financially or otherwise invested in the group as parents were in Southern groups. Others pointed to aesthetic decisions, such as choosing to feature images of a popular souvenir and spiritual symbol associated with Salvador, a ribbon from the Bonfim Basilica, on the players’ happi (Figures 2 and 3). They also used souvenir ribbons

⁵² Bocanera, Leo. Personal interview with author. July 27, 2018. Barris, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

from the church to tie straps to okedo to convert them to katsugi, a style where the drum is fastened to the body with a single cross-body strap (Figure 4).

The decision to visually display *baianidade* did not extend to music before composing *Irasshai*. Several members narrated Wadō's failed attempts at integrating Bahian rhythms and instruments into their compositions in the recent past. Luigi Kawano told me, "There was a time where we tried to make samba sounds and axé sounds in our music, trying to Brazilianize our group a little. We even talked about adding berimbau into our compositions. But it never worked." Some cited failures due to internal disagreements, and others referred to the group's "lack of discipline" as reasons for initial failures at mixing. Many thought it was interesting to learn to play Bahian percussion instruments, but there was no effort to continue training and experimenting. In 2017, an opportunity to perform in a pre-Carnival parade in exchange for a grant from the state government prompted the reconfiguring of certain compositions into a parade form. Members played samba-inspired rhythms to transition between songs they already knew. When members who were not involved in the arrangement of these pieces saw them, some criticized the "mixture," but Daniela, one of the composers responsible for the arrangements replied, "That's our purpose. To mix." Later, plans for playing in pre-Carnival parades fell through, and the rearranged compositions were put aside and forgotten until later a few months later when the group finally composed *Irasshai*.



Figure 2: Happi featuring images of souvenir ribbons from the Senhor do Bonfim church

Lara and Luigi play fûe wearing happi featuring images from the souvenir ribbons from the Senhor do Bonfim Basilica during an outdoor concert in January 2018. The image on the happi was one way that Wadō could display their baianidade for many years before experimenting with music.



Figure 3: The Senhor do Bonfim Basilica and Souvenir Ribbons

Pilgrims tie these ribbons to the gates of the church grounds when making petitions to the Senhor do Bonfim, associated with the Candomblé deity Oxalá. A museum inside of the church shows photos of “miracles,” including cancer survivors and children that pilgrims prayed for at the Basilica. Relationships members had with the site church varied. One Wadō member told me that she had a deep connection with the site since Oxalá was her Orixá (guiding spirit). Another member told me that he had never visited the church.



Figure 4: Senhor do Bonfim ribbons on an okedo

Two ribbons from the Senhor do Bonfim church tied to an okedo to be used to fasten a shoulder strap to play it katsugi style.

Irasshai grew out of a few members playing in Carnival, as well as many wanting to explore what it meant to be Bahian, and specifically, what it meant to be a Bahian taiko group. When I asked Vinicius about this piece, he told me,

We feel a sense of Bahian music as our property. We feel more authority over it, and interest in it also. It makes sense for us to do a Bahian composition because we live here. Even though we are a taiko group, we are from Bahia, and Bahia has a strong tradition of percussion. I think it would be foolish (*uma besteira*) if we never did anything related to our city. It's time we did this composition. Really, we should have done it a long time ago.⁵³

Irasshai was also a manifestation of multiracial and multicultural identifications among Wadō members. Afro Brazilian rhythms on taiko drums and accompanying melodies on the fue paired with beating taiko drums with baquetas designed to beat samba drums emphasize the mixtures and the in-betweenness that Wadō members often narrated when referring to their heritage and their bodies.

Mixing: A Brief History of Brazilian Nationalism and Musical Aesthetics

To intentionally mix or not to mix genres in taiko was something that Wadō members could not agree upon. However, many Wadō members believed mixing was inevitable due to Wadō members having Brazilian and Bahian bodies. Mixing, or *mestiçagem*, was part of Brazilian nationalist narratives since the late nineteenth century, and they were part of musical aesthetics closely related to the ideas about Brazil and Brazilian people.

⁵³ Honda, Vinicius. Personal Interview with author. July 28, 2018. Barris, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

While the idea of mixing has been central in Brazilian literary works since the mid nineteenth century in works such as *Iracema* and *O Guarani*, and through the 1930s and 50s, the notion of racial mixing as integral to Brazil's character is often traced to historical and sociological works by Gilberto Freyre and Sergio Buarque de Hollanda, published in the 1930s. Gilberto Freyre's *Casa Grande e Senzala* traces the "three races" as integral to the formation of Brazil and its people (Freyre 1998). Vianna notes that Freyre, from the Northeastern state of Pernambuco, was ashamed of his mixed-race heritage until he studied with Franz Boas in New York, where he came to "place a positive value on the race mixing that he later came to regard as the true source of... national culture" (2007, 194). Sergio Buarque de Holanda argued that racial mixing between African and European populations was commonplace in Lisbon in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, furthering the notion that racial mixing is a natural tendency for Brazilians as a colony of Portugal for over 300 years (2012, 25). In the 1970s, however, DaMatta argued that the notion of Brazil as a country without racism due to *mestiçagem* "was a subtle way of hiding...racism Brazilian style.... It made injustice tolerable and difference, a question of time and love" (1984, 48). This is a fact that many Brazilians, especially activists in the Black movement, have emphasized. Black women activists have begun to talk openly about how mixing in Brazil was the result of violence, slavery, and rape (Big 2015).

Brazilian music often reflected thinking about mixing. The creation of Brazilian nationalist concert and popular musics, as well as scholarship on these musics, reflected the idea that Brazil was built on "three races," or African, European, and Indigenous

groups. National themes related to racial mixture and inspired by works of 19th century Brazilian literature served as inspiration for some of the first uniquely Brazilian works of concert music. Squeff and Wisnick note that Carlos Gomez created an opera based on Alencar's novel *O Guarani*, which tells the story of the marriage between an Indigenous man and European woman (1982). Ferrão Moreira traces influences of Indigenous music on Villa-Lobos' compositions by examining melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic aspects of his scores and comparing them to transcriptions of Indigenous songs (Ferrão Moreira 2013b; 2013a). Apart from a few examples, however, the "Indian" was generally left out of Brazilian musical creations, and Indigenous music rarely served as an inspiration for most late nineteenth and early twentieth century composers. Béhague argued that Indigenous music seemed "too far removed" to serve as a source for national music (Béhague 1971, 10). Mario de Andrade called the suggestion of using Indigenous music as inspiration for nationalist compositions "puerile," since "national art," which he envisioned as the art of urban dwellers, "already exists in the unconscious of the people" (1962, 15–16). Instead, popular music, emerging from African-influenced genres such as *maxixe* and *lundu*, was a source "to which [composers] could most naturally turn" (Béhague 1971, 43). According to Béhague, Nepomuceno's work, *Dança de Negros* was the first "'Negro dance' of the Brazilian repertoire" (ibid, 28). In an article on the contributions of African influences on the music of Brazil, Vassberg focuses primarily on the figure of the "mulato" as a primary music-maker in Brazil, in both "serious" and "popular" musics of the twentieth century (1976). Sandroni argues, however, that many of the early composers merely imitated black rhythms that they believed that they were

hearing, resulting in “allusions” to “syncopations that written music made to that which was African in oral traditional music” (2001, 26).

Discourses about mixing were also central to scholarship on national popular musical genres, especially the samba. Vianna Junior and Chasteen relate the emergence of samba as a nationalist genre to Gilberto Freyre’s writings on the mixed-race identity of Brazilians. He notes that Freyre, who “believed music to be the chief expression of Brazilian national spirit,” was present during many musical gatherings in Rio de Janeiro at the homes of the “Aunts” who hosted parties where the first sambas were composed (1999, 2). Moehn argues that in the late twentieth century, discourses about mixing continued to dominate the way that middle class and Rio-based musicians thought about and created Brazilian popular music (2008; 2012). He argues that the ethos “mixture” is also related to the notion of being in the “middle”: the “middle” of the political spectrum and the “middle” class (2012, 13). Moehn relates the ethos of the musicians he interviews to the Tropicália movement of the 1960s, which Sovik argues, “brought acceptance to a situation of in-betweenness... It propounded a popular music neither rock nor bossa nova, neither right-wing nor left-wing, neither explicitly interested in being purely Brazilian nor anything but that” (2001, 100).

Globalization, Foreign Influences, Cannibalism

During various phases of Brazilian history, Brazilian artists have incorporated, imitated, and rejected foreign influences, particularly from Europe and the United States. An engagement with foreign musics can be traced to the early days of contact between Europeans and Indigenous peoples. Seeger notes that Indigenous peoples often

incorporated outsiders' musics, and Budasz relates the practice of cultural cooptation to cannibalism, both literally and metaphorically, tracing historical documents on cannibalistic Indigenous practices in seventeenth century Brazil (1987; 2006). He relates Indigenous cannibalism to the modernist *Manifesto Antropófago*, in which Oswald de Andrade argued “for a critical ingestion of European culture” and its incorporation by Brazilian artists (Budasz 2006; O. de Andrade 1976). For these artists, “the cannibal was a powerful symbol that could be used as a national response to recent European ‘isms” by assimilating and using them (Budasz 2006, 2).

Some musicians, scholars and audiences rejected foreign influences entirely, even when mixed with Brazilian musics. Tinhorão, for example, lamented that the middle-class university student composers of bossa nova had “resolved to definitively break with samba patrimony,” and created music that imitated cool jazz, condemning the genre as inauthentic (1969, 246–48). Early MPB (Música Popular Brasileira) musicians rejected the use of electric instruments, and audience members turned their backs on a performance by *Os Mutantes* during the 1968 Festival of Song, as “the use of electric instruments and rock arrangements was often regarded as a capitulation to US cultural imperialism” (Perrone and Dunn 2001, 19; Harvey 2001; Dunn 2001, 75).

Nonetheless, the use of rock instruments by the Brazilian artists Gil, Veloso, and *Os Mutantes* was not passive. Instead, these artists “incorporated Oswald de Andrade’s idea of cultural cannibalism in order to create hybrid arts that challenged the restrictive political and aesthetic dualisms of the time” (Harvey 2001, 109). Harvey discusses the fusion of rock elements with Brazilian forms such as frevo, and maracatu, and the use of

Afro-Brazilian instruments such as the berimbau (Ibid.). In Rio de Janeiro in the 1990s, middle-class musicians also mixed foreign influences with Brazilian genres, which many artists conceptualized as “cannibalism” (Moehn 2012, 10–11).

Taiko Gatekeeping

According to nationalist narratives, to mix, and especially to mix musical genres, was a uniquely Brazilian skill and tendency. While mixing was not initially something that Wadō members were interested in, many members told me that a Bahian character is innate in the bodies of Wadō members, and therefore, mixing Japanese taiko with Bahian movement was inevitable. Furthermore, “mixed” taiko emerged in Bahia because of its geographical distance from the epicenters of Japanese Brazilian communities. Distance allowed for experimentation far away from authority figures associated with Brazilian taiko and gatekeeping about what taiko is and what it is not.

The question of whether the *Irasshai* could be considered taiko, and indeed, whether the very bodies of the players could ever play authentic taiko, was a question that caused anxiety among some Wadō members. Gatekeeping taiko is something that happens in taiko communities throughout the world, where “taiko” is compared with “just drumming” depending on who plays, how they play, and how they interact musically and personally with other taiko players (Wong 2019, 124–27). In Brazil, this process of determining the validity of someone’s playing happens between players and at

performances,⁵⁴ but also in large organizations, such as the Brazilian Taiko Association (Associação Brasileira de Taikô, or ABT). The ABT's competitions, exams, workshops, and performances dictated what taiko was and was not, what kinds of movements and sounds could be in a "taiko" composition, and what kinds of bodies could play taiko throughout Brazil.

The Brazilian Taiko Association (ABT)

The ABT is the only multi-group taiko organization in Brazil.⁵⁵ Since most groups in Brazil belong to the organization, it controls many of the narratives concerning what taiko is and what taiko is not. It works closely with the Nippon Taiko Foundation, which Bender describes as the largest association of Taiko groups in Japan, and the brainchild of Daihachi Oguchi, which was designed to preserve local drumming techniques and practices, but also standardize and nationalize "Japanese taiko."

The ABT's current website tells the story of the organization, It grew out of the efforts of Pedro Yano. In 1998, Yano was the president of the Fukuoka Kenjinkai, an association of descendants from Fukuoka province. The organization wanted to draw young people to maintain and attract interest in Japanese culture among youth. Yano

⁵⁴ At a performance in 2012 by Grupo Wadan, a student from another group told me that her group was different than Grupo Wadan. Her group played "traditional" taiko." I understood from that conversation that shiny costumes and virtuoso dance moves with taiko were not considered "traditional."

⁵⁵ Other groups that are not taiko organizations sometimes put on events, such as the Kawasuji festival, hosted by a different taiko group every year, or Taiko Talents, an online festival that emerged during Covid to continue festivals and competitions started by Hibiki Wadaiko in Marilia São Paulo. Both were open to all taiko groups. Sometimes taiko groups are associated with a particular organization such as a kenjinkai or a Japanese association of a particular city, which is not a taiko organization.

requested a volunteer taiko teacher from JICA, Yukihiisa Oda, from Fukuoka who started the first of four groups in the state of São Paulo in 2002. In 2004, the Associação Brasileira de Taikô was formally established, and in the same year, a championship was held under the guidance of a new taiko teacher, Li-Sei Watanabe, another JICA volunteer. In 2008, the organization coordinated a performance of approximately 1,000 drummers in São Paulo's sambodromo (Carnival parade ground) to commemorate 100 years of Japanese immigration in Brazil. The organization works in conjunction with the Nippon Taiko Foundation and JICA to coordinate activities such as proficiency tests, training, teachers coming from Japan, performances, and competitions for the "maintenance and diffusion of taiko in Brazil" ("Sobre – Associação Brasileira de Taiko" n.d.). Further, the organization disseminates a version of a taiko textbook to players throughout Brazil, with many sections translated from the Nippon Taiko Foundation's Taiko Textbook, used to standardize and nationalize taiko in Japan (Bender 2012, 187).⁵⁶

I visited several ABT-affiliated taiko groups and documented ABT taiko competitions in Brazil in 2011 and 2012. In 2017, I saw performances at an emigration museum in Kobe by winners of ABT taiko championships visiting from Brazil, along with another from Argentina. In Latin America, the ABT is highly organized, and its influence on taiko is broad, especially in the Southern and Southeastern regions of Brazil.

⁵⁶ The Nippon Taiko Foundation put together a textbook for new members and students with the purpose of addressing concerns about students acquiring bad playing habits (Bender 2012, 183–87). The organization requires that students who participate in their workshops buy the textbook. Bender notes that local drumming styles are acknowledged as exceptions in the Nippon Taiko Foundation's textbook, but the pedagogies of these styles are inherently changed because of the disembodiment of placing them in a textbook (Ibid.).

As its website states, the ABT is “the main entity responsible for the expansion of taiko in Brazil” (Ibid.).

Wadō was not affiliated with the ABT at any point during its history, and neither were most groups in the Northeastern region. Two notable São Paulo-based groups, Tanguê Setsuko Taiko, the first ensemble in Brazil, and the professional group Wadaiko Sho, which were around before the ABT existed, were also not members.⁵⁷ I met other professional groups that were ABT affiliated during part of their history but were no longer members. When I first asked Wadō members why they were not affiliated with the ABT, they cited financial reasons. Instead of paying ABT membership dues, Wadō chose to put money toward buying instruments and inviting teachers from Southern areas of Brazil (many of whom were members of ABT-affiliated groups) to give workshops. Even though Wadō was not part of the ABT, ideas about what taiko was and was not that the ABT disseminated affected debates about what constituted taiko in Wadō.

During a 2011 competition that I discuss below, along with interviews that followed, it was clear that the ABT was successfully establishing narratives around what Brazilian taiko could or could not be. At the event, I met members of Ishindaiko from Londrina, the group that helped establish Wadō. Members of the group were still under eighteen at the time and they had expected to win, or at least place in the top five of the competition. Instead, ABT judges decided that their performance was not “taiko” enough to win the championship and compete in a wider youth competition in Japan.

⁵⁷ Tanguê Setsuko Taiko is affiliated with Oedo Sukeroku Taiko in Japan and the San Francisco Taiko Dojo in the United States.

Fieldnotes from the 2011 ABT Taiko Championship

On a cold July morning in 2011, more than twenty tour buses park in front of the Japanese Cultural Association in Presidente Prudente, São Paulo. Hundreds of Japanese-Brazilian children, adolescents, and parents emerge from these busses, dressed in jackets, tee-shirts, and sweatpants announcing the names of their taiko teams in both roman letters and kanji after having slept in buses all night. With sleepy faces, they stumble into the building's cafeteria where they brush their teeth, eat breakfast, and greet one another. Parents claim folding chairs in an auditorium facing a small wooden stage and a table with rows of trophies. At 9am the competition officially opens with the introduction of each ensemble, speeches encouraging the players to “do their best,” a moment of silence for the recent tsunami victims in Fukushima, and the Brazilian and Japanese national anthems (Figure 5).⁵⁸ Japanese and Nikkei men in suits sit at a table at the back of the auditorium, closely evaluating forty-three five-minute performances, separated by the following categories: “junior,” or eighteen and under; “general” or all ages; “master,” or ages forty and above; and solo performances on the odaiko.

The team that wins the junior category will go to Japan and compete in a wider competition with youth groups associated with the Nippon Taiko Foundation. I set up my video camera near the parents of Ishindaiko's members, from the city of Londrina,

⁵⁸ Bender notes that the Nippon Taiko Foundation also opens many of their events with the Japanese national anthem. He argues that the singing of the national anthem in Japan is controversial; it is “thought to evoke nationalistic reverence for the emperor of wartime Japan,” and it is a marker of right-learning politics in recent Japanese history (188).

Paraná. One parent tells me the players had been practicing for several months. They had been “working hard,” and she promises me an exciting and “different” performance.

Ishindaiko’s performance is indeed “different” from the others. The group performs elaborate choreography and unrestrained body movement. Some performers do not actually strike the drums at first, but instead wave their bachi in circles, using them to mimic a sword fight. For visual impact, they toss them to one another across the stage. When the performers play the fue, their heads and arms sway in synchronized waving movements. The piece culminates in a fast crescendo, and the crowd roars at the end of the performance.⁵⁹

More than eight hours later, all the performances are completed. Before announcing the first-place winner of the all-ages category, Mr. Watanabe, the moderator and sensei to most of the groups, addresses the players through a translator.

“Some groups are more concerned with dancing than playing taiko,” he says. “This is a taiko competition. Not a dance competition.” I know that he is talking about Ishindaiko’s performance. Mr. Watanabe announces the winners from fifth to first place, without mentioning Ishin. The youngest members of Ishindaiko cry. I comment to one of the mothers that in my opinion, Grupo Ishin should be the champions. I congratulate a young member on his performance, and he disappointedly thanks me.

⁵⁹ <https://vimeo.com/32533987/99d1ddcec1> | <https://sites.google.com/view/taiko-samba/chapter-2>



Figure 5: ABT Championship Opening

Opening Ceremony from 2011 Brazilian Taiko Championship in Presidente Prudente, São Paulo. During the ceremony, players from each of the competing taiko teams lined up while holding signs with the names of their cities and teams. They stand while listening to the national anthem and to opening speeches. This event showcases Japanese nationalism (Bender 2012) and is an attempt to continue to codify and define taiko in Brazil.

Bruno and the ABT: Rescuing “Traditional” Taiko

Isshin Daiko won a championship two years later when the piece they performed was more within the confines of “taiko.” However, they continued to compose pieces with a lot of dance. They also helped Wadō compose similar pieces. The authority to mix taiko with other music and dance genres in Brazil was complicated by taiko authority figures in the ABT who police the boundaries of what constitutes taiko. In a 2011

interview, Bruno Shimada, an administrator for the ABT, told me that the mission of the organization is to rescue or recover (*resgatar*) traditional taiko in Brazil rather than create “new” or “modern” taiko, so experimentation should be avoided: ⁶⁰

We are trying to diminish the difference between taiko here in Brazil and taiko in Japan... one of our goals here at the association is that the teachings that we provide will rescue (*resgatar*) traditional Japanese taiko and not create a modern taiko. In Japan, it is very common to see contemporary compositions. And in Brazil, we value the traditional.

What is traditional to you? In Japan I've heard that traditional drumming is festival drumming, and not performing on stage.

This is a little bit delicate to analyze because we are Brazilians, descendants of Japanese saying what traditional taiko in Japan is. And even though there are Japanese people living in Brazil who came from Japan, it is a little complicated because we are not in Japan. But one thing that is very clear in relation to traditional versus modern taiko is... the composition. If other instruments are included and if they are of Japanese origin or not. The technique. If when you beat the drum there is some technique, or if you use the palm of the hand, the elbow, to beat the drum, or if you beat on the body of the drum. If the bachi is wooden, or if it is made of plastic or metal. All of this differentiates, here in Brazil, if you are maintaining something traditional or something more modern. Also, what the performer wears. If they use happi, or if they use jeans or pants that dancers use. Or if they use glasses, makeup, or hats when they play. If the haircut is outlandish. All of this differentiates traditional versus modern taiko in Brazil.... Sometimes someone is trying to make taiko modern, since they are influenced by other kinds of art forms. If the player is a student of ballet, incorporating something from ballet in taiko movement. Even if it isn't intentional, there is a touch of it. A position of the body, hand, or arm.

So if someone studied another form of art, it is no longer traditional?

I think there is never any kind of one hundred percent traditional. Tradition in Japan is old.... I think it is impossible to maintain one hundred percent tradition in taiko having been born in an era outside of taiko. The way you live, your face, your body, the way you think is going to influence everything, right? But I think we can be close to traditional or say that our taiko is characterized by the tradition of Japan if you maintain basic techniques of how taiko in Japan is. Here in Brazil,

⁶⁰ Shimada, Bruno. Personal interview with author. January 22, 2011. Liberdade, São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil.

Brazilian music ends up escaping into the musicality of taiko players who do not have Japanese teachers. They end up escaping into the music.

Shimada described traditional taiko as characterized by an absence of modern materials, as well as performances in which Western clothing, accessories, instruments, and dance techniques are employed. For Bruno and ABT judges, modern and Western “dance,” such as ballet, threaten to creep into taiko performances through the taiko-playing bodies that have studied it. Ancient bodies and Japanese bodies are ideal. What these ancient bodies did and may look like today are ideas that the ABT, and its parent organization, the Nippon Taiko Foundation, is trying to define and divulge throughout the world through the influx of affiliated teachers from Japan, exams, and an annual taiko competition. Further, Wadō members could never play traditional taiko. Their bodies would never be Japanese, and even less so than Nikkei born and living in Brazil in the 21st century. Most were multiracial with Bahian kinesonic repertoires.

Setsuo Kinoshita’s *Taiko de Samba: Mixing Genres in São Paulo*

Not all taiko authorities in Brazil, however, were opposed to mixing or trying to erase Brazilian kinesonic repertoires from the bodies of practitioners. Setsuo Kinoshita, the founder of Wadaiko Sho, was an authority on taiko in Brazil who worked to respect and encourage Brazilian kinesonic repertoires in the bodies of his students. He also composed taiko pieces featuring samba rhythms and was active in samba schools. Not affiliated with the ABT, Wadaiko Sho is historically significant as the first professional taiko group in Brazil.

Wadō was not the first taiko group in Brazil that mixed taiko and samba, although mixtures were rare and exceptions. Setsuo Kinoshita composed *Taiko de Samba*, mixing taiko and samba as the name suggests, in the early 2000s after spending time in Japan with the group Yamato Taiko. Lorenz identifies Kinoshita as “one of the few Nikkei musicians in Brazil who has embraced rather than suppressing the bicultural evolution of taiko, accentuating rather than suppressing the influence of Afro Brazilian aesthetic forms of taiko practice” (2016, 5). When Kinoshita started teaching taiko in the 1990s, his intentions were similar to those of the ABT; he wanted to help his students “recover” their Japanese heritage and promote Japanese culture through taiko (Lorenz 2007, 105). Later, disillusioned with Brazilian and Brazilian Nikkei students, he returned to Japan, where he studied samba percussion and started a samba school. When he returned to Brazil in 2001, he had a new approach to teaching, where he wanted his students, mostly Nikkei Brazilians, to be comfortable with both sides of their identity and to heal internalized racism. He decided that taiko did not need to be so rigid. In an interview, he told Lorenz, “Why does taiko have to be played in a [Japanese] way? Why can’t we swing a little bit, dance a little bit? Since I have this Brazilian side, I no longer want to say that [my students] have to play like the Japanese. I don’t want them to lose their Brazilian identity” (Ibid., 112).

Since Kinoshita was the “pioneer” of professional taiko in Brazil, had won several awards in Japanese taiko competitions, and was “immortalized” in the Japanese

Immigration Museum in São Paulo, his *Taiko de Samba* was accepted as legitimate taiko in the Nikkei community.⁶¹

Taiko Gatekeeping and Wadō: Southern Groups as Authorities

Wadō members, who were not authorities on taiko like Kinoshita, took a risk when they composed a song that accentuated their Bahian heritage and ancestry. However, they relied on Japanese and Nikkei authorities on taiko and samba to legitimize *Irasshai* during its creation. Most Wadō members were unaware of Kinoshita's piece, and until composing *Irasshai*, they were anxious about experimenting with taiko. Many told me about a time they experimented by beating their bachi on the floor for a composition they created on their own for a Kawasuji festival, an annual taiko festival in Brazil. Their sensei from Londrina scolded them for disrespecting the instruments, and this reprimand caused some members considerable pain, which eventually led some of them to leave Wadō.

Years later, when composing *Irasshai*, fear of authority was assuaged by the fact that Wadō members did not compose the piece alone. Japanese and Nikkei authorities lent authenticity to the piece, which may have protected the group from similar reproach. First, the decision to learn samba and Bahian rhythms from Naoya Sawada instead of countless other teachers in Bahia was a decision that lent Japaneseness and Japanese authority to the piece. A Nikkei teacher from Ishindaiko from Londrina helped Wadō members set the piece and put the rhythms together. Wadō members did not compose the

⁶¹ These words in quotes come from Kinoshita's biography in local concert programs. See, for example: <https://www.sesisp.org.br/evento/af3b2117-927e-4d4d-a255-2badbf599758/wadaiko-sho>

piece on their own, even though they could have. Rather, the authority from this piece came from recognized experts on samba and taiko who were Japanese and Nikkei respectively.

I wondered about these choices with Wadō members. There were many teachers who could have helped compose a piece using Bahian and Brazilian rhythms that could be mapped on taiko drums. The group had already collaborated with Olodum and Quabales. Why could they not collaborate again? There were also many capoeira mestres who could have helped choreograph the capoeira section of the piece. Why did Wadō members choose a Japanese samba player and a teacher from the South who was not a specialist in Brazilian genres to help compose *Irasshai*?

One person told me that having a teacher from another group would prevent arguing among members on how to arrange the piece. Another member, Leo Raposo, confessed that the choice to bring Sawada to the group made sense, although the choice to invite a sensei from Ishindaiko to help may not have made sense, as this person was not a specialist in Afro-Bahian rhythms:

The new song was something that had to happen in our group. And it was good that some members participated in Carnival and learned from Naoya. That is something that made much more sense than bringing a teacher from Ishindaiko here to work on a piece that is supposed to be Afrobaiano. That doesn't make sense.

That is something I was thinking. The group isn't capable of composing something on its own?

That is another issue. The group doesn't believe in itself. It's as if the group wants to be an offshoot of Grupo Ishin.

Past experiences with mixing and anxiety about the group not being Japanese enough was a likely reason that the group brought a sensei from Ishindaiko. Wadō was primarily a “taiko group,” Japanese and Nikkei individuals from Southeastern regions were the foremost experts on what could be called a taiko piece. Mapping Bahian rhythms onto taiko drums without the approval of a Japanese or Nikkei authority figure, particularly from the South, may have negated its taiko-ness. Wadō could have been accused of disrespecting taiko for a second time, and Nikkei taiko authorities from an ABT-affiliated group prevented the possibility of reproach.

Nikkei as Authorities, Nikkei as Brazilian

Moreover, even within Wadō, Nikkei were authorities, not only because they were excellent players, but also because of their identities. In an interview, a new member identified Akemi Tahara as an authority that lent legitimacy to Wadō. However, this new player knew very little about Akemi. She was not a rehearsal leader or group president at the time, and the new member mistook her nationality. Her presence and appearance lent authority to the group, and the new member described her identity as “legitimate”:

This is what I believe: the people that teach us in this group are Japanese. In the end, there are many Japanese and Japanese Brazilians who are, in a way Japanese, that teach us taiko. Like Akemi.

Akemi?

She’s legitimate, right?

She’s Brazilian.

She’s Brazilian?

Yes, she's baiana. She lived a time in Japan when she was—

Little. Oh, that's why I thought she was from there.

Her parents speak Japanese at home. Her mother is a descendant, and her father is from there.

I thought she was one hundred percent.

She even tells me sometimes that she is Bahian. And sometimes she refers to herself as a "foreigner" when we are around Japanese people.

Well, I think the difference in our taiko must be minimal. It isn't like a couple of Japanese people came here and taught Bahians that taught a little bit like Japanese and a little bit like Bahians. Thinking about Akemi, it is very direct, very close. And for being more pure, so to speak, we are learning. I think that the difference between legitimate Japanese taiko and ours, if there is one, must be very little.

Besides marking Akemi as an eternal foreigner, when this new Wadō member used words like "pure" and "legitimate," they revealed that for them, Akemi's Japanese appearance, despite her self-professed Bahian identity, lent legitimacy to Wadō's taiko, which is likely also true for audiences and potential students.

At the same time, negating someone's Japanese heritage was a way to negate musical authority. Vinicius, a Wadō member who identifies as "Black Yellow," commonly used his mother's last name, Honda, rather than his father's Portuguese last name. He wanted to be known as Vinicius Honda to honor his relationship with his mother and grandfather. Once, he was in a conflict with another member, who complained about him to other members. During this conversation, she called him by his father's Portuguese last name. Negating his Nikkei identity also negated his taiko skills and authority in the group, and even called into question his identity and legitimacy as a taiko player.

Nikkei members of Wadō, however, identified as Brazilian Nikkei. They carried the same Brazilian kinesonic repertoires in their bodies as the rest of the group. Akemi, the group's most senior member, is Nisei. Despite being raised in a Japanese household, being kibeï, and speaking Japanese at home, Akemi often described herself as a baiana. She told me about her identity manifesting in decisions to wear colorful clothing, ask a lot of questions, converse with strangers, and work on her doctorate in Brazil rather than Japan. When describing her interactions with Japanese travelers, she often referred to herself as gaijin, or estrangeira (foreigner), once indicating that she enjoyed the ability to break rules without the reproach that a Japanese woman might receive.

Luigi, another Nikkei member who joined the group as a child, also told me, "I feel that by being in Brazil, I feel more Brazilian than Japanese." Further, he told me, "I want to go to Japan, and I'm interested in learning about it, but I know I don't want to live there forever." Despite growing up in a Nikkei household with parents who were deeply involved in ANISA, Luigi identified as Brazilian, challenging tropes about Nikkei as eternal foreigners.

Nikkei as Eternal Foreigners: Japanese Taiko, Brazilian Taiko

Although Japanese migration to Brazil recently celebrated its 110th anniversary, the Nikkei community and its music remains outside of master narratives of what it means to be Brazilian: a mixture of Black, Indigenous, and White races. Although Nikkei in Wadō identified as Brazilian, Asians in Brazil, as in other parts of the world, were often viewed as perpetual foreigners due to their appearances. As Fuuka Sunano told me:

Here in Salvador, Japanese culture isn't very strong. I felt very stereotyped, very discriminated against for being Japanese in Salvador. Because there aren't a lot of us. People don't understand that I can be Brazilian even while having a Japanese appearance. You know? This is something that Japanese descendants or Asians in general are going to have to face in Brazil... It's partially because the Japanese community is often closed, and sometimes people from other groups don't have access to it... But it's something that is as much the fault of the (Nikkei) community as society in general. Brazilian society doesn't recognize us as Brazilians. It's a racism of disinformation, let's say. As if they didn't know that there is the possibility of being Brazilian and having Japanese heritage. As if I could only be Japanese.⁶²

Many scholars have written about Brazilian Nikkei perceived as and/or feeling like eternal foreigners, at times because of their own resistance to Brazilian nationalist narratives. Masterson and Funada-Classen note that early Issei's intentions to eventually return home to Japan after making money in Brazil, and their resistance to the Vargas government's nationalization campaigns in the 1930s which alienated many Issei and contributed to their "longing" for the Japanese homeland and resisting Brazilian identity (2003, 76, 100). Postwar Brazilian Nikkei-jin, according to the authors, were more concentrated, and "culturally affiliated with their Japanese roots" than Nikkei in other parts of Latin America (Ibid., 185). Lesser defines three "flexible, competing, and intertwined public strategies" Japanese immigrants and their descendants created around their struggle for Brazilian ethnicity: hyphenation, or an argument that Japanese were ethnically White to render their identities "harmless" and "become part of traditionally desired groups"; *brasilidade* (Brazilianness), arguing that Brazil would improve by becoming more "Japanese,;" and finally, ultranationalism, rejecting all forms of inclusion

⁶² Sunano, Fuuka. Recorded interview with author. Pituba, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, September 11, 2017.

(Ibid.). In the communities I studied, I found that the first and second positions were common. Many Nikkei wanted to influence Brazil and make it more Japanese.

Later, Brazilian Nikkei dekassegui, which I discussed in the previous chapter, described the feeling of being “Japanese in Brazil” and “Brazilian in Japan.” One Nikkei interlocutor living in São Paulo told me that when the national teams of Brazil and Japan would play off, he would wear a Brazilian soccer jersey if he was in Japan and a Japanese jersey if in Brazil.⁶³ Nikkei wishing to be recognized as Brazilian living with those who aim to create communities that are as Japanese as possible, still existed in Nikkei communities in 2017 and 2018.

Nationalist narratives of Brazil as a mix between Black, White, and Indigenous people and cultures, taught in schools, museums, and in books about Brazil, however, are also causes of Brazilians positioning of Nikkei as eternal foreigners. Asian heritage in Brazil remains outside of the triangle of Brazilian identity. Although Asians have lived in Brazil since the mid nineteenth century, they are considered foreigners regardless of how many generations their families have been in Brazil. Moreover, Brazilian Nikkei and Japanese citizens were often conflated by both members of the Nikkei community and those outside of it, particularly when explaining cultural values, ideas about Japan, or asking questions about my research.

Similarly, in Brazil, Asian music was often distinctly viewed as foreign and separate, emanating from a country with a “millennial” culture on the opposite side of the

⁶³ Anonymous interview with author. July 2011. Liberdade, São Paulo.

world. Hosokawa's work on karaoke practices in São Paulo directly addresses efforts to separate Brazilian music from Japanese music, asserting that singing practices in the Japanese Brazilian community serve to resist Brazilian nationalist discourses that prize hybridity (1998). Hosokawa reports that high levels of discipline in singing contests contrast Brazilian karaoke practices, which are characterized by what Japanese Brazilians view as a "badly-behaved version" of karaoke, where "the rules of behavior" associated with Japanese karaoke practices "are so incompatible" with Brazilian ones "that 'crossover' has not taken place in the karaoke scene in Brazil, a nation proud of its racial miscegenation" (Ibid., 281). Hosokawa has also called the Japanese Brazilian colony an "ethnic enclave" and has argued that Japanese singing practices, such as karaoke and minyo, promoted "affective experiences," enhancing a sense of ethnic identity and longing for Japan. Similarly, the ABT's stance on taiko as "traditional" and "Japanese," and its efforts to manage the borders of taiko through competitions, certificates, festivals, and trainings resisted mixing and hybridity in Brazilian taiko. To the ABT, and to most Brazilian groups, taiko was Japanese. Brazilian taiko, to be taiko, needed to emulate taiko in Japan as much as possible.

There are, however, examples of mixtures in Japanese music. Zhen Brasil, a group comprised of Brazilian Nikkei who play samba, rewrite Japanese descendants into the myth of Brazilians as mixtures of races (Lorenz 2011). Wadaiko Sho, discussed above, also aims to respect and celebrate Nikkei taiko players' Brazilian identities and kinesonic repertoires, contrasting the ABT's mandate to make taiko "traditional." Wadō contended with these two ideas during their ten years of existence: of taiko as distinctly

Japanese and separate from Brazilian music, and the possibility of taiko mixtures, hinting at the possibility of a Brazilian taiko.

Taiko and Samba in Wadō

Many Japanese musical practices in Brazil serve as a tool to promote Japanese culture, even, and especially when people without Japanese heritage participate in these practices. Wadō's main mission was to promote Japanese culture, and mixtures between styles were rare until composing *Irasshai*. Wadō members had internalized the ABT's stance on taiko, as well as the Wadō's mandate to promote Japanese culture. As Lika Kawano told me, "The main objective of Wadō is to disseminate the culture. That is first. Spreading the Japanese culture through music." Similarly, Hosokawa argues that Japanese culture, including its music shows "presumed Japanese virtues," which Japanese descendants would bring to Brazil and be recognized as a "respectable group by the host society" rather than integrate into Brazilian culture (1998, 107). Promoting Japanese culture through music in Wadō also was a way of showing a Japanese music as separate and virtuous, promoting "Japanese values." Experimenting with Brazilian music in taiko may have interfered with this mandate.

Naoya Sawada teaching samba, however, helped to calm any worries and helped everyone explore differences between taiko and samba. When Sawada began teaching Wadō members to play Afro-Bahian genres, Sawada also began to participate in Wadō's workshops, learning to play Japanese taiko from Brazilians. In these encounters where Wadō was learning to play Bahian music from a Japanese expatriate, and a Japanese person was learning taiko from Bahians, correcting form, and learning "correct" ways to

play each genre was of utmost importance. The collaborations between Sawada and Wadō could have resulted in complex mixture. However, they did not at first; Sawada taught Bahians how to perform bahian-ness, and Bahians taught him to perform Japaneseness, resulting in musicians intentionally code switching.

Blending and overlapping of styles and stances was unintentional and at times considered incorrect. When Wadō members taught Sawada to perform taiko they emphasized body positions and gestures they had learned from Nikkei teachers in the South. The drummer must stand still in front of the drum in a lunge, with the left knee bent and right leg extended behind the body, arms stretched out over the drum. Unlike samba reggae, taiko bachi are held with pinky fingers rather than the index finger, arms stay long, gravity is used to execute the sound. The lower body stays still. Sawada, however, continued to play holding the bachi with his thumb and index finger, bending his elbows to the side and using the force from his arms rather than gravity to produce sound. Wadō members corrected him, sometimes playing next to him to facilitate imitation, or telling him to turn his elbows downward. A kata, or form, useful for playing samba was unacceptable when playing taiko.

Similarly, Sawada taught Wadō members how to hold baquetas between their thumbs and forefingers and encouraged them to sway their bodies while playing drums, which Sawada commented that they picked up easily. Some had trouble stepping while playing, but most were able to easily swing into their bodies, executing movements they had tried to eliminate while learning taiko. Moreover, Sawada asserted that as Bahians, Wadō members did not need to practice as often as the Japanese tourists he trained. He

argued that they already had ginga, or swing, in their bodies from listening to Bahian music their whole lives. Their Bahian kinesonic repertoires were encouraged where they were previously thought to be incorrect.

The resulting piece, completed several months later, *Irasshai*, was a loud and powerful statement about taiko and Nikkei in Bahia not as Japanese, but Japanese Brazilian. Several rhythms of Bahia and the ginga in the bodies of Brazilian Nikkei and non-Nikkei taiko members of Wadō were exuberantly on display while playing taiko drums at a festival of Japanese culture in 2018. *Irasshai* shows a community moving toward explorations of what can and might be a distinctly Japanese Brazilian taiko. *Irasshai* is similar to Kinoshita's *Taiko do Samba*, but it also takes into account Brazilian regionalisms. It investigates what a Japanese Brazilian Bahian taiko may look, feel, and sound like. While Wadō members did not create new, complex rhythmic patterns based on both taiko and Bahian rhythms, mapping them onto taiko drums, playing taiko drums with different techniques and kinesonic repertoires.

Conclusion: Authority in Wadō, Maintaining Japonesidades

Wadō members continued to dedicate time and energy to the Japanese Cultural Association of Salvador. Many attended nearly all events sponsored by the Association and convinced each other to support the seinenkai, often traveling together after rehearsal to participate in its events. Moreover, through practicing taiko and continuing to invite teachers from the South to teach Wadō, members continued to learn about taiko as a Japanese cultural practice. As Lika Kawano told me, these young people continued to

practice Japanese culture and “adapt to it” if they did not grow up in a Japanese or Nikkei household.

However, Wadō members were also deeply dedicated to exploring what it meant to be Nikkei, Bahian, multiracial, and both holders and admirers of Japanese culture through musical practice and composition. They displayed their kinesonic repertoires as Bahians when practicing *Irasshai*, even as they attempted to control them when performing pieces from Japanese groups or teaching new potential members in public workshops. Apart from members of Japanese descent, they did not identify as Nikkei, as Matsumoto suggested at the beginning of this chapter. Non-Nikkei continued to view themselves as contributors to and learners of Japanese culture. They were, above all, allies of the Nikkei community.

Irasshai became a permanent piece in Wadō’s repertory, unlike others that were placed aside or unfinished. It put Japanese music and heritage into the “mixture” of Brazil, as it experimented with taiko as Brazilian, Japanese, Bahian, global, and local at the same time. Wadō members composed *Irasshai* while thinking about their baianidade, exploring and experimenting with a Brazilian nationalist ethos of mixing, employing movement vocabularies they identified as existing in their gestures, movements, ideas, muscles, blood, and bones from being born and growing up in Bahia. They also maintained Japonêsidades that they had trained to acquire. *Irasshai* is ultimately an answer to the outsidersness of Japanese communities and their music in Brazil. It brings taiko, and with it, Japanese communities in Brazil and Bahia into an ethos of “mixing,” even if for only a few moments.

Joyce Neri: Friendship and Baianidade

I end this chapter with an interview with Joyce Neri, one of Wadō's founding members. I admired Joyce for her long-term commitment to Wadō. She was often one of the first people to show up for meetings and rehearsals, even when she was feeling unwell. I admired her outspokenness, creativity, entrepreneurial spirit, and her love of Salvador. Joyce was the member of Wadō with the most ideas on how to make money for the group, leading efforts to sell cakes and pizzas. When I was in Salvador, she started drawing thumbnail images of landscapes and starry skies onto pieces of paper, and later offering them as tattoos for her friends and Wadō members. Later, she started her own tattoo business. My favorite tattoo on her body was a group of tiny and delicate letters spelling, "Party on, Wayne." She told me that her sister had the matching, "Party on, Garth," both referencing the 1993 movie *Wayne's World*. "I think that I am very different, even very strange, like Garth," she told me. "Or maybe I'm a combination of the two characters."

I wanted to feature Joyce's interview because of her thoughts on taiko, mixing, and race in Bahia that contributed to the creation of this chapter. The text below is a condensed and thematic version of two interview sessions.

I already knew about taiko before Ishindaiko from Londrina came to perform here in 2008. I had a friend in Ishindaiko that I met on the internet. It was in an Orkut community group about hair, I think. And we would chat in that community. I met her personally when she came to Salvador with the taiko group. I had seen taiko on the internet, in videos because of this friend. I thought it was cool—the movements the beats. But when I saw Ishindaiko live, I felt deeply moved. It touched my heart. The first time I saw it, I fell in love.

That friend told me about a meeting that they were having at ANISA to start a taiko group, so I went. I was 17 at the time. That first meeting was very simple. We told everyone our names. We were told that we would have to work hard to make a taiko group happen. After that, there were many meetings. We thought about ways to make money. Because we didn't have any drums. We didn't have anything. There weren't any instruments. There was nowhere to practice.

Four months later, Ishindaiko came to teach our first workshop over the course of three days. I remember they had us do a warm-up that was very heavy on the first day. We weren't used to doing so many abdominal exercises and so many squats. When we went to the drums, it was also difficult. I thought, "My God, this isn't for me. I don't want to do this. I'm not sure if I can do this."

But the next day, it was easier. And then on the third day, it was even easier. That motivated me to continue playing. Our first practice with drums was in January. Then in March, we had our first performance. The Japanese Consul in Recife came here, and we performed just one song for him. There were only 5 taikos and around 60 people who wanted to perform. We had to choose who would play, and I was chosen. Together, we had decided that technical ability and following the values of the group, like showing up on time for practice would be the criteria. But some people were upset when they weren't chosen. They thought they were being treated unfairly because they didn't play. And these people ended up leaving little by little.

In the beginning, we had a lot of problems with the Association. In the beginning its members didn't think that things were going to work out with us.

"O, this group of young people that have no connection with Japanese culture. This isn't going to work. They think that this is just a game," they said. But then they saw that we worked a lot. So today, our relationship with the Association is very different. It's a relationship of acceptance. When we go, for example, to Juazeiro, Barreiras, the associations there receive us very well. Because they think that it is great that many people who have no connection to Japanese culture are part of a taiko group and are so dedicated to it. But there are still people in the Association that think that it isn't worth investing in Wadō. Some behave as if they are superior because they are Japanese descendants, so there is a lot that still needs to change. We are a bit distanced from the Association. And it's better that way.

There are many things that make our group unique. First, almost no one is Asian, as you can see. Also, we are very close to one another. We sometimes see cases in other groups where people don't even talk to one another. They fight so much, they don't even talk. For example, there are groups where there are great players, but in terms of union, they aren't so great. I remember when we went to the Kawasuji Festival in São Paulo, and there was a group of people that were sitting at a table. And when another group of people from the same ensemble sat down near them, the first group got up and left. They said, "Fulano came." And they left, you know? This is something that doesn't make sense for us, this, "I don't want to look at this person." We don't do that at all. We try our best to make sure that everyone at least treats each other well... So I think that this is a difference between us and other groups. It's more important to be with one another than to play music. Friendship is more important than being famous in the taiko world.

I noticed that about you all. You all have so much fun together. It is great to see.

We also try to make sure that anyone who is an outside feels welcome. We don't feel that when we go to events where there are many groups. Sometimes we say, "Good morning" to people and they don't even answer us.

How so?

Here in Salvador, it's a custom to say hello to people, even people you don't know. When you pass people at an event, you say, "Good morning. Hello, how are you?" And when we go to these festivals and we see people from other taiko ensembles in the hallways, we say hello, and they stay silent. For us, this is very strange. Sometimes we feel awkward because we are so open. We don't want people to feel what we feel when we go to these events. Anyone who comes, we want them to feel welcome. Because this distance is very annoying. When you want to interact with someone and that person doesn't want to interact with you, it's as if they think they're superior. They think that they should only speak to people they know, but we aren't like that.

I would like to know more about Bahian culture in Wadō. How is Wadō a Bahian taiko group?

Truthfully, we were always very afraid to incorporate Bahian things. And be judged for it not mixing well with Japanese culture. It took a lot of time for us to accept that we're Bahian and we can't do anything to change that. And to accept that our group is unique because we are from here. We started to

incorporate things little by little. In the aesthetics of our clothing, we have started to do this. We have a happi with prints of the ribbons from the Senhor do Bonfim basilica. Also putting Senhor do Bonfim ribbons on our taikos. We chose as a group to use the ribbons from the Senhor do Bonfim Basilica to tie up our katsugi taikos. And if someone thinks that this is wrong, that's their opinion because we decided to do it as a group.

I think that decision took a while to make because we had to get everyone's opinion and consent. But so far, no one has complained that our happi is "wrong" or that we should take off the ribbons, that tying a taiko with the Bonfim ribbons is wrong. But even if they do, we will likely maintain it.

What do you think of Irasshai?

I like it a lot. I think it is very good. It represents us. It represents Wadō. We were always very afraid to mix in music. We were afraid to break "tradition." We were afraid of being offensive, of offending Japanese culture. We thought that we were not good enough musicians to mix because we are not experts in taiko or in Bahian music. At this moment, we still need to work on it, but it's a piece that I am so happy we created. I love Bahian music. I have always loved Salvador, and I wouldn't live anywhere else. I have always loved Olodum, Samba-reggae. I would love to play it one day. Not because of my ancestry, but because I really love it.

We are still thinking about bringing our baianidade to taiko. But we naturally bring our baianidade to our practice. There are people that say that we play differently. Other groups say this to us. "The way you play is different."

Like what, for example?

We Bahians have a very complex musicality. The ginga of a Bahian is complex. They say that we bring this to taiko. Our way of playing. The way to play, they say is interesting (engraçado). Even when we do kuchi-shoga.⁶⁴ The last sensei from Sao Paulo that came and taught us said, "How cool. When

⁶⁴ Kuchi-shoga (also sometimes called kuchi-showa), which literally means "mouth singing," is a vocalization of taiko ensemble sounds. Since players recite the songs in specific to learn and memorize pieces. These sounds serve as a mnemonic device and, when written down, as musical notation. The system is fluid, but usually the syllables "Don" and "ko" represent the sound of a bachi striking a drumhead, "ten" represents the sound of the shime daiko, and "tsu" represents rests.

you count the beats, you all actually sing.” We are already different. Just by being Bahian, we are different.

But also, I think that it may be a little bit of... The truth is, there is always some prejudice among people in the South in relation to people in the Northeast. I think that we are more or less subject to that. A kind of strangeness in the beginning. Like, “My God, is there really taiko in Bahia?” You know?

Nikkeis are different than most Brazilians. They talk a lot about “maintaining tradition” and “traditional” taiko. But “maintaining tradition” is almost outside of the reality of Brazil. It’s almost surreal to be able to “maintain tradition” from your ancestors and not mix. Of course, no one is obligated to mix if they don’t want to, but it’s a very different choice. Most of us in Brazil are mixed and “in between.” We have so many different races and heritages. For example, how would I maintain the traditions of my ancestors? I have too many traditions. I don’t have a “pure” lineage. I’m Black. But I have a lot of colors. My father is Black. My Great-Grandfather was Black. He was the son of slaves. My grandmother was the daughter of Portuguese immigrants. My other grandmother was the daughter of Indians. My other grandfather was the son of Roma peoples. I really don’t have a way to maintain so many traditions. Or to even know where all of my ancestors are from.

I would also say I am different from people in the Black movement. To some, I wouldn’t be Black. I would be “mestiça,” mixed. For example, people in Olodum are starting to do DNA testing.⁶⁵ Some of them say, “I’m 50% from Senegal, 50% from Cameroon.” They know something exact about their ancestry. I would like to do this test, but it isn’t cheap. Here in Brazil, I might be able to identify as Black, but to some people, I am not Black enough to take on that identity.

⁶⁵ DNA testing is controversial. In Brazil, the family of Carlinhos Brown, a prominent Black singer underwent DNA testing with a journalist, along with several other members of his family (Mazzei 2022). With results in the graph, Brown declared that he was happy and moved that he had an ancestral connection with Uganda because of a song he had written about the film *Hotel Rwanda*. He was 1.6% Ugandan, according to the results (Ibid.). In contrast, Purnell, an African American wrote in an op-ed that she was suspicious of DNA testing companies who would look to profit from the violent legacies of slavery and colonialism (2020).

Chapter 3: “Japanese in the Samba,” Looking, Authenticity, and Belonging

Naoyado and Nataka Toshia

Two weeks before Carnival,⁶⁶ a group of Japanese backpackers huddled into a windowless room in Naoyado,⁶⁷ a hostel in the Santo Antônio neighborhood in Salvador, Bahia. Sitting in a circle on tiny chairs or on the cement floor, and leaning against psychedelic wall murals, they played on congas, paint cans, practice pads, and piles of fabric, with thin plastic baquetas designed for the repinique (Figures 6 and 7). Naoya Sawada, the owner of the hostel and leader of this group, led them through ijexá, samba, and samba-reggae drills so that they would be ready to perform in upcoming carnival parades. These backpackers practiced voraciously day and night, during both formal rehearsals, and on their own, for one month.

Sawada planned to visit Salvador for only three days in 1998, when he arrived from Rio de Janeiro, where he was living temporarily. He missed the bus on his return trip, and he only went back to Rio two years later to collect some of his belongings. He

⁶⁶ Carnival in Salvador, Bahia has three circuits: Barra, Campo Grande, and Pelourinho, named after the neighborhoods where the circuits are located. Nataka Toshia members performed in the smaller Pelourinho circuit. Barra and Campo Grande are the main carnival circuits, with trio electricos, or giant floats with huge sound systems and famous artists performing on top of them. Blocos, or carnival groups, are large groups of people that walk next to the trio electricos. Barra and Campo Grande also feature camarotes, exclusive and temporary night clubs that line the carnival circuits. Barra is known as an “elite” carnival, with many acts coming from other parts of Brazil, while Campo Grande, is known to be more “popular” although many acts perform in both. The Pelourinho is a smaller circuit, with a few fixed stages and percussion ensembles and brass bands performing throughout. See the following sources for a more extensive description on carnival in Bahia (Araújo Moura 2001; Armstrong 2001; Browning 1995; Packman 2021).

⁶⁷ The name Naoyado combines “Naoya,” the name of the owner of the hostel who was discussed in Chapter 2, and yado or “inn.”

didn't want to leave Bahia, where he was drawn to musical practices he had never seen before, such as Olodum rehearsals, people playing percussion in the streets, and Candomblé ceremonies, so he remained in the city for several years. He studied percussion and eventually performed with Timbalada, a world-renowned Afro Brazilian samba-reggae band.⁶⁸ He acquired two buildings where he set up a hostel to receive Japanese visitors to the city (Figure 8). In early 2002, with the blessing of Carlinhos Brown, he created Nataka Toshia, a carnival percussion group comprised of his backpacker guests that anyone could join regardless of experience. He never charged for percussion classes.

In 2018, Sawada's students and backpacker participants of Nataka Toshia were in their early twenties and thirties, except for one member in his sixties who had recently retired and was in the middle of a long-awaited trip through Latin America. Some Japanese travelers worked like Brazilian *dekassegui*; Mago and Ken worked in trucking and construction in Japan to save money for travel, and then would spend long periods of time in countries where Japanese currency was strong until money would run out. Tsune was a coder, so she could work remotely. Passionate about Brazil, her plan was to eventually spend half of the year in Brazil and the other half in Japan. Yoshie had quit her job to travel after a stressful work situation and was on a months-long trip, while another traveler, Lumi, was on a short break from her work as a nurse. Yumiko, Yuho, and Wataru had been traveling for several years without returning to Japan. Yuho had picked

⁶⁸ Carlinhos Brown started Timbalada in 1991. The group gets its name from the heavy use of the timbal, a long drum that is more high-pitched than a conga. It is lightweight and can be attached to a player's body.

up work in the US and Canada before heading to South America. When I asked members why they had chosen Brazil and why they were participating in Carnival that year, Ken and Mago reported that they traveled to South America because it was the furthest place from Japan that they could think of, and some, like Yuho, told me things they loved about Brazil, including the “energy from nature and the people,” and Brazilian music. “I was thinking to come back here always,” Yuho told me, emphasizing that she felt pulled toward the country.

Tsune was on her third trip to Salvador for Carnival and had been a member of Nataka Tokyo, the Tokyo team of Nataka Toshia. This year, she wanted to play the caixa (snare drum) to challenge herself. Takamaru, who was from a family that owned a hotel in the Tokyo neighborhood of Asakusa, was the leader of Nataka Tokyo and had studied music since childhood. Yoshi traveled to Brazil because of capoeira. He had been playing⁶⁹ for over 10 years, and he wanted to know more about the place where capoeira was born. Other members arrived in Salvador on a whim, supposing that practicing music could be “fun” or “different.” Many had come directly from a specific hostel in Mexico, Pensión Amigo, where they had met other Japanese travelers who told them about the opportunity to participate in Carnival with other Japanese people. Others happened to be staying in Naoyado when Sawada talked them into participating, since Sawada was short on participants in 2018. Sawada convinced Yumiko, Yuho, and Wataru to participate, promising that it would be fun. They had never played music before.

⁶⁹ I use the translation of “jogar capoeira” here.



Figure 6: Yoshie practicing during her spare time.



Figure 7: Yui practicing at night.

She had just taken off her headphones that she was using to play with a metronome. Her notebook is next to her to reference the rhythms she wrote

There were also a few Brazilian participants in Nataka Toshia, since Sawada collaborated with Bahian musicians. Eddie and Edu joined the group as rehearsal leaders. Tatiane, a traveler from Manaus, and Junior, a sixteen-year-old from the Santo Antônio neighborhood, participated in the group as students. Ivan Santana, the founder of Swing do Pelô, a social project to teach drumming to youth, allowed Nataka Toshia members to perform on the streets of the Pelourinho before Carnival with the youth that he worked with (Figure 9). Many Wadō members also joined Nataka Toshia, and Naoya placed them in prominent visual positions during Carnival processions.

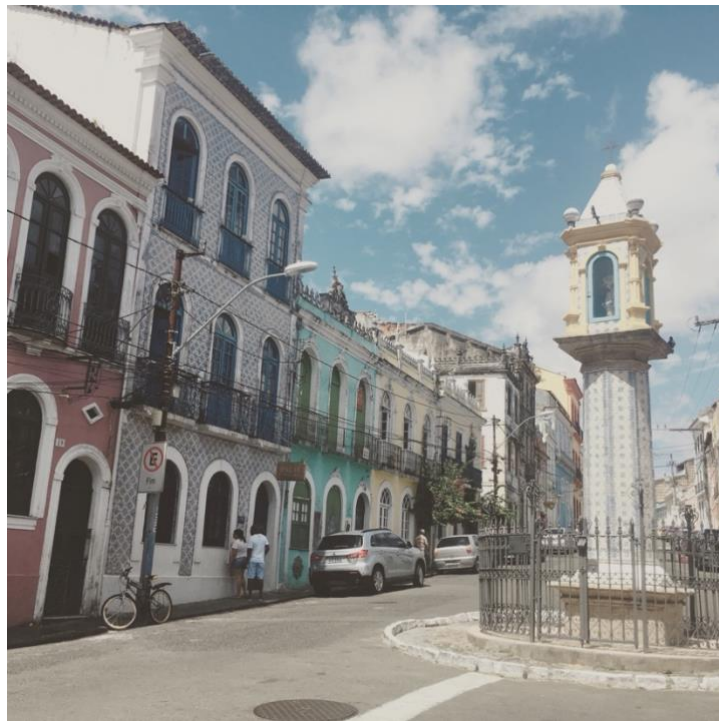


Figure 8: The Santo Antônio Além do Carmo neighborhood

The first Naoyado building is on the second and third floors of a building down the street and to the left.

Sawada depended on Brazilian participants in 2018 more than during previous years to make his project work. He and older Japanese travelers and expatriates told me that travel among Japanese backpackers was longer-term in the 1990s and early 2000s. Travelers with the support of a strong Japanese yen and a weak Brazilian real could spend months and even years in Brazil. In the early days of Naoyado, backpackers would stay with Sawada for several months preparing for Carnival. Rehearsal rooms were packed, and parades included a plethora of percussionists and dancers from Japan, along with extra participants to carry props and generators powering electric lantern displays. 2018, according to Sawada, had scant participation, and Sawada was worried about quality of music performed by tourists who were staying for shorter periods than in previous years. He complained that backpackers these days try to see everything. Their trips are shorter. They over-plan and spend too long doing Internet research rather than exploring places and spending months training in music. In contrast, past backpackers were more interested in music, taking longer trips, and in learning about single places more deeply, he said.



Figure 9: Mago, Ken, Kazuhiro, Yui, and Wataru waiting to play with Ivan Santana's group Swing do Pelô as a practice performance.

Nataka Toshia & Wadō

One Sunday, the travelers visited Wadō, the city's wadaiko, or Japanese percussion ensemble, where they watched Brazilians perform pieces on Japanese drums, applauding enthusiastically after each one. Through Akemi, who translated, Leo, a Wadō member of seven years, asked the Japanese backpackers if they had ever played taiko in

Japan, and none of them had. Only Sawada had some experience playing taiko as a participant of one of Wadō's public workshops a few months earlier. "Well, we don't know how to play samba even though we're from Brazil," Leo responded, reflecting on the current encounter, where Japanese travelers were meeting Brazilians who play taiko and Bahian locals were meeting Japanese people who were learning samba-reggae. After taking group pictures, Wadō members taught the Japanese tourists the basics of taiko (Figure 10).

As a result of this encounter, five members of Wadō joined Nataka Toshia, learning samba from Sawada and eventually performing in Carnival for the first time. On Sundays, Wadō members would join Nataka Toshia practice after their own rehearsals, learning to play the rhythms they always heard since they were children (Figure 11). They were with Nataka Toshia members while getting ready to perform during Carnival performances. They joined Naoya Sawada in social events and sought to collaborate with him in various projects. Until Covid halted Carnival, Wadō members continued to participate in Nataka Toshia.

Chapter Overview

This chapter explores belonging, longing, and anxiety, felt by both musicians and audiences, related to Japanese people in Nataka Toshia playing Brazilian music for Bahian audiences during Carnival of 2018. I focus on the experience of tourists learning to perform Bahian local percussion practices, exploring how stereotypes about Japanese mimicry and voracious appetite for otherness play out in Nataka Toshia. I discuss how participants of Nataka Toshia articulated what they thought were doing, as well as local

reactions to Japanese people playing samba. First, I place tourism practices of Nataka Toshia members in the context of literature on tourism, cultural tourism, and travel. I argue that the activities of Nataka Toshia complicate paradigms of tourism as “consuming” places and cultural products, and tourists as the ones “gazing” at locals since Japanese travelers performed exoticism and orientalism for the consumption and pleasure of Bahian locals. They prepared themselves to be looked at, dressing themselves in a mix of exotic and familiar fashions and became a spectacle for both locals and tourists. Here, I discuss how locals responded to Japanese people playing samba, reaffirming stereotypes and racial hierarchies about East Asians and their immigrant descendants in Brazil as inept samba players.

Next, I discuss two Nataka Toshia members who were “playing Indian” during the last day of Carnival, dressing in faux Native dress and face paint for Carnival parades. I argue that while dressing like an “Indian” was problematic, it was the result of imagined roots between Native Brazilian peoples and ancient Japanese. These two players adopted foreign cultural practices not because they are different and exotic, but rather, because of imagined similarities, and more importantly, because of anxieties about the loss of Japanese religions and cultural practices during modernity. I argue that “playing Indian” was an attempt for two members to recover imagined lost religions and Japanese spirituality. I also discuss imagined similarities between Brazilian musical genres and *minyô*.

Contrarily, some Nataka Toshia members expressed discomfort with playing Afro Brazilian music, declaring that Japanese people can “only imitate,” and analyzing their

own performances as inauthentic. I suggest that self-criticism was directly related to internalized beliefs about Japanese people as imitators rather than creators, an idea that took root during the Meiji era. Finally, I explore ideas about belonging and cultural property in Bahia through Sawada's personal experiences as a Japanese expatriate and percussionist living in Brazil. I argue that Sawada, as a new Issei and an artist, is part of a legacy of foreign artists, such as Pierre Verger and Carybé who were collaborators with Afro Brazilian communities and artists.



Figure 10: Akemi Tahara teaches Kazuhiro the basics of striking a taiko as Tsune, Takamaru, Mago, and Naoya look on.



Figure 11: Naoya Sawada leading a samba reggae workshop with Wadō.

Tourism

With 1.3 million international arrivals⁷⁰ and 1.68 trillion dollars spent worldwide⁷¹ in 2017, tourism is a key source of capital in the global economy.

“Developing” economies have come to depend heavily on the influx of foreign visitors and currency into countries, with advertising campaigns created to draw visitors and

⁷⁰ UN World Tourism Organization Press Release: <https://www.unwto.org/global/press-release/2018-01-15/2017-international-tourism-results-highest-seven-years>

⁷¹ The World Bank International Tourist receipts: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.RCPT.CD>

argue for the uniqueness of their destinations. In Bahia, pamphlets and online advertisements use colorful photos of people, beautiful beaches, and historical centers without crowds to entice visitors.

Literature on tourism focuses on inherently unequal relationships between visitors and locals and highlights tropes to attract tourists promoting destinations as exotic, paradisaical, and in danger of being lost forever. Kravanja traces tourism to the medieval explorations of lands overseas and searches for “Paradise on Earth,” legitimized by the crusades and by later Orientalist and colonialist discourses on “civilizing” the “savage” (2012). Kirschenblatt-Gimblett relates many features of contemporary tourism to 19th century imperialism, exploration, and the rise of the nation state, showing how displays of culturally specific artifacts and performances were changed and banalized when taken out of local and sacred contexts and placed on stages or inside of dioramas for the tourists to look at (1998). Under tourism initiatives, music and dance were refashioned to be “palatable” to outsiders and balanced to become “a mixture of the exotic and the familiar,” promising “visual penetration ...the life world of others as our playground” (Ibid., 435).

bell hooks describes the commercialization and consumption of Black artists’ work as “imperialist nostalgia,” which may also describe structures where European and North American tourists travel to acquire material objects and observe artistic skills associated with Blackness, Brownness and “the other” before they disappear, even as tourism contributes to their disappearance (hooks 1992). Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argue that imperialist nostalgia is not only a sentiment, but also “a scenario for

tourist productions—itineraries, environments, and performances—and the marketing of them” (1994, 435). Moreover, as imperialist nostalgia plays into feelings of sorrow at the loss of cultural practices caused by imperialism they argue, “Mass tourism routinely recycles dying industries, dead sites, past colonial relations, and abandoned ethnographic tropes to produce industrial parks, living historical villages and enactments...[and] stages fantasy” (Ibid., 435). Salazar asserts that anthropological research of the early twentieth century created fantasies that many tourists seek: contact with “noble savages,” “untouched” by “outside” influences (2013). She argues that colonial nostalgia and outdated anthropological ideas placed locals in Indonesia and Tanzania who engaged with tourists in the difficult position of negotiating with tourist fantasies of places as authentically different (Ibid.).

In contrast, some scholars have focused on potential advantages of cultural tourism and tourist performances that go beyond economic and monetary gains. In many cases, tourist performances *have* preserved dying music and dance forms and locals have demonstrated creative agency. Malam argues that although academic discourses on tourism configure conceptions of identity and power around binaries of West/dominant/powerful/first world and non-West/economically weak/subordinated, local populations working in the tourism industry can, and often do shape the tourist industry in creative ways (2008). While Kirshenblatt-Gimblett criticizes tourist performances and museums for enabling tourists to imagine colonial tropes and banalizing sacred practices, others have noted that tourist desires have provided opportunities to artists that have lost audiences in recent years. In some cases, tourists

have replaced defunct palace sponsorship models under feudalism with ticket shares coming from visitors rather than royalty (Widyastutieningrum 2018). Recently, cultural geographers have noted that some cultural tourists defy the very definition of a tourist as a temporary visitor with shallow experiences. Instead, they describe individuals who create strong ties among local communities, return to destinations regularly, and sometimes emigrate to these places (Aoyama 2009). Some have categorized certain tourists as backpackers, a class distinct from other temporary visitors. Like some Nataka Toshia members, they are often semi-permanent residents (Allon, Anderson, and Bushell 2008). Others have described backpackers as allies of local populations against industry, and ecotourism as sustainable alternatives to industry (Esche 1993).

Tourism in Bahia and Cultural Tourism

The Northeast of Brazil is the top destination for domestic tourism, and the state of Bahia attracts millions of visitors each year.⁷² Unlike many locations, where tourists pay to witness performances, many tourists in Bahia pay to join cultural activities, such as taking a single Orixá dance class or spending several months as a student in a specific capoeira school. Many Europeans and North American practitioners of samba and capoeira flock to Bahia to study and adopt aspects of Afro Brazilian performance practices or deepen relationships with Brazil established through teachers at home. Eisentraut relates cultural tourism in Bahia to the proliferation of Brazilian music and

⁷² In 2018, there was a record number of international tourists with 6.621 million international arrivals. In Bahia, there were 4.9 million arrivals from other states in Brazil. See: <http://dadosefatos.turismo.gov.br/2016-02-04-11-53-05.html>.

capoeira groups in North America and Europe, led by expatriates who teach members of host communities (2016). Europeans and North Americans who practice these activities abroad arrive in Salvador in search of “the source of their adopted performance art,” as well as self-identity, self-realization, and community that they feel are difficult to acquire at home, especially for heritage tourists seeking their roots in the African diaspora (Ibid., 32).⁷³ Many deepen their relationships with music, dance, and capoeira clubs, teachers, and communities through traveling to Brazil to engage in these practices.

While one Nataka Toshia member came to Bahia to study at a capoeira school, and two were avid samba percussionists in Japan, most did not neatly fit into these descriptions of a tourist, cultural tourist, backpacker, or student of Afro Brazilian performance forms, although some eventually became semi-permanent residents. While some began intense relationships with local people, I was struck by the fact that most of these travelers interacted very little with locals and did not visit places around the city without the company of other Japanese people. Unlike the cultural tourists that Eisentraut describes, many Nataka Toshia members interacted minimally with Brazilians and other international travelers, citing difficulty with Portuguese, English, and Spanish. The Japanese members of Nataka Toshia and other travelers at Naoyado stuck together and relied considerably on word of mouth from other Japanese travelers they met for

⁷³ I met several African American travelers at cultural centers that taught Candomblé drumming and dance. One Black US American traveler told me that when taking Orixá dance classes, she felt as if she were meeting with cousins who were showing her family heirlooms, even when their exchange was transactional.

information. Rather than connecting with Bahian teachers and locals, they participated in a local performance practice led and mediated by a Japanese expatriate.

One day, a group of women in Naoyado asked me what hostel people from the United States stay in when they travel in Brazil. When I asked for clarification, they told me that there are networks of hostels throughout Latin America where Japanese people stay to meet one another and travel together, and they were interested in knowing if there was a US equivalent. Sawada's Naoyado properties are a part of this network. Group travel was more popular among the Japanese nationals I met than solo travel. Moreover, rather than "gazing" at, and "consuming" local sites, sights, and people, they in turn became attractions for locals and tourists when playing in the street during Carnival performances and pre-Carnival practices.

Tourist Gaze/Gazing at the Tourist

Looking went both ways between Japanese travelers and local people. Like many travelers, the Japanese backpackers of Nataka Toshia looked at and captured images of people, places, and objects during their travels. In Peru, Argentina, Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia, and Brazil, they took photos of people and beautiful objects such as jewelry, blankets, and musical instruments. They posted these images on social media, often with filters to make them brighter. After Carnival, when there was time, some took photos of locals, who gladly posed for the cameras.

Nataka Toshia members, however, also attracted the gaze of locals and considerable attention in Brazil, and consumption of the "exotic" was not one-sided. When Nataka Toshia members performed samba rhythms with Japanese bodies; they also

became a “mixture of the exotic and familiar” for the pleasure of locals (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 435). Being looked at and attracting the gaze of onlookers was intentional. Before each performance, the drummers spent considerable time getting ready for their bodies to be looked at and photographed by both one another and local audiences. Their performances complicated tropes of tourists as the consumers of local practices and locals as those who were consumed.

Nataka Toshia was a well-known object of curiosity in the Pelourinho neighborhood in Salvador, where the ensemble performs during carnival. Before Carnival, I overheard a tour guide in the tourist center telling a group of visitors to keep their eyes open for an all-Japanese samba-reggae group during Carnival. Nataka Toshia had become a tourist attraction, even though it was comprised almost entirely of tourists.

Self-Orientalizing and Self-Occidentalizing to be Looked At

Hosokawa has argued that Japanese people are adept at self-exoticization, often through fashion, dress and performance (2005; 2010). Tobin argues that self-exoticization among Japanese can manifest either through self-occidentalization, where Japanese try to make themselves as Western as possible, and self-orientalization, where “Japanese conscious or unconsciously make themselves into, or see themselves as, the objects of Western desire and imagination” (1992, 30). Hosokawa notes that pre-war Japanese migrants to Brazil who participated in São Paulo’s carnivals as early as 1918, self-exoticized, dressing as geisha or in yukata, “plunging themselves into self-conscious exoticization in response to the others’ imagination and desire,” while others dressed as clowns and as Brazilian characters, like many Brazilians (2005, 64).

Similarly, Nataka Toshia members integrated both Brazilian and Japanese aesthetics into their costumes. In preparation for Carnival, several of the women of the group sewed clothing for the performers that featured both Japanese and Brazilian aesthetics. The women wore halter tops and bright multi-colored skirts, reminiscent of costumes from Recife's Carnival, with fabric attached to a thick belt made to look like an obi (belt or sash) tied low across the hips. The men also wore Brazilian textiles: white tie-dyed fabric fashioned into a happi with borders suggestive of Japanese sashiko embroidery patterns. Fashion for Carnival was a hybrid of Japanese and Brazilian styles that the women in the group created, exploring aesthetics of Brazil and Japan to adorn Japanese (and my own North American) bodies performing Brazilian music.

After final rehearsals and before the parades began, I watched performers paint their bodies and faces in multiple colors, sometimes writing kanji on their upper arms in white paint, like Timbalada players, but displaying Japanese characters instead of designs. I also participated in these activities. Each performer individualized their Carnival clothing with purchased flowers, face paint, makeup, and body paint. Some attached small jewels to their faces or pinned rhinestone necklaces to their heads to create a tiara-like decoration. Others fixed small circular stickers on their faces in red and white, the colors of the Japanese flag. We were preparing to be looked at, looking at ourselves and each other, and capturing images for one another for distribution and for others to see.⁷⁴ Group photos of performances in costumes were posted to Instagram, Facebook,

⁷⁴ Lasén argues that bodies are “double inscribed” through taking and posting selfies. First, people fashion, mark, and pose their bodies, performing movements and postures in preparation for taking an images

and a shared Google Photos folder. I copied many of the styles I saw, and I took selfies as well as photos of the others. One night I placed red and white sticker dots above my eyebrows like other performers. Someone painted the kanji for “Mars” on my arm another night. I wore big earrings and plastic flowers in my hair. I wished the women with rhinestone necklaces pinned to their heads had invited me to go shopping with them.

The costumes and glittery makeup were only a part of the mixture of the exotic and local for locals and other tourists to consume. More significantly, the bodies of Japanese people playing samba were a source of amusement and pleasure for local people, as these foreign bodies played local styles in a group with non-Japanese people like Wadō members and myself. They attracted more attention than I did.

The Spectacle of the “Japanese in the Samba”

During informal interviews with people watching and following Nataka Toshia at Carnival, I learned that many locals admired the group and its Japanese members. Some audience members and admirers of the group spoke nostalgically of a time when the group was bigger, with more participants, and electric generators powered Japanese-style lanterns illuminating the streets. Many expressed hope that the group would grow once more, and that more Japanese travelers would spend more time in Bahia. Many spectators took videos and photos of the group for their personal use, the screens and lights from their phones illuminating the performers.

(2015, 66). In Nataka Toshia, performers snapped pictures of one another getting ready and posed while asking others to take their pictures. Second, bodies are inscribed through posting in digital platforms, where images outlive the contexts and places in which they were taken.

Some Bahians, however, told me that they found the group comical, and even ridiculous. “Rigid, rigid, rigid,” one local musician told me laughing, recalling a rehearsal he witnessed several years ago. He described the musicians walking stiffly and off the beat, laughing at the memory. Some of the amateur musicians *did* have trouble walking on the beat. Some could not play simple rhythms without significant practice. Some could not walk on the beat while carrying heavy drums that dangled from their waists and hit their knees and shins, sometimes bruising them because of badly fitting kneepads. For various reasons, some looked like they were waddling while marching through the streets. This local musician who wanted to remain anonymous, however, attributed shortcomings not to lack of experience and poorly fitting gear, but rather inherent musical and rhythmic ability. He told me that no outsider could “learn” the ginga of a Bahian, including Europeans who participate in Carnival. Europeans and North Americans were also stiff, although not as much as the Japanese. This musician’s statement echoes other instances in North America, Europe, and Asia, where many audiences expressed racially essentialist views about classical music and jazz performances by Asians and Asian Americans as inferior or less authentic (Yoshihara 2007; Wong 2004, 161–93). Ginga, swing, and groove are seen by many as belonging to Black communities the most and to Asian communities the least.

In Brazil, Lorenz notes that “Japanese in the samba” is an expression to describe “incorrect interpretation of samba regardless of who is playing” (2016, 20). In a country with nationalist narratives celebrating diversity and mixing, this expression assumes racial essentialism and contrast, linking Blackness and racial mixing to musical virtuosity

and Japaneseness to incompetence. While Japanese incompetence, is, however, built into Nataka Toshia, as most members are first time musicians, these stereotypes exist even when Japanese and Nikkei musicians demonstrate considerable skill in Brazilian music. Setsuo Kinoshita, a well-known taiko and samba percussionist based in São Paulo, had to contend with stereotypes about his national origins, as well as overtly racist comments when he played samba in a Carnival in São Paulo (Lorenz 2007, 108). Gidal noted a performance when a Japanese pandeiro player Keita Ogawa was regarded as a joke when playing in front of a large audience during a Carnival in Rio de Janeiro. The audience witnessed and believed his virtuosity only partway into the performance (2022).

The stereotype of the “Japanese in the Samba” played out when locals looked at tourists during practices, performances, and in everyday life. Japanese visitors often encountered references to jokes about their origins and phenotypes on the street. As the Japanese musicians carried drums on their way to meet the group, several people they passed on the street catcalled them, yelling in gibberish meant to sound like Japanese, or “Japa, Japa,” or “Jap,” and “Arigatou! Sayonara!” referencing *Arigatchan*, a popular Bahian song from the late 1990s by the Pagode group É o Tchan,⁷⁵ parodying Japanese people and badly copying Japanese aesthetics (Figure 12). In the music video, Bahian dancers in silk bathrobes perform Axé dance stiffly to lyrics about a “dance from the orient.”

⁷⁵ É o Tchan, the group that wrote performed *Arigatchan*, is known for its low-brow, sexualized, and often overtly sexist and racist lyrics that parodied a variety of cultural groups while two dancers performing sexualized choreography in music videos, TV shows, and live concerts.

Arigatchan is well-known throughout Brazil, particularly in Bahia where É o Tchan originated. For many years, the song was the only contact many local Bahians had with ideas about Japan, other than a few solo travelers such as Sawada, a few Nikkei, and Nikkei tourists from São Paulo. Many Bahian locals learned to say “arigatou” and “sayonara” because of the song, and in turn, many called participants of Nataka Toshia, as well as other expatriates “arigatou.” When heckling Japanese travelers in the street, many shouted “arigatou sayonara” at the confused travelers in public spaces, prompting laughter from others.

Heckling the tourists on the streets was an example of what bell hooks calls the “oppositional gaze” (2010). hooks wrote that when Black women first looked at White men and women on television and in film, they could finally stare at those who had power over them with confidence. Being forbidden to look for many years produced “an overwhelming longing to look, a rebellious desire, an oppositional gaze. By courageously looking, we defiantly declared: ‘Not only will I stare. I want my look to change reality’” (hooks 2010). Similarly, Bahian locals knew that they were objects of the tourist gaze of foreigners, both internal and external to Brazil, that they perceived as wealthy and powerful. These travelers consumed Black Bahian traditions, including music, dance, martial arts, and religion. By staring at the Japanese tourists and ridiculing them, the locals briefly reversed power dynamics between locals and foreigners, and they defied social conventions of politeness and deference to those of perceived higher economic standing that was not possible in everyday life and work, with no consequences.

Moreover, by ridiculing Japanese samba players, they claimed ownership over samba and samba-reggae as Bahian, Black, and local cultural property.

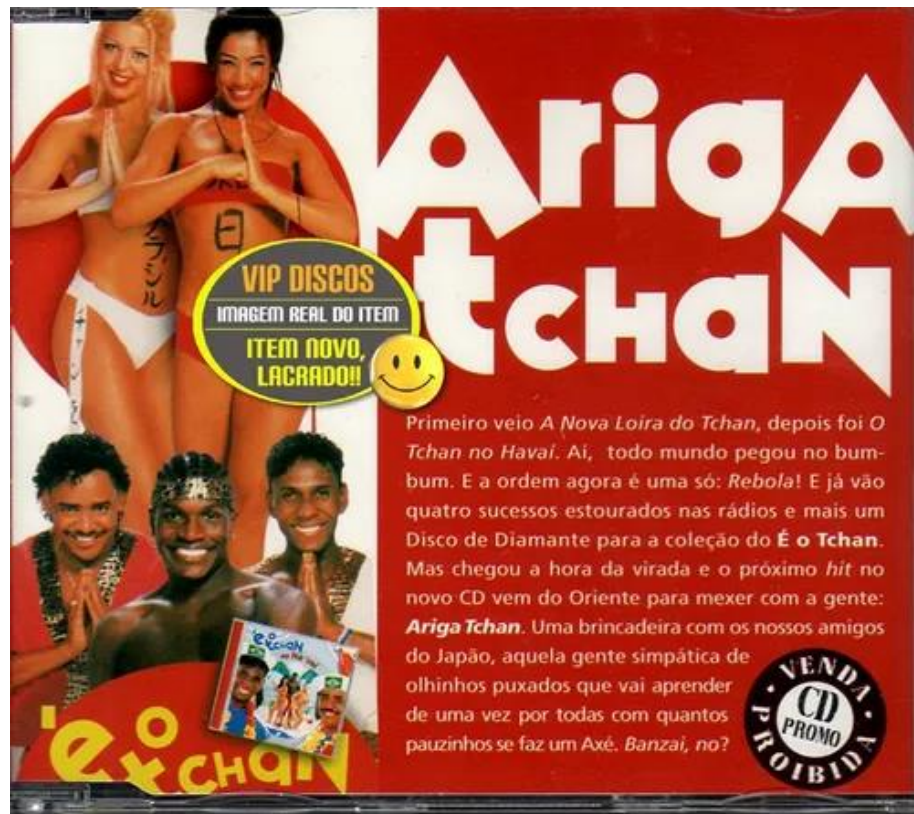


Figure 12: Album cover for the single Arigatchan.

Image from Mercadolivre, an online store. The description of the single reads, “it is time for the new hit of the new CD that came from the orient to stir us up: Arigatchan. A playful game with our friends from Japan, the nice people of pulled eyes that will learn once and for all with how many sticks you can do an 'é. Banzai, no?” For the full music video see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5leKKrK5Syw>

Looking at the tourist also held the promise of love or pleasure. Bahian were curious about Japanese women. They stared at them, commented on their appearances, and asked me to communicate with the women, particularly during Carnival when the

women were dressed up in costumes showing their midriffs and adorning their faces with makeup and fake eyelashes. How long would they be in town? Did these women have boyfriends? Did they want a Brazilian boyfriend? What about a Carnival love? “Ask her, ask her,” they told me, “Tell her that I said she is beautiful.” The viewing of Japanese women’s bodies also held the promise of pleasure for Bahian men.

Sameness, not Difference

Playing Indian

Now, I turn away from Bahian locals to further explore reasons Nataka Toshia members spent time in Brazil and played samba, and then I discuss how some of these members articulated hopes, dreams, and disappointments related to these experiences. In this section, I focus on two performers, Wataru and Yumiko (not her real name), who painted their faces to mimic designs from Indigenous people in Brazil’s North and Center-West. Wataru created a costume based on a small painting he carried with him of the Hindu God Shiva, wrapping a gold snake around his head. He also painted the area around his eyes in a black band, reminiscent of images of the Munduruku people who live in the Amazon region.⁷⁶ Yumiko’s dress, however, attracted more attention from Wadō members. She adorned her head with an imitation headdress with multicolored feathers she bought from a street vendor. She painted a red band across her eyes. She inserted a piece of dried spaghetti through her septum piercing, imitating the piercings of

⁷⁶ The Munduruku have been vocal in recent years, speaking out against illegal mining operations close to their lands that released mercury into waterways and poisoned fish. Deforestation and increase in mining activity increased since Bolsonaro came into office in 2018.

the Yanomami people. She parted her long hair in the center, braided it, and positioned one braid in front of each shoulder.

Yumiko's accessories and face paint sparked a debate on cultural appropriation among Nikkei and non-Nikkei Wadō participants of Nataka Toshia. I found them huddled in a circle, whispering as she was getting ready. When I asked what they were talking about so intensely, they pointed to Yumiko, indicating that they found her costume offensive. They specifically referenced the spaghetti in her septum piercing and the headdress.

Some Wadō members had recently posted memes and articles on social media asking friends to refrain from wearing fake Native headdresses, stressing to followers in cyberspace that “Indian is not a costume” and sharing painful stories from Indigenous people in Brazil who were losing their land to development (Figure 13). Recently, younger and more “woke” Brazilians, like those in Wadō, were beginning to explore the long tradition of dressing as an “Indian” during carnival, which has existed for at least 100 years. That year, the hashtag #ÍndioNãóÉFantasia (Indian is not a costume), started by a young Indigenous activist, took off on social media following campaigns in the United States from earlier years, such as “We’re a culture not a costume” and the hashtags #mycultureisnotyourcostume and #notyourcostume.⁷⁷ The Wadō members debated censorship and cultural appropriation. Should Yumiko’s costume be prohibited

⁷⁷ By 2019 and 2020, longer articles explaining to people why they should not dress as an began to appear in popular magazines and newspapers, such as Claudia Magazine, BBC Brazil, and even Globo (although with some editorials complaining about “political correctness”). These articles featured interviews with Native people explaining why it is problematic. See: (Arnoldi 2019; E. Santos 2020; Steil 2020).

or banned in some way? Younger members said that cultural appropriation should be forbidden. An older member said that all kinds of censorship should be avoided, and I suspect his point of view may be related to his age and his proximity to collective memories of censorship during the military dictatorship. Born in the 1980s, his parents likely lived through periods of intense censorship in arts, music, and the press during the 1960s and 70s. Younger members stressed the importance of not offending others and worried about banalizing the struggles of Brazil's Indigenous people.

Wadō members then debated about cultural appropriation, and whether Wadō itself is an example of cultural appropriation. They concluded that Wadō was not an example of cultural appropriation because of its connection with the Nikkei community and because of members' long-term commitment to learning about Japanese culture. Yumiko, they argued, was acting differently. There was no visible blessing from an Indigenous community member regarding her costume. Moreover, her costume was inauthentic. The headdress was from a street vendor, one of many sold during Carnival, and far from its cultural context. Yumiko, however, was oblivious to these debates, and even those who wanted to censor her did not. Everyone was either too busy getting themselves ready or too shy to start a confrontation. Sawada, who had the most authority to ask her to change costumes, was stressed about the upcoming performance and was not present while Yumiko was getting ready. Wadō members who appeared most affected by the costume did not say anything.



Figure 13: Facebook post asking friends not to dress like an Indian.

Paty, who was not in Nataka Toshia that year shared the “Indian isn’t a costume” hashtag on Facebook. She wrote, “I didn’t want to say anything because people may say I’m just complaining, but I am very uncomfortable with the number of “Indian” costumes I am seeing during carnival. I know that people see that each person should do as they want, but still.”

The author of the original post, Werá Mirim Ronildo wrote, “I am real. My difficulties are real. My fight is real and prejudice and racism I suffer are real. I am Guarany M’byá. I am a warrior, and I fight to defend my people.”

Yumiko's commitment to learning about Indigenous people was unclear, and her costume was problematic. Here, however, I am interested in the what the fantasy of playing Indian meant in this situation. When a Japanese traveler dresses in a faux Native headdress, what ideas and desires about Native people in the Americas are they enacting? Yumiko had told me that she felt deep connections with Native Brazilians and Black communities in Brazil. Although misguided, I wondered if she was trying to articulate this real or imagined connection in some way and act out a fantasy that she thought was appropriate for Carnival. Costumes are indicative of fantasy, and the word for costume and fantasy are the same in Portuguese: fantasia.

Fantasy

There are examples of playing Indian that are empowering for non-Indigenous peoples and communities during Carnivals, specifically for Afro-descended communities in the Americas. In the United States, Mardi Gras Indians, who are Black men from mutual aid societies, dress as Plains Indians during Carnival, performing resistance and freedom from domination, with “narratives and imagery” that “revolve around self-affirmation and solidarity” (Lipsitz 1988, 105). In Salvador during the 1980s and ‘90s, Blocos Afros, Carnival associations of Black communities, included groups who called themselves Comanches and Apaches (Apaxes), naming themselves after North American Native peoples.⁷⁸ By adopting names of North American nations, these groups

⁷⁸ Blocos Afros emerged in the 1970s in response to carnival groups excluding people with dark skin, which was still reported to be a problem in 2018. Blocos Afro often play samba-reggae. One of the most well-known pioneering groups, Ilê Aiyê, only allows Black people to participate. Many Blocos Afro that started out informally now have professional groups within their groups that perform, tour, and engage in educational outreach (Packman 2021, 62–63, 258).

positioned themselves on the opposite side of North American colonialism, the United States as a nation, and White imperialism (Browning 1995, 146–48).⁷⁹ In 2018, during the same Carnival when Yumiko dressed as an Indian, the Filhos and Filhas of Gandhi, one of the most well-known Afoxé Blocos Afros in the city, featured “the Indian” as their Carnival theme. In the Filhas de Gandhi bloco, young Black women wore feather earrings and blue headdresses. They danced fierce movements with spears. The Indian is a symbol of resistance for Black North Americans and Brazilians, particularly during Carnival (Figure 14).

Yumiko, however, was not engaging in resistance or performing anti-colonialism or anti-imperialism, as many Black communities in the Americas did when “playing Indian.” Instead, she was first participating in Carnival as an individual fantasy; Carnival was a brief time every year where anyone can become anything. Yumiko was self-occidentalizing and trying to become more Brazilian. Japanese in Brazil, including early Nikkei, were aware of the idea of Carnival as a fantasy. In 1936, a Japanese language newspaper in São Paulo, distributed in the Nikkei community, published a description of Carnival as “a cocktail-shaker that blends the authentic and imitation. It is a hypnotic state in which everyone engages in make-believe and makes good on their promise to respect each other’s dreams” (Nippon Shinbun, 25 February 1936 in Hosokawa 2005, 64). Hosokawa notes that many pre-war Japanese immigrants dressed as Brazilian figures, such as Baianas (Black women dressed in Candomblé attire), and Indians (Ibid.).

⁷⁹ Browning also critiques these groups for their histories of sexual violence against women, also arguing that the men participating in these groups “whiten” women by sexually assaulting them during parades.

Like Yumiko, early Nikkei dressing as Indians were trying, in some way, to position themselves as part of Brazil while enacting a fantasy, contrasting with others who dressed as Japanese characters, such as samurai. Yumiko had already positioned herself as more Brazilian than the other members in Nataka Toshia because of her familiarity with Brazil, her previous travels to remote areas of Brazil, and rarely traveling with other Japanese people, opting to meet Brazilians. Later, however, I learned that by dressing like an “Indian,” Yumiko was not only engaging in an individual fantasy, but she was also trying to reclaim a part of an imagined Japanese heritage and indeed, herself, that she believes Japan and other Japanese lost during modernity.

Yumiko: Recovering Real and Imagined Losses

Yumiko had traveled to many parts of Brazil, including Acre and remote areas of the Amazon, visiting Indigenous communities. She told me that she wanted to learn more from these people, telling me that her time with them was like a dream, influenced by medicinal plants:

I went to Acre to stay with tribe people. And so, I went to four tribes with my ex-boyfriend, who is Brazilian. Because he had been staying with tribes for many years, he knows many places... I went to Huni Kuin, Ayanawa (Sayanawa), Kaxinawa, and Yawanawa. I took ayahuasca, kanpo, and we made hapé. We used to sell hapé during our travels... I felt like this time was my dream. It's very different from this reality that I am living. I felt a totally different space. They live in a different way. It was very interesting. I am planning to go back.



Figure 14: Bloco Afro with the theme of “Indian” in the 2018 Carnival

The theme of the 2018 Carnival for the Filhas de Gandhi was “The Indian.” Most women wore white dresses and blue and white necklaces and scarves on our heads. Young Black women performing, however, dressed as Indians and danced in front of the bloco in Barra. In Carnival in the Americas, there are several examples of the Indian as a symbol of resistance among Afro-descended peoples.

Besides being dreamlike, the experience connected her to something she believed was essential about herself. Later, she told me about (real or imagined) similarities between Native religious practices and Shinto, a Native Japanese religion that venerates kami, or nature “gods” and local spirits. In a conversation, Yumiko and Wataru, told me that Shinto is like other shamanic and Indigenous religions, but that it has been degraded. “Japanese people remember Shinto,” they told me, although it has been degraded and

forgotten over time, and Japanese religion is “almost nothing” nowadays. By traveling, they told me that there is “something inside” that “remembers” their religion through engaging in the religion of others. Yumiko and Wataru told me that Indigenous people in Brazil, as well as Afro-Brazilians know “something” that Japanese people lost in modernity. Today, traces of Native Japanese spirituality can be found in Shinto shrines, but much of the trance religion of their ancient ancestors had been forgotten. In a conversation, they told me about this forgetting:

I need to ask you the same question. The other night, you were telling me about Shinto. You were comparing Indigenous religions and Candomblé.

Y: I don't know Candomblé, but Naoya explained a lot, and I went to Iemanjá festival. I think it is a little similar because there are many Gods from Elements. From nature. Candomblé And Shinto, there are Gods. I felt it a little bit similar. But I really don't know exactly about Candomblé.

And then you also said similar to Indigenous religions.

Y: Yes. I think they are more connecting with nature. And also, Japanese people, we used to connect more with nature.

W: But I think now not so much. We lost this.

Traveling was a way to remember something inherent and ancient in their culture and something deep in their bodies or DNA. In Brazil, they found ecstatic experiences they craved, calling Carnival experiences shamanic, emphasizing the drum as communal and ancient. Later, they told me that they had traveled to pursue other “shamanic” experiences, including ayahuasca ceremonies and music festivals.

Ivy and Karlin have reviewed anxieties about loss of tradition and cultural identity because of modernization after the Meiji period, and again after World War II (Karlin 2014; Ivy 1995). Karlin has written about these anxieties giving rise to popular nationalist

movements emphasizing traditional and Indigenous Japanese knowledge over the influences of Western imperial powers (2014). However, these movements were related to masculinist narratives, violence against women, and justifications of violent colonial expansion in Asia (Ibid.). Ivy's work focuses on anxieties about "vanishing" cultural practices in Japan and the resulting rise of cultural industries, such as museums, folklore, tourism, and popular theater intended to revitalize and preserve local "tradition" in Japan (1995). Several articles in a volume edited by Vlastos argue that Japanese ideas and policies, such as "wa," or collectivism, furusato (homeland), and worker-employee relationships were based on anxieties and conflicting ideas about modernity and tradition (Vlastos 1997).

Yumiko and Wataru, unlike the Japanese politicians, policymakers, and intra-country tourists cited above, were looking for a part of a forgotten Japanese tradition outside of Japan rather than trying to find them in Japan. The emphasis on similarities rather than differences between Japanese and Brazilians is striking. Scholars researching Japanese in non-Japanese performance practices also cite imagined cultural, emotional, and corporal sameness between Japanese and non-Japanese people. Savigliano notes that Japanese people who practiced tango in Japan in the 1990s insisted that Japanese people are "emotional" like Argentinians, and dancing tango was a way to connect to that common emotion. They practiced tango not because it was exotic, but because it connected dancers to something inherently Japanese (1992, 243–45). Kurokawa notes that ideas about loss sparked a trend in Japanese people studying hula to feel close to nature and recover a sense of lost identity (2004, 124). Others have articulated

similarities between Japanese minyô and foreign musical genres considered “root” music. Hosokawa notes that members of the Japanese salsa band Orquesta de la Luz said that salsa is to Caribbean people what minyô is to Japanese. The comparison with minyô also connotes a loss, as Hosokawa writes, “Orquesta de la Luz, feeling the loss of their own folk tradition, search instead for the roots of the other” (520). Naoya Sawada also compared minyô to capoeira songs in an interview. Like the Orquesta de la Luz members, he felt that both genres were rooted in life and in work, but also explained a loss of minyô and looking for a part of Japaneseness in the cultural practices of an Other. Stressing the seriousness of cultural loss, he told me:

Today, Japanese culture is seriously lacking things. It’s serious. It’s lacking minyô. People have let go of the culture of minyô and the songs. Partially this is because of the style of life. Everyone wants a salary and to live in the middle of a city and has stopped doing rural work. Minyô is very much the music of before, of the past. It’s economically behind, but the culture of it exists, although it’s been beaten down. One day, everyone thinks of going back to their roots. There are people that love the culture here because it’s good at preserving the culture. Of music, of song, for example. Unlike us and our minyô. *Falta muito*.⁸⁰

Dressing like an “Indian,” playing samba, and practicing Brazilian music were all ways to reconnect to lost roots, whether or not these efforts were a conscious way to gain the result of “finding” a lost or authentic self. In the case of Yumiko and Wataru, and even Sawada, “searching for the roots of the other” because of cultural loss resulted in playing samba, dressing like an Indian, visiting Indigenous communities, and taking Indigenous medicines like ayahuasca.

⁸⁰ I want to leave this phrase in Portuguese because *faltar* can be translated as lack, missing, failing, or loss. A lot is missing/failing/lacking/lost in maintaining minyo.

The case of Yumiko playing “Indian” and articulating similarities between Brazilian religions and a lost form of Shinto implies a belief in physical similarities between Japanese and Indigenous peoples in the Americas. Bigenho, while working with Bolivian music ensembles in Japan, writes that many Japanese and Bolivian nationals who traveled between the two countries articulated feelings of intimacy with one another through the idea of an imagined common ancestor (2012). Bolivian musicians cited similar appearances between Native people and Asians, particularly Altiplano Indigenous people and Japanese. Some spoke of possible common ancestors who had likely passed through the Bering Strait. In interviews with Japanese people, “‘Mongol’ emerged as a perceived genetic ancestor who [was] traced through reference to a racialized Indigenous world” (Ibid., 129). Seeking to remember Shinto in their bodies through practicing Brazilian music, dressing like an Indian, and visiting Indigenous communities articulates feelings of loss and lack of Japanese cultural practices and religions from “before,” fantasies of being or becoming an Indian, and possibly bodily connections to Native people living in the Western hemisphere.

Voracious Training and (Not) Eating the Other

Not all Nataka Toshia members felt intimate connections between Japanese and Brazilian culture and religion. Some, in contrast, articulated the impossibility of playing authentically and had anxiety about their own Japanese bodies playing Black people’s music. Even those who did not worry about authenticity worried about playing correctly, and to make up for lost time, most Nataka Toshia members practiced fervently. One

morning, Yoshie, looking exhausted, told me that she was awake until 1am practicing. The entire ensemble was sleep deprived because of trying to be correct.

The Japanese travelers brought their own methodologies for learning Brazilian music. Unlike Brazilians, Nataka Toshia members used musical notation and paper to learn samba rhythms. New members would take notes in tiny notebooks while learning new rhythms and then go over them late into the night and during lunch breaks in addition to formal practices and periodic practice performances with Ivan Santana's *Swing do Pelô* at night. Some who felt they needed extra practice, especially those without musical training, spent free time listening to metronomes on their headphones to acquire a sense of rhythm, often while intensely copying the straight 4-4 beats on practice pads at various speeds. Travelers who were learning percussion underwent intense training with little time for tourist activities in Salvador, a city with beautiful beaches, food, museums, and a plethora of other opportunities to learn Afro Brazilian dance and percussion. They did not attend the famous Iemanjá festival that year, where locals and tourists go to the beach in the Rio Vermelho neighborhood to throw offerings of white flowers, perfume, jewelry, and other favorite items of the goddess to Iemanjá, the ocean goddess. Instead, they woke up early that day to practice. They did not travel to far flung neighborhoods in the early evening to sample the most famous acarajé, abará, and tapioca. Instead, the travelers prepared meals at the hostel, sometimes made with ingredients carried from Japan in backpacks, such as curry rice mixes, packets of ramen, and stir-fried cabbage and rice. They did not spend time at the beach until Carnival was

over, except for one day when Sawada made the men of the group jog to a distant beach in the lower city for the purpose of endurance training.

Several authors have noted that when Japanese performers teach and practice non-Japanese music and dance, they superimpose Japanese training methods and hierarchies onto these non-Japanese traditional performances, including corporal punishment (Miller 2009). Some teachers have imposed an iemoto system in hula schools in Japan, starting hula classes in seiza and bowing to one's teacher (Kurokawa 2004, 141–43). Japanese performers with the salsa band Orchestra de la Luz transcribed sections of salsa songs to learn and imitate them, contrasting how salseros learn to play pieces (Hosokawa 2010, 524). Training in Nataka Toshia also superimposed uniquely Japanese methods and ethos onto Brazilian music practice. One member told me that although she wanted the group look and sound Brazilian, there were things Brazilians did not do when learning to play samba, such as writing down notes and listening to metronomes. She wondered how useful these methods were, especially for those with a musical background. She said that there were sometimes disagreements about how to make the group as Brazilian as possible. Further, in Nataka Toshia, Japanese ideas such as *isshokenme* (to try to one's utmost) or *ganbaru* (to persevere and persist), and the results of these ethos, such as spending free time practicing, eschewing visits to local places, and tolerating corporal punishment, were an attempt to correctly incorporate Brazilian bodily practices. Yumiko and Wataru noted this strictness and called it “Japanese,” comparing the experience of rehearsal to being in high school:

W: I felt like I was in high school. I feel like this feeling.

Y: Yes.

How is it similar to high school besides being strict?

Y: It is strict, like a sports club. And Japanese people always care about hierarchies: students and older people's relationships. By strict, I mean, we have to start at 9 and end at 6, and Naoya expects that everyone practices at night time. I don't know. Naoya's energy was really serious. But everyone respected him. So it was very Japanese style.

Nataka Toshia practices reminded me of some descriptions of training in taiko groups like Ondekoza and Kodo, in its strictness and discipline and pushing the body to its limits. Through training, Nataka Toshia members were trying to make swinging movements and rhythmic patterns easy, automatic, and a part of their bodies. They were attempting to overcome the deficiencies of their Japanese bodies.⁸¹ The repetition of movements was an attempt to acquire bodily knowledge, replicate it, and eventually make these movements automatic. The idea is that technique gives way to freedom, innovation, and continuity to an art form or uniformity among ensemble players. Some Japanese players, however, told me that the constant training and technique would never give way to freedom, innovation, or authenticity. Hard training, instead, was stressful and even futile. They would never have the bodies or souls of Black Brazilians. Contrasting Yumiko and Wataru, who felt that they were finding a part of their authentic selves through being in Brazil, other Japanese practitioners felt that no matter how much

⁸¹ I use the same language that Bender uses when he writes about members of the Kodo apprenticeship program attempting to overcome "the deficiencies of new Japanese bodies" by learning to sit in seiza for long periods of time and hard training in taiko. Some of the constant, hard, and even suffering training reminded me of the training in Nataka Toshia on a regular day. See: Bender 2005.

Japanese people practiced a Brazilian art form, they could never perform “the real thing,” and what was “real” was the opposite of imitation.

Ako, a Japanese woman living in the Urugai neighborhood of Salvador and my Japanese language teacher, who was both a practitioner of capoeira and samba, told me that mimicry is part of the skill set of Japanese people, but this mimicry is superficial. No matter how much a Japanese person may practice samba, they can never make it a part of themselves. Using the metaphor of cannibalism, she told me:

Japanese people are skilled at imitating. But they chew, and chew, and don't swallow. They don't actually digest what they are practicing. They work hard to get it. They have a lot of technique, but it doesn't become part of them. A *baiana sambando* doesn't have “technique” per se, but it is part of her. A *japonesa* may get it, and become skilled, but in the end, it isn't a part of her. It is just an imitation.

Ako was criticizing the *Nataka Toshia* members and a certain samba dancer that was staying in the hostel, but she was also referring to her own performance practices. “Just an imitation,” and “chewing” without swallowing is the opposite of the cannibalistic imagery, associated with *Brazilianness*.

Cannibalism is a metaphor used in Brazil since colonial times but especially in the 1960s and 70s to describe an immersion into, or an appropriation of, a cultural, musical, or bodily practice of an Other. In the 16th century, fascination with cannibalism among Europeans followed early colonial reports and travel chronicles describing Indigenous people, and in particular, the *Tupinambá* in Brazil roasting and eating their enemies (Budasz 2006, 2). Later, *Tropicália* artists of the 1960s and '70s deployed an ethos of cannibalism as an answer to US and European cultural Imperialism during the 1960s and 1970s, as well as to explore what it meant to be Brazilian, where “Brazilian artists should

immerse themselves in the early native's thoughts, looking at the European as they would—a source of nutrients” (Ibid. 2). Instead of copying European and US artists, they would take parts of these artists' aesthetics, incorporate them, and make them their own. Cannibalism factors into Brazilian nationalist narratives that prize mixing. In an artistic context, genres can be mixed and refashioned, collaged, quoted, and appropriated. Brazilians cannibalize to be powerful creators, not imitators. In contrast, many Japanese, including a few Nataka Toshia members and Ako, have internalized narratives about themselves as imitators rather than creators, with imitation viewed as inferior. Chewing without digesting or internalizing is “inauthentic.” They do not internalize. Imitations are “just” imitations.

One member of Nataka Toshia had serious concerns about cultural appropriation and wondered if participating in the group was disrespectful.⁸² They told me that they did not have plans to participate in the group after one Carnival season because they felt that Nataka Toshia was performing “Black people's music” and felt that what they were trying to do was inauthentic. Japanese bodies could imitate, but they did not truly represent Afro Brazilian practices and never could. They argued:

Even if we play correctly, this is just imitating, looking like we are doing it. It isn't true. When I see people here playing, when I see their bodies, they are so much bigger than Japanese people, and with better muscles. It's a different meaning when we do it. That's African peoples' music. It sounds similar, but it's

⁸² Nataka Toshia did not include members who were openly gender non-conforming or gender fluid. Although it is possible that some were queer, none were out. I use a gender-neutral pronoun here because this member wanted their comments kept secret. Although they used a nickname, I worry this could easily identify them, so I am keeping gender and names anonymous.

different because of the soul. People's souls and tradition and background...
Black people's music.⁸³

Here, the idea of imitating as not being “true,” and also the physicality of Black people, as well as the idea of the “soul” comes into play, following Romantic ideas about authenticity, copying, and creative genius, as well as ideas about physicality linked to musical legitimacy.

Ideas about authenticity in art and music and about Japanese people as adept imitators originated in the 17th century and proliferated in the Romantic era. Lucken and Simkin trace the idea of Japanese as imitators to travel accounts tracing Buddhism and Confucianism to the Chinese mainland, and an account written by Pierre de Charlevoix from the 18th century (2016, 9–11). In his account, however, the Japanese were not the only people accused of being imitators; Arabs, Russians, Americans, and other non-Western European also lacked creativity (Ibid.). The idea of Japanese as imitators, however, took off and was repeated in many texts until well into the twentieth century. Even accounts that argue that the Japanese are not inherent imitators are based on the idea that they are (Ibid.).

At the same time, the idea of creativity and a denigration of learning through imitation surged in the Romantic era, when the idea of God as the Creator and learning art through imitating masterpieces was replaced by the idea of “man” as capable of creative expression deriving from deep emotions. These ideas come through in the English language, especially in corporate language, in which being a “creator,”

⁸³ Recorded anonymous interview with author. 2018.

“interrupter,” or “artist,” is superior to being a “follower,” “copycat,” “craftsman.”

Romantic ideas and ideals coincided with Japan opening to the West in the 19th Century with colonial ideas about the superiority of the West, including Western art, along with Japanese elites adopting certain types of Western dress, art, and ideas. As Lucken and Simkin write, “The West likes to see itself as an entity composed of liberated and enlightened individuals driven by a creative force while Japan and the East in general supposedly imitate in a slavish and immature way” (Ibid., 37).

In recent years, performance studies scholars have described Japanese attempts at performing others’ music and dance as inauthentic, even if subtly so. In his article on Japanese salsa musicians in Orquesta de la Luz (discussed above), Hosokawa argues that “borrowing is intrinsic to the Japanese sense of self,” recalling the phrase “Learning (manabu) is imitating (manebu)” (2010, 524). He ultimately describes Japanese performance of tropical music as a simulacra, with the implication that imitation as an unsatisfactory substitute for the real thing, because of its hyperrealness. The salsa playing by Orquesta de la Luz members was so correct, that it was realer than the real thing, and somehow inauthentic. Similarly, Savigliano reports that when watching Japanese perform Argentinean tango, “incorporating all the techniques of passion they have learned, they still look Japanese... something does not quite work” (1992, 248). Kaeppler points out the Japanese who practice hula do so by copying teachers, without understanding song lyrics or cultural contexts around hula, with changes and improvisation to movements not allowed and an emphasis on correctness (2013, 222–23).

Sawada, in contrast, allowed and encouraged individual flair when playing, even though it was difficult for many of the beginner drummers to play with enjoyment and groove. I wondered if the idea of imitation as inferior and the impossibility of playing authentically may have been linked to the anonymous Nataka Toshia member spending considerable time with other new practitioners (including themselves) who needed to imitate to learn. I asked them what they thought of Sawada's playing. I pointed out that imitation may be necessary when a person is first learning to play. Eventually people stop imitating and they "get it." This member, however, told me that even Sawada was imitating, even after more than twenty years of playing. He was playing inauthentically and with a different "feeling" than the *baianos*. They compared Sawada's playing with that of two local musicians who joined the group and ran a few rehearsals:

[Sawada] plays really well, and he can do a lot, but the feeling is different. Here, Eddie and Elson (local musicians) played with him too, but it was different. Completely different for me.

Moreover, they told me that as a Japanese person, Sawada and others were more concerned about being correct than a Brazilian musician would:

I feel I have to be correct, because otherwise it's a little scary (*chotto kowai*). But what I was caring about was to not make a mistake. Not music, not rhythm, but playing correctly.

You think Naoya has this too?

Always. But with Elson, it was different. He seemed to be enjoying himself. I know that Naoya was very busy, he must have been tired, but he still played differently.

Sawada carefully watched the tourist-musicians he was teaching much more than invited local musicians did, as he was responsible for them. He displayed far more stress

than the local musicians who were not responsible for the group, and he may not have been enjoying himself at rehearsals. Because of the difficult and intense training Sawada was leading, some members of Nataka Toshia that year also did not seem to be enjoying themselves during rehearsals. I was not sure that worrying about being correct was the result of being Japanese, but rather, overseeing a beginner ensemble. How did Sawada play when he was not stressed? As far as I knew, most other Brazilian and Bahian ensembles did not have performing groups comprised of (mostly) beginner musicians. Would other group leaders feel stress with beginner musicians? I believe that the stakes were high for Sawada. As an outsider, he needed his ensemble to reflect well on him.

I had been observing Sawada and his playing for a while by the time I interviewed this anonymous member, and I confess that as a non-expert, I could not see too much difference between Sawada and locals, except for one moment. Several months before the tourists arrived, I accompanied Sawada to a capoeira roda (circle, open practice) on a Saturday night. Sawada was a student of capoeira Angola in the school of Mestre João Pequeno de Pastinha. At the roda, players alternated between singing and playing percussion, playing/fighting in the roda, and playing berimbau. In the roda, I saw Sawada similarly to the other players. When he played berimbau, however, he looked different, playing like no one else I had ever seen. His wrist had more flare than the other players, and the baqueta bounced off the arame (string) with much bigger movements than the other players. There was something lighter and more deliberate when he tapped the arame. I thought of so many US American taiko players who described Japanese music, dance, and performance as “grounded,” and wondered if the wrist could also be grounded

in Japanese music because Sawada's wrist was flying. As someone from the US, however, I could not attribute the relative lifted qualities of Sawada's playing compared to the grounded quality of local musicians' movements to national heritage. Maybe this was just the way Sawada played. Maybe it had more to do with his classical piano training than being Japanese. I am skeptical about the idea of Japanese practitioners of Brazilian music as mere imitations of the real thing. While concerns about cultural appropriation must be taken seriously, many Japanese players, including Ako and the anonymous interviewee I cite above, have unnecessarily internalized the idea of Japanese people as imitators and have deployed it to denigrate themselves and their fellow travelers. Japanese people have their own kinesonic repertoires, which I discussed in Chapter 2. In a country that values mixture, can Japanese bodies become integrated into local practices in Bahia?

Naoya Sawada: Foreigners as Adopted Children?

Many Bahians believed that Japanese people could never play the music of Black peoples' bodies and souls, and moreover, they were inept and comical when trying. Above, I described locals heckling Japanese visitors and residents in the city as they walked through the streets and as they played samba and samba-reggae. Sawada ignored a lot of "Arigatou, Sayonara" greetings and heckling in the street, even after twenty years of living in the city, and he was aware that the locals made fun of him. Eventually he re-appropriated insults. The name Nataka Toshia derived from the heckling that Sawada experienced when he arrived in Bahia. Nataka Toshia meant, according to Sawada, "the moaning sound that someone makes while having sex." Others told me that it is "the

sound of love,” while others giggled and enjoyed repeating the name when I asked about it, although I was unable to find references to this term on the Internet. Since many locals thought that “Nataka Toshia” sounded like Japanese, they shouted it at Sawada, who did not know how to speak Portuguese or what the expression meant when he first arrived in Brazil. He reclaimed the insult when he decided to use it for the name of his group, sometimes laughing when explaining the name. He laughed when a former Wadō member who participated in Nataka Toshia rehearsals who expressed shock when upon learning the meaning of the group’s name. Akemi, the most respected Brazilian in the ensemble, was never told about this meaning. She told the rest of Wadō that Nataka Toshia was a play on “Ashi to Katana,” or “feet and swords” rearranged, commenting on the creativity of the visitors who came to the city rather than the ironic term.

I interviewed two Black local percussionists who subtly distanced themselves from Sawada and wanted to promote their own work in the space of an interview. When I asked about Sawada, one artist gently made fun of him, describing him carrying around a keyboard when he first arrived, looking like an outsider. Another Bahian musician and specialist in Candomblé drumming wanted me to know that Sawada played for Timbalada in the “chão” or “floor” section of the ensemble. Playing on the “ground,” or “floor” was presumably less prestigious than playing on a trio electrico or stage. Sawada was good, this musician argued indirectly through this chosen emphasis, but he was not among the best. Moreover, he had followed a commercial path rather than a spiritual path for percussionists, since he played for and taught tourists, and rather than playing for the Orixás (gods/guiding spirits) in a terreiro.

Both artists told me about foreigners from Argentina, Europe, and the United States who studied drumming in Bahia for a short period of time and then proceeded to teach it and position themselves as experts. They criticized foreigners writing down rhythms in their notebooks and asserted that the problem of cultural appropriation has become worse over the years with students recording music on their phones and relying too much on technology to practice.

A fear of the possibility of misappropriating Afro Brazilian cultural practices influenced Nataka Toshia's membership and pricing. Sawada also told me that his awareness of his role as a foreigner playing Bahian music impacted his decision to remain in Salvador for many years, run his group free of charge, and refrain from drumming in religious contexts. He said:

People here are open, with big hearts, you know? They always are like, 'come, come, come! Come play!' But I don't do that anymore... at first, when I was playing in the street, people would say, 'you are stealing our culture! You're going to leave and get a lot of money for teaching! You're stealing our culture!' and this upset me. I never had those plans, you know. And so I stayed for many years. I've been wanting to stay here, researching music, with time. So I'm here for years, years, years. And I never charge anyone to teach percussion. I only charge rent when they stay here.

Sawada cited a love for Bahian music and sincere interest in Afro Brazilian culture as reasons for remaining for many years, which he hoped mitigated problems with engaging in and teaching a cultural practice by and of Afro Bahian people. His long-term commitment contrasted with those who studied for only a few weeks.

For foreigners who stay in Bahia for a long time, there is a precedent of local musicians embracing foreign artists. In the visual arts, the work of foreign artists has become iconic of Bahia. Two art museums in the Barra neighborhood of Salvador

celebrate two foreign artists: Carybe and Pierre Verger. Carybe, born as Hector Julio Páride Bernabó, was a painter born in Argentina who documented Afro Brazilian culture in his works, including bucolic scenes of capoeira on the beach and Candomblé that tourists can buy on postcards. Pierre Verger, a French photographer who traveled around the world and settled in Salvador, became a Candomblé initiate. His photographs are loved by many in Afro Brazilian religious communities. Academics who are practitioners of Afro Brazilian religions, musics, and dance, such as Barbara Browning and Angela Luhning, are beloved, respected, and well-known scholars in the local community. Outside of Brazil, Gidal has shown that in New York, many Japanese musicians collaborate with Bahian and Brazilian musicians. Mamiko Watanabe, a Japanese pianist who studied in Berklee College of Music, performed with Dendê Machado and was the subject of his hit song “Mamiko.” Miho Nobuzane, a band leader who learned Brazilian music in New York, says that she learned to be “more relaxed and grooving” while living in New York and collaborating with Brazilians.

Although Sawada is not as well-known as the artists and scholars I mention above, many artists wanted to help him and collaborate with him. Some lent instruments to the group. Others emphasized their relationships with him to me, recalling the first time they met him or taking credit for helping him obtain a visa. One of Sawada’s teachers, Ivan Santana, claimed Sawada as his adopted son, placing him in his own bloodline, demonstrating flexible notions of family based on artistic training and *convivência* (living together).

During Carnival Fred Dantas and his ensemble members performed their admiration for Sawada and the travelers. Twice, they stopped their procession through the streets to serenade the Sawada and his musicians playing *Ue o Muite, Arukou*, a popular song from the 1950s. In a moment of mutual acknowledgment, the tourists danced, waving their baquetas in the air, while yelling the lyrics, thrilled that a group of local musicians knew who they were and where they were from.⁸⁴ Then they played *Ê Baiana*, a song about a baiana dancing samba, with the tourists still waving and trying to sing along. After the two pieces, Fred Dantas and Sawada bowed to each other and shook hands, performing mutual admiration, before both groups moved on with their processions.

In Wadō, members and Nikkei elders accepted Sawada as an expert in Bahian music. They did not know he trained at a conservatory in the United States, but they trusted that the time he spent learning Afro Brazilian rhythms was a long-term commitment, and his dedication deemed him trustworthy. For elders in the Nikkei community, Sawada was a paradigm of discipline and dedication. He had sacrificed comforts associated with Japan to learn a musical skill. Many Nikkei identified hard work, dedication, and discipline as Japanese values, and Sawada embodied these values through his musical practices, showing respect for the communities of practice. Even if he played differently, perhaps his training and time was enough to make him accepted, to

⁸⁴ <https://vimeo.com/703043157> | <https://sites.google.com/view/taiko-samba/chapter-3>

make him less of a foreigner and legitimize his project of Nataka Toshia, even though Sawada was looking toward future projects and a life in Japan.

Conclusion: Carnival and Looking Forward

Carnival was ecstatic for me. Playing in Nataka Toshia with Wadō, the Japanese travelers, and the local guest musicians was thrilling. I think it was ecstatic for everyone else too. The face paint, the flowers decorating everyone's hair, and the Japanese and Brazilian costumes fit in with the rest of the Pelourinho, decorated and vibrant. We seemed to glow in the dark under the light of the streetlamps. Japanese women staying at the hostel led the way of the ensemble, dancing a different kind of samba, and no one blinked an eye when it was different—with more foot movement and less hip movement—than the samba of a baiana. Sawada's wife Shiori showed her chops on the repinique, jamming through the streets covered in glitter. She surprised many of us, as she never attended rehearsals. I walked in formation, letting everything go, feeling the presence of my friends, and listening to the leaders of the groups so we knew when to change patterns.⁸⁵ Nataka Toshia attracted the attention of a TV crew who filmed the group and interviewed Sawada and Akemi Tahara from Wadō (Figure 15).

⁸⁵ Carnival Footage: <https://vimeo.com/703049738>, <https://vimeo.com/703049641>, <https://vimeo.com/703041601>, <https://sites.google.com/view/taiko-samba/chapter-3>



Figure 15: A television crew interviewing Akemi Tahara and Naoya Sawada during a break from playing.

That night, friendships seemed to deepen. After the performances were over, everyone returned to the hostel, where everyone jammed, talked, danced, and drank while slowly taking off makeup. Takamaru, Leo, and Vinicius played forró and MPB (Música Popular Brasileira) songs on guitars and others started playing percussion to accompany the trio. The next day a group went to the very last Carnival parade in Barra, the *arrastão*, exhausted but following a woman yelling “I’m going after Leo Santana.” Mago photographed young women who posed for him. He documented Carnival’s open social inequality, posting photos on social media of those who clean the streets after each parade (Figure 16).

In the days that followed, as the city settled down and businesses opened again, there were parties at Naoyado, and day trips to Cachoeira and far-flung beaches near the city. I went to the mall with travelers where we tried bad sushi with mango and strawberry on top. Then many of the travelers scattered, some going off to other countries. Others stayed for a few more days in Naoyado before going to the Chapada Diamantina Area, with one exception. Mago, who stayed for months, nearly overstayed his visa while he was trying to figure out how to stay in Brazil permanently.

Naoya went to Japan for a few months later that year after teaching Wadō how to play Bahian rhythms in a workshop. He told me that eventually he wanted to move to Kagoshima and set up a cultural center where people could learn music and art, both Japanese and non-Japanese. Although I argue here that Sawada and other Japanese are accepted in Bahia, and even adopted as baianos by some, Sawada's life was characterized by mobility and movement. He was a new Issei, a 21st Century Issei, different from the Issei of the 20th Century, with freedom to travel back and forth between continents, with permanent, semi-permanent, and temporary projects, relationships, and businesses taking place in various parts of the world. Sawada was lucky to have permanent residence in Brazil and citizenship in Japan, but others were not so lucky. Mago, for example, during this first trip to Bahia and first Carnival, longed to stay permanently in Bahia.

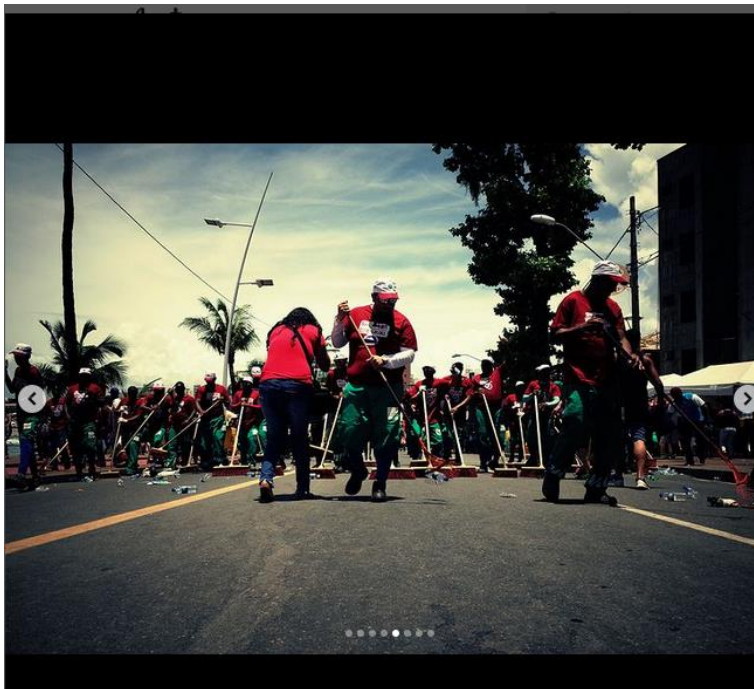


Figure 16: After Carnival

Screenshots from the Instagram page of Ryuichi Magori (Mago). Used with permission. In the above image, young women pose for Mago on the last day of Carnival. Below, street sweepers prepare streets for use after the last parade is over. Mago's Instagram handle: @ryuichimagori

Instead, he needed to travel on a tourist visa, spending six months in Japan, and six months in Latin America, cultivating relationships and a romance while slowly learning Portuguese.

Still others, like Ako, who could never properly digest samba, struggled to make their lives in Latin America work. Ako traveled back and forth between Brazil and Japan like a *sansei dekassegui*, working low-wage service jobs to save money to continue practicing music, art, and capoeira and living in a country—Brazil—where she felt more at home.

Wadō and Nataka Toshia members regarded each other fondly in the days, weeks, and months after carnival. Wataru called the Wadō “amazing,” noting that other members were happy to play with them. Vinicius told me that playing with Nataka Toshia was,

Very good, enriching. I learned so much in many ways. I learned so much discipline. Musically, this was the first time that I participated in Carnival to play. This had never happened before. Playing in carnival was something I always wanted for Wadō.... And it was challenging, but also a wonderful exchange... A way to be involved with different cultures and ways of thinking and self-expression.

The groups continued collaborating, with more Wadō members joining the parade in 2019 and 2020, until Covid shut down the 2021 Carnival.

“Opening the Heart to Destiny”: Take’s Interview

I end this chapter with an interview with Takehito Obuchi (Take). I met Take when Sawada and his family went to Japan for the months of July and August in 2018. Take took care of Naoya’s hostel while he was gone. The year before I arrived in Brazil,

he and his wife participated in Naoya's Carnival percussion classes, and Take cooked for the group. He took care of the players, and he kept the hostel tidy.

Take and Mago, the only guest of Naoyado for those months, accompanied me as I explored Salvador during my days off. We would eat dinner together, walk around Ribeira, get ice cream, go to the beach, or watch the sunset in Barra. I remember young boys approaching Take, asking, "are you Chinese?"

"No, guess again."

"Japanese."

"Yes! Well done!" He would say, giving the children a high five.

I wanted Take's grace and ease. He embraced being an outsider with generosity and patience.

Take and I would tease Mago about a woman that he was seeing. "Where were you last night?" We would ask. "Is the reason you wanted to stay in Brazil this woman? Are you in love with her?" No, he insisted. He just liked Salvador. "*Why do you like Salvador?*" I would ask. "The atmosphere is good." One day, he showed Take-san and me a picture of the woman. She had thick glasses and a short buzz haircut. She was reclining in a chair, her elbow resting on the armrest, and with her hand obscuring her nose and mouth. She was smiling at Mago, the camera. I was sure he stayed in Bahia to be closer to her.

I chose to feature Take's interview because of his long-term perspective as a Japanese person who wanted to travel, to see the world, and who fell in love with countries and people far from home. Take had been traveling for most of his adult life.

His dream was to open a hostel in Bogota, although the idea of eventually returning to Japan was never off the table. In 2018, his wife was working in Mexico for a Japanese company. They were saving money to open their hotel. Because of Take's long-term travel throughout Latin America, he spoke Spanish, and we communicated in Spanish. I have tried to preserve the feeling of Take's Spanish in this English translation.

My complete name—my surname is Obuchi, and my name is Takehito. My city is Yokosuka in Kanagawa province. I grew up fifteen minutes away from the beach, walking. And in the summer, there are a lot of travelers. Yokosuka has beaches, ocean, and also mountains and farms. It also has a US military base. When I was a child, it was prohibited to go to there. The teachers would tell us, "Children cannot go there. They cannot visit." They gave us the idea that it was dangerous. Once, I went there with my friends to see a movie because there was a theater there. We were scared, and we crossed through the neighborhood running. There were a lot of stores and bars to serve the Americans. It seemed that it wasn't Japan.

My father was born in Gunma, and my mother was born in Kagoshima. My family is very, very normal in Japan, because my generation is, as we say, *dainiji*. 20 or 30 years before I was born, there were a lot of babies that were born.⁸⁶ And then another baby boom when I was born. And this generation normally lives with their grandparents. My parents had two kids. That was very normal at the time. My mother stayed at home until we finished primary school. After that she worked part time. My father always worked. In the same company until he was 65. He worked at an auto parts factory. Tokyo Radiators. You know, the part that cools the car.

I was in Yokosuka until I finished high school. At that moment, I had to take the *Junken*, the university entrance exam. A lot of my friends did *rōnin*. You know *rōnin*? That's when you prepare for the exam for a year if you don't pass the first time. You study for it at a private school. And when you don't pass again, the next year you try again. So I did this. The first year was a normal year of *rōnin*. And then the second year. During the first year, my parents paid for the private school. But in the second year, I thought, "I need to work part time." Because in two years, you spend a lot. So I went to work part time in an *Izakaya*. A bar. And in that moment, my life changed. I started living alone. And I met more people. And I started to become interested in India.

Why India?

⁸⁶ Second baby boom generation

There are a lot of reasons. First was a book that I read about India. It was a bestseller at the time: *Midnight Express*, Shinya Tokyu, a multi-part documentary of a backpacker who traveled from Shanghai to London. There was also a singer, Nagabuchi Tsuyoshi, who wrote a song about India. And then one day, I was on the train, and I ran into a friend after six years, and I was like, “Que milagro! What are you doing now?”

“I’m going to the Indian embassy.”

“Cómo, cómo?”

“I’m going to travel to India.”

So, I started to be interested in India. It was unmei. Unmei is destiny. Maybe India was calling me, inviting me. I was 19 years old.

That’s why in my second year as a rōnin, starting in April, I worked at an Izakaya until August, and then, little by little, I saved money and checked the price of a plane ticket, and at the end of September, I arrived in New Delhi.

I met another Japanese person on the plane. He was older than me. When we arrived, we took a local bus instead of a taxi. We arrived late, and the truck took us to the train station at New Delhi. But there was no light. And I didn’t see anyone, but I felt a lot of people around me. We thought that there were going to be a lot of places to stay by the New Delhi station. But there weren’t, and there wasn’t any light. And I felt a lot of people around me. I was nervous and scared. Scared, scared, scared. And then some people saw us, two foreigners, and they came up to us trying to communicate with us, but we couldn’t speak English or any of their languages. I was even more scared. We finally found the station staff, and when we explained that we were looking for a hotel, he explained that we had to cross to the other side of the station. On that side, there were a lot of stores, restaurants. A lot of dogs and cows. It was raining a little. And it was 11 at night. We had to find a place to sleep. My friend—who was not really a friend—he had information about a posada. And he went walking and there were a lot of people trying to guide us. They would say, “let’s go to this posada, let’s go to that posada.” And at that moment, I was like, “here is good.” But not my friend. He was like, “I know a really good place.” We got lost. And after one hour, two hours, he was like, “Here.” We arrived at the place, and there was only one room available. The staff said, “the room has air conditioner.” Yes, there was an air conditioner, but it didn’t cool the room. And then we heard a boom in the dark. And then we turned on the light and saw that the place was covered with insects. Flies, mosquitos, other things. But we were tired, so we slept. That was my first experience in India.

During the daytime, I went out, but people would always approach me, trying to communicate. And I was so scared, I closed my heart. I couldn’t leave the hostel. After a few days, I thought, “I’m going back. I’m going back to Japan.” But then I decided that I had to give this trip another chance. I went to Agra. Agra where the Taj Mahal is. I bought a train ticket, and on the train, I decided to try to open my heart. Indians always wanted to talk to me, and this wasn’t Japan. So, in the train, I thought, I am going to try harder. And it was a very calm ride.

When I arrived in Agra, I talked to a rickshaw driver. I didn’t feel anything, but I also didn’t feel scared or bothered. I continued my trip. Varanasi, Calcutta, Darjeeling. These places. And it ended up being a wonderful experience. Everything was so

different than anything I had experienced before. Every person I met. It was like a shock. For example, near Khajuraho, where there were a lot of temples, a young boy came up to me and said, "Come, come to my home." He invited me for dinner. I was scared because a lot of tourists and travelers—our mentality is that when someone invites you to their home, you shouldn't go. Like they will give you a drink with a drug in it to make you sleep and rob you. You always hear that information. But I talked to this boy for a while, and I didn't think he was bad. I thought that maybe it would be okay. And I ended up going to his family's home for dinner four or five times. They always invited me, and we talked about a lot of things.

How did you talk about things if you didn't speak their language?

I don't know. I don't remember. But it isn't important. We were able to speak! So I ended up liking India. Once I opened my heart, I could experience things.

When I returned to Japan, I decided that I wanted to go to Okinawa. I had some money left over, and a lot of people had told me good things about Okinawa. I wanted to live there. I went to Iriomotejima. I found a job in a guest house. A minshuku. As a helper. The owners were from Kobe, and I helped them to construct new parts of the property, like a Beer Garden. I was thinking about living there forever, but the owners, who were like my parents said, "Okinawa is always going to be here. You are only 20 years old, and you shouldn't decide to live here for the rest of your life. You have a lot of possibilities. It's best if you go back to Kanagawa." So I went back. I ended up working in a theater.

I love the theater. It changes constantly. Each play lasts a month, two months, or even just a week. I worked there for a year and a half, and I was always thinking about leaving Japan and how outside of Japan there is another world. Other countries. I was always thinking about going on a trip around the world. I saved money during a year and a half, and I thought about whether to go East or West.

I was thinking that I know nothing about the Americas. A lot of people said that Central America is a place where people are murdered every day. And I thought that it was dangerous, that it was difficult to go to the Americas. But if you want to go around the world, you have to go through America. So I decided to go. I arrived in Los Angeles. I went to a language school that was free for Latin Americans. In Los Angeles, there are a lot of Latinos, and some of them don't speak English, so the school was really for them, although tourists could study there too.

I spent three months in Los Angeles. In the first month, I hadn't found the school yet, so I studied two months there at the school. The other students were all Latinos. Young people. They taught me a lot of swear words in Spanish, telling me, "When you get to Mexico, you have to say, this, this, and this." They taught me to say, "jodido pero content – broke but happy." They also told me, "When you meet a girl, a woman, you have to say, 'Quieres bailar conmigo esta noche? Will you dance with me tonight?' First you say that."

When my visa ran out, I crossed into Mexico at Tijuana, and Baja California, and went to La Paz, and then I took a boat to Mazatlán. Then, Durango. Zacatecas. Do you know these places? Shiteru? Shiteru? Guanajuato. Mexico City. And I didn't speak any Spanish. I traveled by bus.

In Zacatecas, in the historical center of the city, there was a clown. A mime. He wanted me to do a performance with him. And after the performance, he had me introduce myself. "My name is Take." And after that, whenever I walked around the streets of Zacatecas, everyone would say, "Take, Take, Oh, Take!" Some people in a group recognized me, and they invited me to a discoteca. Then I ended up not staying in the posada where I had planned to stay. I stayed in their homes. One night in one person's house, and the next night in another. And they would explain things to me in Spanish. "Hoy vamos a..." But I didn't understand anything they would say. I was just like, "Sí, sí, sí." I was always a little bit scared. But I couldn't refuse. The best thing was just to say, "sí, sí, sí."

When I went to Guanajuato, I didn't know anything about the city. One day, I saw a slope, and I know that whenever there is a slope or hill or mountain, a lot of people want to climb it. So, I went there, and I saw people climbing it, and I climbed to the top where there was a little church. I saw a young man sitting in front of the church that looked like he was about my age—early twenties. He was drinking a soda, and he invited me to take a few sips because he could see that I was thirsty. We didn't have any language in common—English, Spanish, or Japanese. So, we talked with our bodies. He invited me to a barbecue with his friends. He was a student from a university in Mexico City who was in Guanajuato for spring break.

At that time, there were no cell phones. And we didn't exchange information. He told me that he lived near the metro station Camarones in Mexico City and that every day at noon he would go to the station to look for me, so I should go there and find him when I get to Mexico City. And when I arrived in Mexico City, I went to the station, and he was there waiting. "O, Take!" His name is Ivan, and we are good friends today. We hung out a lot during the four months I was there.

When I first arrived in Mexico City, I stayed in a posada that was famous with Japanese travelers because the owner was Japanese. It's called Pensión Amigo. One day, a group of people wanted to go to the zoo, and they invited me. When we got there, we decided that if anyone in the group gets lost, we would find each other at the entrance. I lost them, and then I waited at the entrance. But no one came. It turns out that they didn't count me before they left to go back to the hostel. I felt hurt in my heart. Un poco lastimado mi corazón. I didn't know how to get around in Mexico City, and so I took a bus to a big park in the center of the city where I knew how to get back to the hostel. It's called Parque Alameda.

And in the park, I saw another clown, doing pantomime again. And again, he chose me for his performance. And then he told me to choose a girl, a woman for the performance, and we did a pantomime of a wedding. I was like, "that one." Afterwards we introduced ourselves. She was there at the park with her sisters. And they invited me to places around Mexico City. We went to a lot of places together. Her name was

Hortensia. And one day, I don't remember, I asked her to be my girlfriend. I had a great time with my girlfriend Hortensia and my best friend Ivan, and her two sisters, my good friends. I was always having fun with them.

One day, Ivan took me to Teotihuacan, and we were walking behind one of the pyramids. And a car stopped, and a woman rolled down the window and asked me if I was Japanese. And she asked me to work for her in a store nearby that sold handicrafts. She offered me a percentage of what I would sell. That was kind of a miracle. I was working at Teotihuacan, and then spending time with my girlfriend and with Ivan. I thought about staying there and marrying Hortensia. I didn't want to leave. I didn't want to go to a different place. But Hortensia and my friends understood. "It's okay, Take, you can go," they said, but they were really sad, and I felt bad about that.

In Mexico, a Japanese citizen can only stay up to six months, so eventually I had to leave. I decided to go to Colombia. I took a flight directly to Bogotá. When I arrived, I had around \$10,000. Six months later, I had only about \$1000. Colombia has a lot of casinos, a lot of bars. I met two other Japanese people, and we hung out together at the bars and casinos, and I lost a lot of money. I went to Leticia and went into Brazil. I thought that if I run out of money, I would have to go back to Japan, but I had a credit card, and then I would use it to buy a plane ticket and then go back and work to pay it off.

I went to Leticia, crossed into Brazil, and when on to Manaus. There, I found work as a teacher in a private primary school. I worked there for six months in the afternoon. There was normal school in the morning, and then in the afternoon, special classes. I taught Japanese, art, and physical education. I also didn't want to leave Manaus. I loved the students.

I ended up recuperating my money. But then I went to the Bumba Meu Boi festival in Maranhão and lost my glasses, and I spent all my money, so I was back to the one thousand dollars I had before. I left Brazil. I went to Manaus again, then Caracas, and then Mexico City. My money was almost completely gone. But then I met a Japanese friend who introduced me to the owner of a Japanese restaurant, who hired me as a cook. I was able to stay in Mexico, and then I went to Cuba for two months, and then six more months in Mexico.

The second time in Mexico is when I met E-chan, my wife. She was Spanish language student at UNAM, and we met at the restaurant where I was working. She noticed that I could speak Spanish, and that even though I had bad grammar, people understood me. And she was very surprised by that, considering I never studied Spanish. And she became interested in me. She could come with me when I went out with Ivan, and she followed with me to various places.

We both had to return to Japan, and when I went back, I went to the theater where I was working to say hello. They had thrown a goodbye party for me when I left, so it was best to go and say hello, like, "Thank you. My body is well." They asked me if I had work.

"I'm not working."

“Then you’ll work here again.”

They hired me as an independent contractor.

E-chan started working for a company that supports guest workers, a *dekassegui no haikengaisha*. There are a lot of Peruvian and Brazilian factory workers in Japan. Or Brazilians and Peruvians married to Japanese people. They don’t know how to look for work. They don’t know how to go to the hospital and communicate with doctors, and they are alone. And if there is an accident, like in traffic, there is no one to advocate for them. She does this work.

E-chan and I were friends for seven years. And then, for some reason, our relationship changed. And during a tour of the theater company, from Hokkaido to Kagoshima, we decided to start living together because it didn’t make sense for me to pay rent without living at my place for three months at a time. And then we decided to get married. We were happy with our lives. We both liked our jobs. Everything was great.

And then one day, our good friend invited us to a wine bar because she said that she had something to tell us. And when we were drinking, she said, “I’m getting married.” And then at some point, she said to us, “When are you going to travel?” We had never talked about traveling. And we drank a lot thinking about traveling. I asked E-chan, “So should we travel?” and she said yes. We drank so much, that I don’t remember how we got home. The next day was Sunday and we both had bad hangovers, and I was hoping that she wouldn’t remember what we had talked about. Because at that time in our lives, everything was calm. *Tranquilo*. But if we travel, we won’t know what the future holds, right? And then, with my headache, I asked, “do you remember what we talked about?” “Yes.” We ended up deciding to travel the world together.

I think that there was a box very, very deep in our hearts that was closed and locked very, very well. But our friend knocked on the box and opened it when she asked when we would travel. In the bottom of our hearts, we really wanted to travel. We met in Mexico, and we know the world is amazing. Three years later, we began our trip.

In February 2010, we left our home and went first to Tohoku. Iwate, Aomori Kita. And then my wife’s parents’ home in Shizuoka. Then to Nagoya. We had a lot of friends there. They were drummers who played Cuban style drums. And then Kyoto. We stayed with a friend who cuts her hair whenever she gets drunk. Very crazy, but *muy buena onda* (a very cool person).

Then we went to Fukuoka where a friend offered to keep our things while we were away. We packed everything up into 10 boxes, which are still in her house. Then to Kagoshima, then Ishigaki.

We spent a lot of money before leaving Japan, so we had to work. I started working on a rice farm, and she started working as a waitress. We were in Ishigaki for six months. And then we went to Taiwan and spent time in Haulien. Then to Kaohsiung. From there, we started to think about China. We decided that we needed to learn to speak Mandarin, so in Kaohsiung, we started attending a language school. Then we

went to Hong Kong, Kunming, Yunnan—Shangrila. A lot of ethnic minorities live in these places. Maybe Han people don't like the Japanese. But everyone where we went was friendly and nice. We thought about going to Tibet, but getting a permit was very difficult. So, we went to Vietnam and Thailand. And then Malaysia, Indonesia, and back to Thailand because we found work in Bangkok at a call center that paid well. We were there for one year.

Then we went to Sri Lanka and India, Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia. We were in Ethiopia for three months, and our money was running out. And at that point, we thought about Spain as a place where we could find work because we can speak Spanish. But when we got there, we discovered that even Spanish citizens had trouble finding work, so foreigners also couldn't work. But then, I remembered I had an acquaintance that lived in Canada who recommended a job there as a cherry picker during a summer harvest. So we went to Canada.

We made friends with a lot of Mexicans when we were working on the farm. They couldn't hang out with us too much because they were always saving money to send home to their families and didn't take any days off. We told them that once we were all in Mexico, we would go out drinking and hang out until sunrise. We had fifteen coworkers. Fifteen Mexicans. We ended up visiting four of them when we got to Mexico. When we arrived, we didn't tell them we were coming. And we surprised them, and we met their parents, spouses, and children. One night, we drank until the sun came up.

We decided that we wanted to look for work and stay one, two, maybe even three or four years in Mexico. And we spent two years there before going to Colombia and Brazil.

I met Naoya because actually, he is famous. You can read about him on blogs, and if you want to find an inexpensive place to stay in Salvador, his website always pops up. You can find out about carnival when you read about his place.

When we got to Brazil, it was January, so we thought about where we wanted to be for Carnival. We decided that we didn't want to be in Rio de Janeiro, and since Salvador had a hostel where Japanese people stay, and where you could participate in Carnival, we decided to stay there. We got here, and there were only 4 people. We talked to Naoya that night. "Very few people are coming this year," he said. And normally, one month before Carnival, 10 or 15 people are participating in Nataka Toshia. Naoya was really worried about Carnival. Very few people.

One day, Naoya was like, "If you would like, come and see our practice." And we loved it. We love to dance, and music is always something we enjoy. And then, "If you would like, why don't you try playing?" E-chan and I thought that we should help Naoya out. We thought at first that we could cook for everyone. We noticed that every night, the players were exhausted, and each person was cooking their own meal. And then later, E-chan started noticing that there really weren't enough people, so she would play. So I cooked, and she played.

Naoya and I are always talking about why so few travelers are coming through and staying recently. We think that the problem is the Internet. There is a lot of information, and it is difficult to choose what to do. And people don't want to miss out on anything, and they want convenience. Like with an airplane ticket. People always choose the date that is the least expensive. So imagine, you get to Salvador, and you want to stay until after carnival, but you already have your plane ticket, and you can't change the date.

Nataka Toshia may change. The issue is that Naoya has children now, and maybe it is best if someone else runs it during Carnival while Naoya goes to Japan. Also, if people don't come to participate, it cannot continue. But then again, Nataka Toshia is open.

Yes, like people from Wadō. They were happy to participate. They had a great experience.

Yes. So not only travelers. Maybe Wadō people and others that are interested. Maybe people who are interested in Japan. And Nikkeijin.

I recommended Nataka Toshia to Mago-chan. We were staying in a posada in Mexico close to the border with Guatemala, and we met. Mago-chan wanted to go to Guatemala to study Spanish, but when I told him about Nataka Toshia, he was very interested. Ten days after we spoke, he left Mexico to travel to Salvador, changing his travel plans completely.

Participating in Nataka Toshia is a life-changing experience. You change a lot in a month. Your thinking, mentality—it changes. It's a precious experience for each person.

How so?

For example, I went to Machu Picchu, and I went to Galapagos. And spending carnival here is 100 times more precious. There is a lot of fighting. And a lot of crying. Sometimes people come to rehearsal in the morning and say, "I can't do this anymore. I have to leave." And everyone else is like, "No, no, no!" And we ask, "How can we change your mind?" and we talk it through.

It's a lot of stress to participate in the group. But it is a great experience. You get to play with Swing do Pelô too. And you meet people like Ivan and other Brazilians that play with us. There is the aspect of meeting people. And then the day of carnival is really, really interesting. Last year, I danced while the others played. On the second day of carnival, the performance was incredible. It was like the players were playing, but it wasn't really them.

Like a spirit?

Yes, yes, yes, a spirit. It was ecstatic. Ecstasy. We don't know how it came to be. I talked to the others, and we don't know. It was a precious experience. Life changing.

Now, my wife is working in a factory as a translator at a car factory in Mexico. She is getting a great salary. Right now, I am here for six months taking care of Naoya's hostel. She told me to come here and get this experience. And in September, we are going to meet in Colombia. Maybe we will open a restaurant or a hostel. That is our dream. To be traveling, but not moving. Not so much movement, movement, movement, like now. To be traveling in one place.

Chapter 4: Taiko and Anime as (Imagined) Refuge

Leo Boca, a Wadō member for eight years, told me he was an awkward child—an outsider who was bullied for being overweight and especially for being gay.

Consequently, he spent a lot of time by himself watching anime and drawing characters during his teen years. In an interview, he said that anime fandom in the Bahian “LGBT” Community was common; LGBT youth were outsiders, particularly during the 1990s while he was growing up. “I think this is because adolescence is a difficult time for LGBT people and they end up being antisocial and coming into contact with the world of manga, of anime, of books, of video games,” he said:

If you go, for example to a Japanese cultural event, the majority of those doing cosplay are gay or lesbian. At least that is what I see. There are a lot of hetero people too. I’m not saying that there aren’t. But if you go to an event, like a Bon Odori, there are many more LGBT people than if you go to any other music event, or any other event or festival from another association, like an Espirita religious event. There are a lot more gay people at the Bon Odori or a Japanese cultural event. I am sure about that.⁸⁷

When I first visited Wadō in 2011, I was aware that Japanese cultural events, as well as Wadō’s rehearsals and practices, were places where people could be open about their sexuality, contrasting other spaces in Salvador, which were described to me as both heterosexist and sometimes dangerous for queer people. In Wadō, many same sex couples were open and out, often participating in the group with their partners. In 2017 and 2018, many began telling me that Wadō “used to be a majority LGBT” group. “It used to be very rare to see a hetero around here,” one of the rehearsal leaders told me one

⁸⁷ Bocanera, Leo. Recorded interview with author. June 15, 2018. Barris, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

day. “You really couldn’t find one!” Thais, a former Wadō member, told me that a few years ago, many members would joke that new Wadō members should be recruited based on a quota system to make sure that “heteros” were represented within the gay majority. This had changed by 2017 and 2018 when LGBTs were in the minority. At one rehearsal, Leo Boca, told a newer member that there were “way too many heteros around here. We need more gay people!” However, some members still commented on the large number of members who identified as queer. When planning for the group’s annual Bon Odori performance, one person commented, “The only thing missing from our performance is glitter falling everywhere,” and another, “The only thing missing is an explosion of Power Rangers.”⁸⁸

Over the next few months, I started asking Wadō members about the connection between taiko, Japanese culture, and LGBTQ+ identifications in Bahia. Was there such a connection? If so, what did it mean? At first, most interlocutors told me that it was a coincidence that there were so many gay people in Wadō. Gay members would invite their gay friends, who would invite their friends, and so on, until the group naturally had a queer identity. Others said that Wadō was a space of harmony and friendship regardless of one’s identity, so it was a space where everyone was “comfortable,” including “LGBTs.” There was no specific connection between Wadō and queerness was what I was first told.

When I attended an anime festival, however, and saw same sex partners holding hands, which was something I did not regularly see in other areas of the city, I started to

⁸⁸ The Power Rangers are associated with the LGBTQ+ community because of certain characters.

doubt that Wadō was a majority queer group because of coincidence only. Then, in interviews, Leo Bocanera and Felipe Jacobina expressed something more profound about the connection between Japanese culture and being queer: Japanese cultural practices and media allowed queer youth to imagine and share safe spaces and fantasy spaces around Japanese cultural products. That is, Japan became an imagined place where youth imagined that their identities would be tolerated and protected. Japanese anime and manga showed queer people, which were images that were absent in Brazilian media at the time. These images, references, and stories about queerness attracted members to want to know more about Japanese culture, and in some cases, attracted LGBT members to Wadō, which contributed to an LGBT-friendly culture. This chapter is mostly based on these interviews.

Throughout this chapter, I use the term LGBT as a catch-all to describe queer identities because this was how my interlocutors referred to themselves, often saying, “I am an LGBT.” Other identifications they used to define themselves were “gay,” “lesbian,” and “drag.” To describe gender fluidity, they often used descriptions, such as “sometimes I feel I am both a girl and a boy or neither,” rather than using phrases such as “gender fluid,” or “queer.” Once, in practice, we chatted about the “Q” in LGBTQ+, since they asked me what it meant in English, but Wadō members rarely used the “Q” in everyday speech. These tendencies have changed in the years since fieldwork in written communication and social media posts. By 2020, I regularly saw the “Q” added at the end of LGBT, and later, LGBTQIA+ when written as well as “gênero fluído” or “gender fluid” in Portuguese writing on social media.

In this chapter, I first outline the need for safe spaces and fantasy spaces in Brazil for the LGBT community, that is, spaces where members could imagine a world free from violence against the LGBT community, as well as a space of acceptance, tolerance, and convivência, or living together. I show that Brazil is a country of contradictions when it comes to LGBT rights and safety, where celebrities are openly gay but violence against queer people increased in 2018 and again in 2019 when Jair Bolsonaro, then the presidential frontrunner, emboldened those who would commit acts of violence against LGBTQ+ people through his violent and homophobic rhetoric. I also highlight narratives that demonstrate that in the 1990s, seeing images of queer people or openly having a same sex partner was “impossible” for many Wadō members. I show that an influx of Japanese manga and anime in Brazil offered alternatives to images of hetero- and gender-normativity portrayed in Brazilian media, and I discuss how these images contributed to attracting queer people to Wadō.

Non-Asians have a long history of performing in “yellowface,” which has always had strategic purposes that include racist containment and propagating stereotypes and fantasies about Asians. However, yellowface was also the result of a need to explore alternative social formations. Moon reviews popular representations of and performances by Asians at the turn of the twentieth century and argues that American women’s impersonation of Chinese stereotypical characters such as the “dragon lady” and the “tigress” in the early twentieth century was “a way to break down Victorian morals, which promoted domesticity and purity, and helped to create the New Woman,” who was sexually autonomous (2005, 130). Brett suggests that the use of Balinese gamelan in

compositions of European composers “can be heard as belonging to the larger strategy of camp, a strategy which confronts un-queer ontology and homophobia with humor and which by the same means may also signal the possibility of the overturn of that ontology” (2009). While Brett argues that any form of orientalism is problematic, gamelan allowed Westerners who were openly gay to critique Western heteronormative “classical music,” a “discourse that involves among other things an exalted notion of ‘composer’ and ‘work.’” (Ibid.).

These framings were applicable to Wadō in Brazil, where heteronormativity was often imposed on middle class youth from a young age through fashion and expected behaviors. Following Moon and Brett, I argue that non-Asians playing Asian music in Wadō was not the same as the cultural appropriation and racist containment, exemplified by Hollywood stars performing in yellowface in the mid-twentieth century. Rather, consuming anime and playing taiko helped members of Wadō enact a better world, particularly for those who did not fit into hetero- and gender-normative frameworks. Focusing on the manga, *Knights of Sidonia*; the anime, *Knights of the Zodiac*; and *Anipolitan*, an anime conference, I show how manga and anime fans would congregate in spaces where queer people were safe to express themselves because of characters that young people identified as LGBT. Moreover, I show that anime was a huge industry around the world that allowed desires and dreams to be mapped onto characters and stories widely available throughout the world. Playing taiko was a continuation of a dissemination of Japanese media in Brazil, and Wadō members performed the labor of

promoting Japan as “cool” and propagating Japanese culture abroad through their performances and workshops.

Lastly, I show that there were limits to these safe spaces, and that these fantasy spaces were, in many cases, unrealistic fantasies about “Japanese” culture largely based on the worlds of anime and manga. Wadō members told stories of discrimination and homophobia from elders in the Nikkei community associated with the group. Moreover, Wadō’s experimentation with music and dance, and members’ desire to ignore gender roles in taiko repertory, contrasted with other taiko groups in Brazil, where gender normativity was enacted during competitions and taiko repertory and choreography. Queer relationships and expression eventually won acceptance over the period of ten years from Nikkei elders, although a specific case of homophobia led one member to leave Wadō. In spite of these limitations, I argue that Wadō was a safe space for a diverse set of young people who share a love of music and perceived Japanese cultural values.

Brazil and the LGBT Community: A Country of Contradictions

The Interior

While Wadō was preparing for its annual performance at Salvador’s Obon festival in 2018, Vinicius Honda, a Wadō member since 2013, began to travel regularly between a small town in Bahia where he recently had found employment, and Salvador, where he participated in Wadō rehearsals. In an interview, I asked him about his impressions of the connection between taiko, Japanese cultural practices, and the LGBT community. He responded by describing the interior of Bahia, where he was currently working on an arts education project at a public school. Vinicius told me about “the interior,” or rural areas

away from major cities and coastal regions, as homophobic and sexist, particularly in the state of Bahia.⁸⁹ This was a place where families and public school authorities accepted child pregnancy, rape, statutory rape, and femicide, but where individuals reacted violently to homosexual relationships and parents ostracized children who came out to them. Vinicius said:

This week, I was in a little market outside of the high school where I work. I was there having a coffee, and the owner of the market introduced me to a student and asked me,
“Did you know that this student is already a mother?”
“No, I didn’t know,” I said.
“She is fifteen years old and had her first child at 11.”
I looked at her and said, “Is it true?”
And she said, “It’s true.”
I said, “Are you okay with that?”
She said, “For me, okay.”

And so you see. This could have been a shock for her and her family, for an eleven-year-old girl to have a baby. Except that this was a fleeting emotion for them. She gets pregnant, and that’s it. No big deal. But a boy who comes out to his family as gay, who has a homosexual relationship, is going to be expelled from his home. And sometimes not even be accepted as a member of society. And not embraced by his family. You understand? I’ve seen cases like this in the interior. And because of this, people there are so repressed.

I’m going to tell you also something else I’ve only told a few people. When I was putting together this project that I’m working on, I contacted the principal of the school where I was going to work. I talked to him. I said, “How are cultural and artistic activities in your city? What about in your school?” I was trying to get background information for the project and think of activities for the students. I told him, “We can do a lot of different projects together.” And he responded to me like this: “If you are gay, you can forget about it.” I said, “Look, friend. No one is talking about having a relationship here. I’m talking about a project for the students.” I don’t understand why he said that. He is the principal of a school. So this is very serious. Not just for me, but for the students.

The cultural project I proposed is supposed to deal with themes like homophobia and femicide and domestic violence. You know? A lot of women are killed in the

⁸⁹ Honda, Vinicius. Recorded interview with author. July 28, 2018. Barris, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

interior. And I have this huge barrier with this person that I have to report to. For example, I found a person who could teach dance classes in the school. The principal wouldn't accept that person because that person is gay. So this is just one example of what happens in the rural zone in the interior of the state. And the interior of Brazil. A repressive, machista culture is very present. And it is difficult to break this barrier.

Brazil is a country of contradictions when it comes to LGBTQIA+ rights and safety. By law, Brazil has had some of the most advanced protections for queer people the world, which were implemented earlier than many other countries. The country's queer community currently enjoys prominence in mainstream media domestically and abroad. On the other hand, Brazil has some of the worst rates of violence against gay and trans people, and a conservative backlash against the recent visibility of the LGBT community has prevented further advancement of gay rights in the country. Jair Bolsonaro's violent and homophobic rhetoric emboldened those who would commit acts of violence against queer and trans people.

LGBTQIA+ Rights and Advances in Brazil: A Brief Overview

At the time of writing, images and information showing an open and vibrant queer community in Brazil abound in various print and digital forms both in Brazil and internationally. Tourist guidebooks in English report that major cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro have vibrant queer communities where gay tourists can feel safe and enjoy festivals and nightlife by and for the gay community (“Gay Travel in Brazil: Your LGBTQ Travel Guide” n.d.; “LGBT Travelers in Brazil” n.d.; “The Best Gay Brazil Destinations For Your Next Fabulously Queer Holiday BR” n.d.). Festivals and public events that highlight the Brazilian queer community attract crowds. In 2006, the Guinness

Book of World Records listed the São Paulo Pride Parade as the largest in the world, and numbers have increased significantly in Pride Parades around the country in the past year (Laks 2015). Carnival is also known as a gay event in many major cities. The Southern city of Florianópolis promotes a Carnival circuit specifically for “LGBTs” that attracts more than 50,000 people each year (“Carnaval Gay de Florianópolis 2020 é um dos maiores eventos LGBT do Brasil” n.d.). In Salvador, specific blocos, or carnival groups, are known as LGBT groups, such as Daniela Mercury’s Bloco Cocodrilo, whose 2017 theme was “gay, black, and feminine empowerment.”

Gay, lesbian, and trans celebrities have become more visible in mainstream Brazilian media in recent years. Recently, Pablo Vittar, an openly trans woman and singer, who began her career by making YouTube videos, was called the “world’s most popular drag queen” and has spoken openly about being trans to the international press (Codinha 2018). The first transgender model for Victoria’s Secret, Valentina Sampaio, is from a rural fishing village in the state of Ceará, and has said that she did not suffer violence or discrimination in her hometown (Hanbury 2019). In 2019, a popular gossip magazine reported a “gay tsunami” of telenovela actresses of various age groups “coming out of the closet” (“Tsunami gay: Globo tem inúmeras atrizes lésbicas no catálogo - Fofocas dos Famosos - iG” 2019). Many other celebrities can be seen posing with their partners in tabloids. Some trace the openness of LGBT celebrities to 2013, when the Bahian singer Daniela Mercury and her partner Malu Verçosa were publicly married, and photos of the ceremony were published on front pages of newspapers and tabloids. Later, the couple published a book of their letters to one another, including diary entries, erotic

poetry, and descriptions of day-to-day experiences of being parents in a blended family (Mercury and Verçosa 2013). Da Silva Noletto notes while the publication of the book and the public nature of Mercury's marriage was a political act, she positions herself as a "savior of the Brazilian LGBT communities," which is not the case (2016). Instead, they argue that Mercury's marriage, as well as the possibility of the openness of their relationship, was the result of a long history of LGBT movements in Brazil, and the rights that they fought to secure (Ibid.).

The establishment of organizations promoting gay rights and denouncing violence against queer people came before the end of Brazil's military dictatorship, which lasted from 1965 to 1985, and was characterized by torture, disappearances of leftist protestors, and widespread censorship. In the late 1960s when other parts of the world were witnessing student, anti-war, and gay liberation movements following Stonewall, Brazil was in its most oppressive years of the military dictatorship (Dornelles 2018). Green, whose important historiography traces LGBTQIA+ rights movements in Brazil, notes that attempts to organize the gay community at this time were "unfavorable" but likely benefited from activists living in exile abroad (1994). In 1979, a "slow political opening" with the intent to return to democracy under President Ernesto Geisel allowed activists and politicians to form new political parties. The same year, *O Lampiao da Esquina*, a magazine dedicated to LGBTQ+ themes and readership launched its first issue, and Grupo Somos: Grupo de Afirmação Homossexual (We Are: Group of Homosexual Affirmation), which became well-known after members participated in a historical debate on minorities at a conference in the University of São Paulo, where students complained

that the Brazilian left was anti-gay. O Grupo Gay da Bahia was founded in Salvador in 1980 with the purpose of tracking violence against gay and trans people, and the organization still compiles annual reports that international human rights groups depend on for data. Groups in other cities were created over the next decade, including Beijo Livre, Libertos, Faccão Homossexual da Convergência Socialista, and AUÊ, in Brasilia, Guarulhos, and Rio. The emergence of new groups also represents a splintering, some which expressed solidarity with other social movements, and others that refused to affiliate with other political or social organizations, such as socialist and workers movements, which has proven complicated through the present because of the presence of homophobia throughout Brazilian society (Green 1994). By the 1980s, the Brazilian LGBT movement was not aligned with any political party. Itaborahy argues that this was advantageous to the community in the 1980s, since it allowed the movement to engage in dialogue with the government regardless of the party in power (2012, 51).

Gay rights were partially protected under Brazilian laws before many other countries. In 1985, a Brazilian court ruled that homosexuality could no longer be classified as a medical disorder. In 1989, the constitutions of the states of Mato Grosso and Sergipe explicitly forbade discrimination based on sexual orientation. In the 1990s, the AIDS crisis and HIV prevention efforts led to the creation of the Brazilian Association of Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Transsexuals, which, Itaborahy argues, strengthened the LGBT movement's relationship with the federal government (Ibid., 51). The Cardoso administration prioritized HIV prevention efforts and called on activists to respond to the AIDS crisis through public-private partnerships with NGOs with gay

activists as specialists. LGBTQ+ individuals were increasingly protected during the presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and the administration was more collaborative with the community than during the Cardoso administration (Ibid, 53). In 2003, the Worker's Party government under Lula entered into dialogue with stakeholders in the gay community, launching federal initiatives such as "Brazil without Homophobia" and "Program to Combat Violence and Discrimination Against LGBT and to Promote the Homosexual Citizen" in 2004 through a special secretary of Human Rights. In 2013, the Brazilian government legalized marriage between same sex partners and recognized long-standing civil unions. In 2019, the Brazilian Supreme Court ruled that homophobia and transphobia should be criminalized until Congress passes a formal law prohibiting these. It also ruled that LGBTIA+ individuals could not be discriminated against in the workplace.⁹⁰

Wadō members described sharp contrasts between recent years and their childhoods in the 1990s when it came to homosexual expression. They described an "opening" where young people were able to openly demonstrate their same sex relationships and fluid gender identities in recent years. Felipe said:

When I left high school, it was very rare to see people (young men) my age at that time being so openly LGBT and going out so feminized (afeminado). Putting on earrings. Putting on makeup. So in the last ten years, things have gotten a lot better. When I was eighteen, I didn't know what a transgender person was. Now knowing this information is more standard.⁹¹

⁹⁰ LGBTQ+ movements are not uniform throughout Brazil, and they often reflect racial and class tensions that already exist. Mascarenhos Neto and Zanoli document drag shows and other artistic presentations by Black LGBT favela dwellers who are not represented or heard in mainstream LGBT movements.

⁹¹ Jacobina, Felipe. Recorded interview with author. August 17, 2018. Barra, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

Leo also commented, “It wasn’t possible to openly have a boyfriend when I was young. I was nineteen when I first kissed someone, to give you an idea.”

Recent Violence and a Right-Wing Surge in 2019

Despite many progressive policy initiatives protecting LGBTQ+ rights in Brazil and the “openness” that Wadō members described, the Grupo Gay da Bahia has documented that since 2012, approximately one LGBT person was killed per day, and that Brazil was the one of the most dangerous countries in the world for transgender people. The numbers increased in 2017 and 2018, reporting in 2018 that “every 20 hours, an LGBT person dies in a violent way, as a victim of LGBTphobia, which makes Brazil the world champion of crimes against sexual minorities” (Michels 2018).⁹² The most high-profile murder was that of Marielle Franco, a Black, openly gay woman from Rio de Janeiro who was a city councilmember and activist in 2018. She was murdered by two former policemen. The Grupo Gay da Bahia’s 2018 report was dedicated to her.

Mott traces the history of homophobia in Brazil to the Catholic church and to Brazil’s colonial past, demonstrating that anti-gay sentiment is part of the country’s history and identity (2003). Several evangelical politicians have made homophobic remarks in recent years, emboldened by the defeat of the worker’s party, which many on the left called a coup. This is particularly true of the current president, Jair Bolsonaro, who famously said during his presidential run that he would prefer that his son was dead

⁹² A Brazilian colleague who read a draft of this section asked that I note that violence is a problem in Brazil in general, not only for the LGBTQ+ community. High rates of homicide and other violent crime are noted in World Bank data.

rather than gay. Later, he said that Brazil must not become a “gay tourist paradise,” and during the Covid outbreak, he repeatedly used a homophobic slur to denigrate staffers who wore masks. Sovik traces the proliferation of violence against sexual minorities to evangelical Christianity and the mainstream media in Brazil, which is owned by seven families and two churches, and has likened Brazilian news media as “only Fox news” (2019). She has also argued that social norms did not change as quickly as laws protecting LGBT folks (Ibid.).

Fear was a topic that came up in many interviews with LGBT Wadō members and former members, particularly as the 2018 election was approaching and it looked like Jair Bolsonaro would win the election. Felipe described a “conservative wave,” saying,

Things were starting to get better before, even though they were far from ideal. Recently, people are starting to be very hateful. And much more offensive in their anti-LGBT discourse (on social media). This started around two years ago, which was when the coup⁹³ happened, and it happened very quickly and in a very surreal way. People started openly saying that being gay was wrong and in a very aggressive way.

Other members discussed similar fears, but they were also proactive about their political situations, going to protests and posting anti-Bolsonaro memes on social media.

Anime, Manga, and Cosplay: Fantasy Spaces in Bahia

Japanese media, especially anime, offered a refuge for gender fluid expression and queer identity for Wadō members from an early age. However, the majority of those who were not Nikkei—both those who identified as queer and those who did not—told

⁹³ The word coup, or golpe in Portuguese, here refers to the impeachment of Dilma Roussef, the president who succeeded Lula Inácio da Silva of the Worker’s party. Many on the left call it a coup by the right to seize power.

me that a love of Japanese culture began with an interest in manga and anime. Favorite shows included *Sakura Card Captors*, *Dragon Ball Z*, and especially *Knights of the Zodiac*. Wadō members described story lines that were more interesting to them and more complex than cartoons from the United States and Brazil. As Stalker notes, US American media imparts values such as capitalism and individualism, while anime and other cute characters encode values such as cooperation and attention to aesthetic detail, which members cited in interviews.⁹⁴ Most reported that they loved to draw and loved to re-create the beautiful heroes from their beloved television programs and even create their own manga. Some pursued architecture in college because of their love of drawing characters and worlds. Others loved story lines with altruistic and community-oriented leaders as heroes, such as Goku in *Dragon Ball Z*. Some, however, reported that a love of anime resulted almost entirely from its availability in Brazil and its constant presence on children's television programming. As Fuuka told me, "If I were exposed to Taiwanese anime, I would be watching it," contrasting the availability of Taiwanese programming with Japanese anime in Brazil. Wadō members were aware of their limited choices about what to watch on television, with multinational businesses dictating what was available and from which countries.

Anime aired on Brazilian television in the 1980s and 90s as its popularity expanded globally.⁹⁵ The global success of Japanese popular culture was carefully

⁹⁴ In *Great Saturday*, Mittel notes that in the US, television executives argued that children cannot discern quality of programming and will gladly watch recycled programs of lower quality (2003).

⁹⁵ Anime was available throughout the world according to informal conversations I have had with friends and colleagues from Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Iran, and Taiwan. Friends who know that I am writing about anime in Brazil have discussed the translations of the names of the shows.

planned; Japan exported many anime, manga, and related merchandise to countries around the world. Eventually, the effort to expand the popularity of Japan's cultural products were part of Japan's campaign to establish itself as a "cool" soft power global superpower. By consuming Japanese popular culture and being part of a Japanese music and cultural group, Wadō members participated in and enacted the labor of promoting Japan as "cool." However, the anime and manga that arrived in Brazil were also imbued with meanings that Wadō members and others in the queer community created around these products. In particular, one member cited a character in an anime that was of ambiguous gender, and another member steered me to a manga series where the main character's side kick and love interest is neither male nor female. Two Wadō members described that they imagined a world where they felt represented and where they could openly express their identities because there were people in Japan like them. Acceptance and tolerance of homosexuality were consequently important in Wadō and among members.

Anime Globally and "Cool Japan"

Japanese media are ubiquitous around the world, with the first anime series airing in the US in the early 1960s. Anime's popularity in North America peaked in 2003, when in the US alone, anime accounted for \$4.84 billion in sales, more than 3 times greater than the value of steel exported to the United States the same year (Otmazgin 2014, 54). Popularity of anime in the US has dropped since that time, but anime consumption continues to flourish in other parts of the world along with other media and products,

such as manga, video games, fashion, and merchandise related to the characters that many love and consume.

Animation in Japan is said to have emerged in the Edo period with the visual spectacle of *utsuhi-e*, where pictures painted on glass were projected onto a screen with light. In the early twentieth century, animation was a household industry that emerged alongside cinema with the two genres becoming inseparable (Miyao 2002). As Japan sought to expand its colonial power and establish itself as a unified nation-state, the government used cinema and animation to export images of Japan. In 1916, a professor at Waseda University wrote that “cinema and national education are inextricably linked,” and in 1916 and in 1917, censors began to ban certain animations in the name of protecting children (Miyao, 197). The same year, the government began patronizing and promoting propaganda animations, with budgets for creating propaganda increasing, allowing animators to experiment with more expensive techniques.

After WWII, the Americans destroyed many early films, and national animation was censored under the American occupation, with animators considered Class C criminals (Annett 2018, 28). Animation in Japan was fully re-established at the end of the occupation with short television commercials produced by anime houses in Kansai, and then larger projects for television in Kanto. In 1956, Toei established an animation studio, which produced many well-known animations and tokusatsu programs (live action shows laden with special effects).⁹⁶ It is noteworthy that products, such as chocolate, stickers,

⁹⁶ The word tokusatsu, comes from the original term *Jissha Tokusatsu*, which literally means “Real images” and “special effects.” It is a live action genre that is often horror or science fiction, created in

and other merchandise, as well as sponsorship followed the success of many shows, which Steinberg calls a “media mix,” or the interconnection of media and commodities (2012). Stalker notes that elements of popular culture are connected today as they were in the Edo period, with fashion and merchandise influencing manga and anime and vice versa (2018, 377).

In the early 1960s, Japanese animation started to move abroad. Japanese scholars in the 1990s described a spontaneous adoption of Japanese cultural products around East Asia as middle classes started to consume Japanese media, while others describe cultural imperialism and glocalization of imported products (Funabashi 1993; Iwabuchi 2002; Otmazgin 2008; Hu 2010; K. M. Santos and Sihombing 2017). However, there were conscious efforts to disseminate Japanese animation in the West. Annett describes acclaimed animator Tezuka Osamu’s efforts to create a de-nationalized anime when he saw that Toei had begun efforts to distribute animation abroad (2018, 33). NBC aired Osamu’s show in the English language in September 1963, which was a huge hit.

Mukokuseki is a word that often arises in discussions of the international dissemination of anime. The word literally means “without national identity,” and refers to the practice of animators trying to create characters that do not look “Japanese,” often with the purpose to increase shows’ international success (Annett 2018; Ruh 2014; Iwabuchi 2002; Napier 2000; Allison 2006). For example, the creator of the Gundam franchise, Tomino Yoshiyuki, famously “tried to avoid having ethnicity” and “tried to

Japan starting in the 1950s. Wadō member described shows from the 1980s where real actors playing heroes as opposed to animated characters.

remove all cultural elements” from the show. Similarly, the creator of *Ghost in the Shell*, Oshii Mamoru, said that he unconsciously chose not to draw realistic Japanese characters, saying, “it is not uncommon for anime creators to aim for cultural neutrality by erasing Japanese-ness from their works” (in Annett 2018, 28). Iwabuchi argued that Japanese cartoons are “culturally odorless commodities,” since they were designed to appeal to broad audiences (Iwabuchi 2002, 33). In spite of efforts to create racially “neutral” characters, Japanese anime are known and recognized as being Japanese throughout the world (Hu 2010; Otmazgin 2008; K. M. Santos and Sihombing 2017). In Brazil, anime is known for being specifically Japanese. In Wadō, members cited specific Japanese elements from anime, such as an aquarium and a Ferris wheel in Osaka. Some told me that they wanted to know if what they saw on television was true, particularly in terms of “Japanese values,” such as the teamwork they would see among characters, and the heroic deeds of the heroes.

The consumption of Japanese cultural products abroad was the result of a conscious dissemination of Japanese media and cultural products through governmental policies designed to establish Japan as a soft power superpower. With a collapse of the bubble economy in the 1990s, and industrial competition with other countries in Asia, Japanese government officials looked to increase the visibility of cultural products such as manga and anime to create and further international demand for Japanese cultural products, particularly through their “cool Japan” campaign, which many trace to a 2002 article in *Foreign Policy* magazine by Douglas McCray titled: “Japan’s Gross National Cool.” Here, McCray argued that over the course of the 1990s, a “dismal decade” for

Japan economically, the country had been perfecting the “art of transmitting certain kinds of culture” and “reinventing itself as a cultural superpower.” He argued, “Japan’s global cultural influence has only grown. In fact, from pop music to consumer electronics, architecture to fashion, and food to art, Japan has far greater cultural influence now than it did in the 1980s, when it was an economic superpower.”

As a result of this article, the Japanese government adopted the title “cool Japan” to increase revenues from tourism and cultural industries, as well attempting to brand itself as “cool.” Anime, manga, and other Japanese media played a key role in defining Japan as a soft power superpower. Some Wadō members were aware of the efforts of Japan to become a cultural superpower. As Aline told me, “The most efficient form of domination is cultural domination” when discussing her love for Japanese and Korean dramas that she had recently been consuming on Netflix. Although Wadō members consumed shows from around the world, they were aware that there were big sociopolitical factors behind them, even if they did not know specific details.

Tokusatsu and Anime in Brazil

The first dissemination of a Japanese series to mainstream audiences in Brazil took place in the early 1960s when *National Kid*, a tokusatsu drama created by Toei animation, was widely broadcast on the now defunct TV Tupi for 39 episodes. The popularity of tokusatsu exploded in the 1980s, when Rede Manchete, a media conglomerate based in Rio de Janeiro, began showing dramas created by Toei animation. Rede Manchete’s history was troubled; the broadcaster was plagued by financial problems due to expensive investments, accumulation of debt, failed telenovelas, and

worker strikes, and many problems continue today, as there are still disagreements as to who owns the rights to the broadcaster's archives. Tokusatu and anime, however, allowed the company to pay its debts periodically, expand programming, and ultimately, avoid bankruptcy until it finally failed in 1999. By that time, however, Japanese animation was already very popular in Brazil. Other broadcasters picked up the shows that Rede Manchete aired, and other media conglomerates started to translate manga. At the time of writing, anime is still widely available with a broader range of options, including cable programs such as Cartoon Network airing in Brazil, Netflix, with multiple language options in subtitles, and Crunchyroll, a streaming service focused on anime, manga, and drama.

The tokusatsu *Jaspion* and *Changeman* were the first widely broadcasted Japanese shows that regularly aired in Brazil. They attracted large and young audiences and created a demand for products related to the show, such as albums, action figures, and cassette tapes (Vieira 2009, 12). Later, TV Globo and TV Bandeirantes began showing tokusatsu, emulating Rede Manchete's success. Ponte Filho writes that in the early 1990s, there had to be at least one tokusatsu hero in children's programming in order for it to be successful (2010, 35). Ponte Filho notes that tokusatsu on Brazilian television were characterized by emotion and that the "plots never tire of propagating moral attributes that were dear to the heroes of the series, such as honesty, perseverance, honor, loyalty (to one's principles), and above all, sincerity" (Ibid.). These were traits that many Wadō members said attracted them to Japanese programming.

By the mid 1990s, anime started to replace tokusatsu on Brazilian television. The first anime shown in Brazil was *Patrulha Estelar* (*Star Patrol*, or *Uchuu Senkan Yamato*), broadcast as part of a children's program, *Clube de Criança* (*Children's Club*). Until the mid 1990s, themes of most anime were science fiction dramas, with spaceships, journeys across space, and "themes related directly to the destiny of the human race," along with threats of apocalypse (Ponte Filho 2010, 39). As in tokusatsu, anime heroes were moral characters who overcame difficulties (Ibid.).

September 1, 1994 marked the first broadcast of the widely popular *Cavaleiros do Zodíaco* (*Knights of the Zodiac*, or *Saint Seiya*) on TV Manchete (Ibid., 40). Duarte writes that the show on Rede Manchete⁹⁷ was so successful, it made other broadcasters uncomfortable (2017, 8). The show increased demand for anime broadly in Brazil, and other favorite shows on the TV station, such as *Sakura Card Captors*, *Dragon Ball Z*, *Pokémon*, and *Yu Yu Hakushou*, were also immensely popular.

Cavaleiros do Zodíaco (*Knights of the Zodiac*)

Cavaleiros do Zodíaco tells the story of Seiya, an orphan who joins a group of five "knights" or "saints" who defend Sienna Kido, the reincarnation of the Goddess Athena, and fight to protect Earth from other Greek Gods who want to destroy it. The anime was adapted from a manga of the same name, and it was produced by Toei animation, airing from 1986 to 1989 for 114 episodes. Limited series were created in

⁹⁷ When Rede Manchete folded, other broadcasters took up anime programming.

2002 and 2008, and six feature films created between 1987 and 2014. In 2019, Netflix released a new *Knights of the Zodiac* series.⁹⁸

In an article about the queer Nikkei community in São Paulo, *Knights of the Zodiac* and other anime were discussed as a “reference” for queer people in Brazil, including those in the Nikkei community (Minatogawa 2017). Aryel, one of the author’s interviewees, said:

There were several characters with sexuality often non-heterosexual or with behaviors well out of standard. I remember *Saint Seiya*, in which everyone thought Shun was gay; many gave a bad connotation to that. In *Sailor Moon*, there were the Sailors who were men, and when they transformed, they became women. In *Card Captor Sakura*, there were Toya and Yukito, who were very dear to the public. In cartoons, everything was treated very naturally, without deep questioning. I think this has helped me look at these issues (LGBT issues) in a lighter way (Ibid.).

Many Wadō members told me that *Knights of the Zodiac* was their favorite show when they were children. Felipe Jacobina, however, told me that his connection to the show and its characters was intense, and characters in the show led him to seek to know more about Japanese culture, dedicate himself to a taiko group, which, years later, gave way to a career in dance and performing in drag as Flaminga da Xena.

He specifically spoke to me about Shun specifically and how the character inspired and validated his identity when he was a child:

I asked myself why I had such an affinity for Japanese culture. You asked me that in the first interview, and I didn’t remember. But then I thought about it. The first contact I had with Japanese culture that pushed me toward Wadō were Japanese cartoons. But then I was asking myself why they called to me to the point that I

⁹⁸ In Brazil, the new series caused significant controversy, because Netflix turned the beloved knight Shun, who was male in the earlier series, into a female character named Shaun. A lot of fans were upset that Shun became Shaun. One feminist online described how Shun often occupied a “damsel in distress” position in the original cartoons. Now that he became “she,” problematic stereotypes about female characters posed a problem of representation (Cerqueira 2018).

would be so enchanted (encantado) as to join a taiko group. And then dedicate myself to the group so much. I began to recognize that it was the anime that had such a hold over me (que me prendiam). And then I realized that Japanese cartoons were the only cartoons where I saw myself represented.”

How so?

The first one that I saw was when I was three years old—or maybe five years old, was *Knights of the Zodiac*. Do you know it? You don’t need to see it. It’s really bad. It’s really for children. But it had certain characters. It had Shun. You see, each knight has a constellation, right? A designated constellation. And Shun was from Andromeda. Andromeda was a woman. And Shun is a man. His armor even had breasts. It had boobs. So it was the only time I saw myself represented. There was an LGBT in that cartoon. I was obsessed with that knight. I wanted to be him. And I didn’t understand why.

And then, thinking about it, it didn’t stop with *Knights of the Zodiac*. There were other cartoons, that in some way, brought this representation. Maybe not in the same way. There were characters in *Sakura Card Captors* that you didn’t know if the character was a man or a woman. And there are homosexual relationships in the cartoons, even when the open TV channels tried to hide it with dubbing and such. You know? It had that. And I continued seeing myself there. It was the only place I saw myself. In life. Because I couldn’t exist in other places. Because I was “wrong.” I never even thought of the possibility of being gay because it wasn’t a possibility. The only place I saw that was in Japanese cartoons. So, for me, it was the place, you know, like, “What marvelous culture is this that there are people like me?”

Because Salvador, during my adolescence when I started to get involved with Wadō, the majority of people that liked Japanese culture—or maybe not the majority, but a very large segment, a big percentage of them were LGBT. You know? It was always easy to find people like me. Maybe it was because of the representation that the animes brought somehow.

I watched *Knights of the Zodiac* for the first time after listening to my interview with Felipe. My partner Alvaro, who is Colombian, pointed me to an episode dubbed in Spanish that aired in Colombia in the early 1990s that features Shun. The show was popular throughout Latin America, including in Colombia, not just in Brazil, and so were debates about Shun’s gender and sexuality. I was struck by the anime’s popularity was

worldwide. In the episode, Shun has an erotic encounter with a male enemy, Pisces. My partner says that the episode demonstrates that Shun is gay, although not necessarily gender fluid. He is simply a man who falls in love with another man. That was how Colombian children thought of him, he argued.

Shun looks female to me at first, at least compared to other characters. He has long flowing green hair and pink armor. The breasts on his armor are small, but do not resemble the pectoral muscles on the armor of more masculine characters. When he wields his weapon, a chain, a fuchsia pink cloud envelops him.

My partner pauses the video when Shun sees an enemy that he has to fight, Pisces of Aphrodite, for the first time, making sure to direct my attention to Shun's reaction. A disembodied voice calls Pisces "the most beautiful of the 88 combat fighters. A warrior of beauty, brilliant and proud between the Earth and the sky." Shun and Seiya are climbing stairs toward a temple when Shun sees him. Pisces sparkles, with animated glitter on his armor, and an up-close image of his pink mouth holds a red rose. Shun's eyes tremble, and a synthesizer plays a downward glissando; he is captivated by the beauty of his enemy. Pisces has a deep voice, but presents as a feminine character, with long flowing light green hair, pink lips, and gold sparkling armor. His weapon is the rose, and the fight between the two characters is homoerotic. Pisces tries to kill Shun in a cloud of red roses that causes pleasure and hallucination. Shun is enveloped in a world of pink and purple roses. "I don't feel pain. I am dying, but I feel good," Shun says. He wonders how someone so beautiful as Pisces can fight for evil causes. Even though the scene is a battle scene, it is also an erotic scene with two men who look feminine by Brazilian

standards, and who are attracted to one another despite being enemies. The battle they fight is a homoerotic encounter between two feminine-presenting men.

Felipe created Flaminga to be like Shun. Flaminga was neither a woman nor a man. “I didn’t want Flaminga to be understood as a woman. Not a female presentation,” he said, “even though she presents as feminine.” I first saw Flaminga on stage in a play, *Uma Janela para Elas (A Window for Them)*, set in a dystopian Brazil in 2028, where right-wing politicians have imposed military rule on all citizens, eliminating the rights of gender expression. Five drag queens who receive an anonymous invitation to gather in a defunct theater and revive their personas take turns performing in secret, bringing light and happiness back to a stark and dark city, while discussing themes important to the LGBT community in between numbers. Flaminga shines on stage, literally. They wear bright yellow tights, a bright pink leotard, and a shoulder length yellow wig with bangs that skim her eyebrows and reflects the stage light onto the audience. The audience laughs when Flaminga starts their performance, putting on a snorkeling mask and goggles. They dance as if they were underwater, while lip syncing to Kate Bush’s *Wuthering Heights*. Flaminga dances in a cloud of flowers that they pull out of their pink leotard and throw into the air, reminiscent of the cloud of flowers that Pisces created to kill Shun in *Knights of the Zodiac*.

Anipolitan

Anipolitan, “The Festival of Asian Pop Culture in Salvador,” is an annual event where crowds of Bahians people share and celebrate their love of anime in the middle of large crowds. In December 2017, I attended Anipolitan with Thauan, a Wadō member

who told me that he used to attend the festival every year. I bought a “ticket package” that included two tickets and a t-shirt with a character on it, that I later learned was Venus from *Sailor Moon*.



Figure 17: Me (the author) with Flaminga after a performance of Uma Janela para Elas.

For more and better pictures of Flaminga, see <https://www.facebook.com/flaminga.xena>, https://twitter.com/avoa_flaminga, or @avoa_flaminga on Instagram.

Fieldnotes from Anipolitan

Thauan and I set off together after Wadō’s performance at a Bounenkai (end of year) party in the hot summer sun, and then we walk with a crowd to the entrance. We wait in line to get in, even with our pre-paid tickets, and a security guard lets us in

through a turnstile, and into a gated area. I start to observe that what Leo said was true.

There are more openly LGBTs at the event than at other events in Bahia.



Figure 18: Shun from Saint Seiya. Image from the Facebook group Saint Seiya Forever Brasil – Os Cavaleiros do Zodíaco

Anipolitan takes place in the classrooms, parking lots, and courtyards of UniJorge, a private university. I ask Thauan to explain everything to me. We start at a main stage outside where a rock band sings in Japanese, and Thauan tells me that the songs are the themes from anime. We pause to listen before attending a panel on fantasy and speculative fiction in Salvador in one of the classrooms. The featured speakers who are fantasy writers lament that most readers think that “everything good” in science fiction

and fantasy genres are from the United States or Europe, and that even when Brazil is a setting for stories, it is usually in Rio or São Paulo. These writers want to change that.

Thauan takes me on a tour of all the other spaces. There is a room for Harry Potter fans (Platform 9 3/4), Star Wars fans (Jedi Counsel of Bahia), and a room where people dance to K-Pop songs, with a leader teaching choreography. There are rooms where people change in and out of their cosplay costumes, and a another where people display dioramas of popular anime series in shoeboxes. Nearby, vendors sell imported toys—figurines of anime characters, and I overhear people complaining about the high prices.

I run into acquaintances, and I notice that they are holding hands with same sex partners. It is the first time that I see them “out,” and in one case, learn that they are queer. I see many lesbian couples. In Salvador, I had never seen women holding hands before, except for when on the federal university campus.

Thauan and I run into Ramon, one of Wadō’s newest members, with his girlfriend by a makeshift manga store. He accompanies me through the shop showing several comics he had read, explaining that he loves manga and has read many of them. He points out LGBT manga that feature same sex relationships called Yaoi, also called BL for Boys Love; and Yuri, which are lesbian-themed. Since Ramon has read so many manga, I ask him for suggestions; I am open to any of them, with a preference for adult, rather than school-aged characters. He recommends *Knights of Sidonia*, about a dystopian future where humans live on a spaceship and try to protect it from monsters, called Guana, that threaten the existence of humanity. I only buy the first book in the series,

hoping that I can read more later, although the book sits on my shelf for a few months before I crack it open.

Knights of Sidonia

My new manga has a warning on what would normally be the front cover of the book for readers of Portuguese. It says, “Warning! You are reading this book wrong.” It instructs the reader to flip to the “back” cover to start the book as if I were reading a Japanese language book.

Knights of Sidonia tells the story of Nagate Tanikaze, the hero of the series who had lived his entire life underground far from other humans. He eventually finds a colony of people while looking for rice. He is recruited for a mission to save humanity from the Guana, and on his first day among his new colleagues, he accidentally wanders into a “photosynthesis room” where naked women are bathing under UV lamps; in this world, people of the future do not need to eat much since they acquired the ability to photosynthesize. They all beat up Tanikaze in the semi-erotic scene. A few pages later, I meet another character is neither a man nor a woman. Izana Shinatose, a secondary character, “hears” the Tanikaze thinking, “Is this person a man or a woman?” and they answer his thoughts:

I guess you don’t know because you hadn’t been out of the underground, but I am neither a man nor a woman. I can generate a clone of myself whether I am a man or a woman. Nowadays there is a third gender that is neither masculine nor feminine.

Later in the story, the two have an accidental erotic encounter when they jump into a lake together and Shinatose’s crotch lands on Tanikaze’s face under the water. An erotic encounter between a man and a “third gender” person happens by accident, perhaps

foreshadowing romance? I buy the second book in the series, where the two characters almost kiss while visiting an aquarium. The kiss never happens because they are interrupted by a message that tells them that it is time to fight the Guana. In the same volume, Shinatose corrects a man who calls them “young girl.” “Oh, I’m not a girl,” they say, and a bubble appears over the head of the man with a question mark in it.

Ramon, who suggested this series, is decidedly masculine and heterosexual. He often mentions his girlfriend in conversation. He told me he is Christian, which is sometimes associated with conservatism in Brazil, but he is apparently unfazed by Shinatose, the third-gender character in the manga, and he looks to LGBT members of Wadō as mentors and colleagues. His recommendation of the *Knights of Sidonia* shows the normalization of gender fluidity and sexual diversity in the circles where people consume manga and anime and in Wadō.

Later, I noticed that gender fluidity and style was celebrated among Wadō members, not only with former members such as Felipe, Thiago, and Thaís who performed in drag. Marcela, for example, dressed in pants, a vest, button-up shirt, and black bow tie for a ceremony and reception where a former president of the Japanese Brazilian Association of Bahia received an award from the Japanese government. She matched her fellow Wado member Luigi in both dress and short spiky hair dyed blue. The reception was formal and conservative, attended by university professors, Japanese businessmen, and others from the Nikkei community. Traditional gender roles played out at the event. The men served themselves first, and Lika instructed us, the young (and mostly female), to wait until they were satisfied before we served ourselves. Since we

were dressed up, we snapped pictures on the balcony of the venue, and we posted them on Instagram. Mari wore a yukata and lipstick, and Joyce a black skirt and sweater. In a comment, Leo praised everyone's style, but in particular, Marcela's gender fluid beauty, her short cut blue hair and bow tie. Marcela used gender neutral language to respond to those who also tell her how stylish she looks in the picture, calling her friends "migli" instead of migo/a (amigo/a).⁹⁹



Figure 19: Style

(From left to right) Marcela, Mariana, Luigi, and Joyce dressed up for a Nikkei community event honoring Mr. Tahara. Later, Marcela's friends and other Wadō members praised Marcela's "gender fluid" style and matching with Luigi on social media.

⁹⁹ Portuguese and other romance languages are very gendered. Young queer people have been trying to correct this in spoken language, similar to the word "Latinx" in the United States, although using @ or x at the end of words to designate gender ambiguity has been in written language since the first decade of the 21st Century. Masculine and feminine subjects, almost always ending in o or a, respectively, have been changed to "i" or "e" at the end of words to designate gender non-conformity. (See: feliciaguerreiro 2016 for more details).

Japan: A Utopia for “LGBTs”?

Among Wadō members, ideas about Japan and “Japanese culture,” both in Brazil and Japan, were partly based on the fantasy worlds of manga and anime. However, these worlds were both “real” and “imagined.” Homosexuality and cross dressing were normalized in certain contexts in Tokugawa and Meiji Japan and gave rise to gender fluid fashion and characters on stage and in literature (Leupp 1995; J. Robertson 1998). However, strict gender roles, closeted homosexuality, and demonstrated homophobia were also aspects of “Japanese culture” that Wadō members discussed, heard about, and in some cases, witnessed in their interactions with members of other taiko groups and the Nikkei community in Brazil. Below, I discuss how Wadō members’ fantasies and ideas of Japan derived from anime were real. However, I also explore homophobia in Japan and how some Wadō members experienced homophobia when they interacted with some members of the Brazilian Nikkei community. Here, the fantasy space of Japan as a tolerant society and where gender fluid and queer individuals could express themselves freely clashed with personal experiences. I also show how Wadō members argued against “traditional” gender roles in taiko repertory and worked toward making a world of tolerance of gender fluidity and queerness a reality in Wadō, ultimately influencing the Nikkei community, Queering taiko and connecting Wadō to the queer community, however, had limits.

LGBTs in Japan and the Brazilian Japanese Colony

Wadō members described their ensemble as a place where they were accepted for who they were, regardless of sexuality or any other trait that made them “different.” In

interviews, many also initially described Japanese culture as “open,” or “accepting,” based on their experiences in Wadō and their impressions derived from anime, manga, and other sources of Japanese popular culture. However, then when thinking more about these ideas about Japan, some began to imagine the country as homophobic and possibly xenophobic:

The connection between taiko and LGBT, and definitely between Japanese culture and LGBT [in Brazil], it seems contradictory, right, because Japanese culture is completely, like, if you look at it, it’s extremely homophobic. Extremely conservative (Leo Boca).

What I think, my hypothesis, I mean, I don’t know what happens in taiko groups in Japan, but I think they only accept Japanese people and heteros (Marcela Almeida).

Taiko comes from a very traditional country. You know that very well, right, Stela? Culturally, in Japan, people don’t talk about sexuality normally. Parents don’t talk about it with their children and children don’t talk about it with their parents (Vinicius).

These members acknowledged that they had never been to Japan, and so, they were unsure about their hypotheses, but the idea of Japan being a homophobic and “traditional” country came up often when I asked members about the connection between sexuality and gay rights.

Like in Brazil, famous queer people in Japan have been able to live their lives openly. In the 1990s, scholars described a “gay boom,” in the Japanese media, with several prominent public figures coming out and writing about their lives as LGBTs, including politicians, authors, and activists (Fotache 2019, 29). Japan in the 21st century, however, contrasts Brazil when it comes to LGBT rights. Unlike in Brazil, there are very few hate crimes against LGBTQIA+ individuals, and there have been no anti-sodomy

laws, except for a brief period in the late nineteenth century (Ibid.). However, there are also few protections for queer people under the law, with no anti-discrimination laws, and same sex partnerships only recognized in certain cities. “The current consensus,” Fotache writes, “seems to be that queer culture is tolerated so long as it stays segregated and does not disturb the majority” (Ibid., 29). Fotache attributes the shift from a fascination with androgyny and normalization of homosexuality in the Tokugawa period to intolerance on stances of homosexuality to the adoption of Western values in the late 19th century (Ibid., 29).

Many scholars note that for most queer Japanese citizens, “coming out” is extremely difficult. According to a 2013 online survey, only 5% of Japanese respondents said that they knew a colleague, friend, or relative who is gay, the second lowest among 16 participating countries, suggesting that many Japanese “GLBTs” were living “in the closet” (Tamagawa 2018, 489). Tamagawa argues that it is more difficult to come out to family members than colleagues, but even so, coming out to anyone is difficult and risky. Marriage in Japan is defined in the constitution as confined to being between a man and a woman (Tamaki 2012). Kawaguchi, Kazami, and Vincent write that even when children are gay, many parents still require them to marry and bear children (in Tamagawa 2018). They do not care about same sex relationships as long as they are kept secret, with parents worrying about children’s public life rather than their private lives (Ibid.) Tamagawa also cites gay children saying that it is more difficult for them to come out to their mothers than their fathers, and mothers having more difficulty accepting their children’s sexual orientation (Ibid., 498).

Some have noted similar issues in the Brazilian Nikkei community. In an ethnography of an online gay community in São Paulo, Ribeira notes that many Nikkei had difficulty coming out to their families and that many times, their parents would not accept their identities, or simply pretend that their children hadn't come out to them (2011, 106–8). He also writes that coming out to fellow community members in person was also difficult for Nikkei LGBTs. When members of this online gay community gathered in public to meet one another in person, the subject of homosexuality never came up in conversation. Many were afraid to acknowledge the existence of the community and their role in it in the physical realm (Ibid.).

Among Wadō members, however, there was only one gay member who was Nikkei and unequivocally “out” at the time of my fieldwork. This member, Fuuka Sunano, spoke openly about being an activist, Nikkei, feminist, and lesbian in an initial interview. Her family situation appeared to contrast those described above. Fuuka's partner was constant and beloved presence at family functions and community events, such as parties, barbecues, and seinenkai gatherings. Her situation and the support Fuuka's parents gave to Wadō members may have contributed to the idea of Japanese culture being “open” and “accepting” among non-Nikkei Wadō members.

Gay and Non-Nikkei Wadō Members and the Nikkei Community

The Exuberance of Matsuri Dance

In Wadō, gender and sexuality played out in spaces and activities like social dance and rehearsal warmups. When Wadō's activities began in late 2008, there were no drums. While the focus of the group in the first year was establishing core values and

discussing how the group would function, members would also start each meeting by dancing *Matsuri Dance* choreography together. Matsuri Dance was created by members of Grupo Sansey from the Southern city of Londrina, Paraná, with the name appearing “around 2002 or 2003” according to Grupo Sansey’s blog, even though the style and practice “came long before.”¹⁰⁰ Grupo Sansey considers the name its intellectual property, although “anyone can use it; we are not selfish,” they say. The dance style was created to get crowds moving at Yosakoi Soran performances in Brazil, where groups would create simple choreography to Japanese pop songs and teach dances to the crowds who would mirror their movements from the front of the stage. The movements and practice were reminiscent of dancing at both Bon Odori festivals and at Axé and Pagode shows in Brazil simultaneously. Choreography created by Grupo Wadō members, often used as rehearsal warm-ups and performed with crowds at festivals, had movements similar to those used in Bon Odori: slow steps, bent arms crossing the body, and clapping between phrases. There were also hip gyrations, twerks, and steps resembling the electric slide, like movements found in Pagode and Axé dances.

When Thaís told me that many Nikkei elders at ANISA were uncomfortable with the fact that most Wadō members were gay, I asked her how early Wadō members conveyed their sexuality, especially since Felipe had told me that many members were not “out” when they were teens. “How can someone know the sexuality of someone else for sure if they don’t tell us?” I asked. Thaís reflected, “I think because of their

¹⁰⁰ See: <http://www.gruposansey.org.br/atividades/10/matsuri-dance.html>

mannerisms (jeito). There were a lot of people that were more extroverted...In the beginning, we did Matsuri Dance. A lot of people liked dancing. And there were boys who liked dancing. And some of them were gay.” As she spoke, I imagined lively dancing, with especially energetic twerking in the courtyard of ANISA. Did the elders feel scandalized by the exuberantly performed sexuality in their space? Later, Joyce told me that some early Wadō members spoke openly about being gay. “It wasn’t a secret,” she said. “And we Wadō members saw this as normal, okay, no problem. But I think this made ANISA members uncomfortable.”

Wadō members often praised the Nikkei elders from ANISA for the support they gave to Wadō in the beginning and through the present. Lika Kawano, the group’s founder, and Miriam Sunano, who many called Tia Miriam, were family members—mothers and aunts to all Wadō members. They were available to listen, help resolve conflicts, and answer questions. Sometimes they would help prepare meals after meetings or consciously allow the “children” to prepare their own food. By the time I came to Wadō, some Nikkei elders and community leaders had hired former Wadō members to work in administrative capacities in their family businesses. Before writing about homophobia in the Association, I want to be clear that many members were not homophobic, and nearly all were incredibly supportive of Wadō members.

Nonetheless, there was very little agreement on how the Association should be run and who should be a part of it. Many Wadō members and former members told me that some ANISA members were unfriendly to the new Wadō members who had entered their space. Some reported that elders often ignored them, failing to greet them, even

though greetings, or aisatsu, are important in both Bahia and Japan. Many members began to speculate that there was homophobia, and Nikkei elders not wanting to associate with outsiders and LGBTs was the reason behind ignoring, criticism, and gossip. As Thaís told me:

To me, in the beginning there was a kind of awkwardness (*estranheza*) because the people in the Association were always used to being around their friends and other members. Right? It was if there was a closed circle, and we were outsiders. There were some people like Fuuka who had parents in the Association, but the majority of us, let's say 99 percent, were outsiders. We weren't descendants, and we were unfamiliar to them. But then we began to see that there was also homophobia.

Secret conversations were overheard and then repeated and spread among members, along with reports of “feeling” that “bad energy” was directed toward them, often without being able to describe what it was. When I probed more, there were two members who reported that they overheard conversations complaining about them, and with references to members' sexuality. Joyce cited members' young age as part of the reason she felt enduring hurt over a period of ten years:

There were some people that were always saying bad things about us. We were told this after the fact. And we were really young! Fuuka was only 14. Luigi was seven, and Rafinha was only four. I was seventeen. We were children. You know. Everyone super young. And then someone comes up and says that we are not worth anything, and “I don't want my child in this group because these people are a bunch of degenerates, a bunch of gays.” And what if there are a lot of gays? What is wrong with that? If your child is with gays, that isn't going to make him gay, and if he is, what is wrong with that? This is something I still feel sometimes from parents of the young children. There are a lot of prejudiced people there (in ANISA).

Many homophobic criticisms were related to a children's group within Wadō, where members taught young children in the Japanese school how to play taiko. Joyce, however, also cited the fact that other ANISA members defended queer Wadō members,

telling the following story based on what another member who overheard the conversation told her:

One time a woman said, “I don’t want my child with these gay people.” Something like that. And I remember that Lika immediately defended us. She said, “don’t talk about things that you don’t know about. Don’t judge people just because they are gay.”

The woman eventually decided to pull her child out of the group because of the openness of LGBT group members. Homophobia was cited as one reason members speculated that some Nikkei sons and daughters of Association members were not Wadō members. Parents did not want their children around gay people, who they called, “strange.” One member cited at least one Nikkei member who was an excellent taiko player who left the group early on. This member speculated that was because they did not want to be associated with a group where many members were gay, saying:

I noticed that some people left Wadō because of the large number of gay people in the group. They didn’t want to be associated with gay people. I don’t know for sure, but I believe that is the case.

Gender, Sexuality, and “Tradition” in Brazilian Taiko

In Brazil, based on festivals I attended in 2011 and 2012, as well as visits to groups in São Paulo state, traditional gender roles and heteronormativity was built into taiko practice, repertory, and choreography. Those who were in charge were men, and gender roles were clearly demarcated. Sexuality and queer gendered expression may have also caused tensions between certain queer Wadō members and members of other taiko groups from the South. One queer and non-Nikkei member privately wondered if a Nikkei from a conservative Southern taiko group that he met ignored a follow request on

Instagram because he was gay. He was the only person in Wadō who reported that his follow request was ignored.

Certinho in Portuguese translates as “correct” or well-behaved. An online forum for translators from Portuguese to English translates the expression as “straightlaced,” “strict,” or “uptight.” This is the word that Fuuka used to describe the majority of people who play taiko in Brazil. I asked her if taiko in Brazil is related to Asian American and LGBT activism.¹⁰¹ “I don’t think so,” she responded. “They really aren’t very involved in these debates. People in Brazil who are militants, activists, who are artists, aren’t really involved in taiko or seinenkais. I don’t know.”

Wadaiko associated with the Brazilian Taiko Association (ABT) in the South of Brazil, which I discuss in Chapter 2, was patriarchal in the early 2010s when I spent time attending Taiko championships and practices around São Paulo. The ABT was associated with the Nippon Taiko Foundation and was run by men. When I attended taiko championships in 2011 and 2012, gender roles were clear. Men in suits sitting at the back judged competitions. There were no women judges or sensei.¹⁰² The volunteers who would come from Japan via JICA to teach taiko to Brazilian Nikkei were men. There were no women sensei in the ABT apart from peer teachers. Female taiko students and players were recognized in the Brazilian Taiko Association, such as when the judges of the annual competition name the year’s most valuable player among associated groups,

¹⁰¹ I use this term to also include Latin American and Brazilian Asian Americans. (Brazilians mostly do not consider themselves Latin Americans or Latinx).

¹⁰² Wong discusses gender and taiko in her work, noting that although women in North American make up the majority of players, there are fewer women in positions of authority and leadership (Wong 2019, 202).

but men were in charge as teachers, administrators, and judges. Moreover, gender roles were reflected and performed in one of the main pieces children's taiko groups in Brazil practiced: *Kenka Yatai*.

Kenka Yatai: *Patriarchy*

Yoichi Watanabe, a volunteer teacher in Brazil with JICA, composed *Kenka Yatai* to celebrate the centennial of Japanese migration to Brazil. The piece is a mainstay for those who study taiko in Brazil, and it is also part of North American taiko repertory; a workshop during the East Coast taiko conference in 2019 focused on the piece. I have seen this piece many, many times. I usually see it when I visit a taiko group in Brazil. I saw an Argentine group in Kobe who traveled to Japan to participate in the Nippon Taiko Foundation's contest in the "junior" category perform the piece as well, showing its international renown.

In *Kenka Yatai*, sets of drums are divided into two sides of the stage. A set of chudaiko are set up on naname stands on stage left, and another set are upright on stage right. Shime daiko, played on the floor in the front and center, are divided into two groups, with equal numbers of players in groups corresponding with the chudaiko behind them. The piece begins with phrases that are calls and responses between the two groups, with each call and response increasing speed and loudness. Shime daiko ripple at the apex of the crescendo, until an odaiko solo is the catalyst for the two sides to start playing together to keep the underlying beat during an odaiko solo. The piece ends with a straight beat in unison that everyone plays together, supported by the odaiko.

When I first saw the piece in 2011 while visiting a youth taiko group in São Paulo, I was told that the piece is about a heated argument between siblings; “kenka” means “fight.” The increasing crescendos and speed represent voices raised and flaring tensions during an argument. The odaiko, which represents the family’s patriarch, or “the grandfather,” I was told, settles the argument with his deep voice, inspiring unison between players. I have seen versions with two odaiko, perhaps representing a patriarch and matriarch, although I have only seen it with two men playing the odaiko, implying two male patriarchal figures. *Kenka Yatai* represents, as taiko does in Brazil, tradition, including traditional gender roles for age categories. Whether or not it was Watanabe’s intention to compose a piece about a family argument in which the patriarch settles the fighting at the end, this is how the meaning of the piece was conveyed to me in Brazil; “traditional” family groups with a patriarch in charge is the norm in the Japanese Brazilian colony. This is the story that the community tells itself.

***Himawari* and Odaiko**

Wadō members played *Kenka Yatai*, but they did not agree with traditional gender roles. Differences of opinion on gender roles in taiko repertory, dance, and performance manifested while Wadō members were collectively composing *Himawari* with the help of teachers from Grupo Sansey from Londrina who had traveled to Salvador to be Wadō’s “senseis.” The piece, as I discuss in chapter 5, depicts harmony and peaceful relations between members of an imagined society. The roles in the piece, however, were meant to be performed along gendered lines, as per the suggestions of the sensei.

Himawari features chudaiko on naname stands, Yosakoi Soran dance movements with

fans and with a staff, an odaiko, and chichibu style drumming. Men were to play chichibu style, odaiko, and dance acrobatic movements with a staff. Women were to dance circular movements with fans.

Leo discussed *Himawari* as part of a reflection on taiko and gender performance, saying:

I think there is a little bit of everything in taiko. There is a masculinity, right, in using haragake to show arm muscles when you play to show strength, and then there is also a kind of delicate femininity. There are dances that use fans, naname, and more graceful movements. There is a little bit of everything.

However, based on his experience with taiko groups from the South, and particularly with the composition of *Himawari*, he said,

In Japan, it is already decided who does each role. You aren't going to see a small delicate woman playing odaiko in a Japanese group. It's probably something that doesn't happen. And you probably aren't going to see a super muscular man doing a delicate dance.

Several scholars have noted gendered standards in taiko drumming, as Leo discusses above. Bender describes women apprentices in Kodo having fewer performing opportunities than men and being asked by authority figures to play “as a woman” or with “gentleness and refinement” (Bender 2012, 153). Certain instruments and styles in taiko ensembles are associated with gender roles. Women sing and dance (Ibid.) and the odaiko, the largest drum in a taiko ensemble, is associated with masculinity (Yoon 2008; Wong 2004; 2019; Ahlgren 2018). Yoon traces the instrument's association with strength and aggression to the male solo *Odaiko* in *OndeKOZA*, along with the display of a (nearly naked) male body topless in a fundoshi (2008, 110). The piece, and therefore, the instrument is “deeply connected to specific ideas about masculinity, strength, and

authority” (Wong 2019, 46). Men who wish to convey expertise and authority often feature their photos with the odaiko, showing their upper body musculature (Ibid). Women playing odaiko is unique, and even radical in North America. When Ahlgren describes Tiffany Tamaribuchi, a queer woman of small stature playing odaiko, she contrasts what is considered a masculine standard for odaiko (2018, 122–24).

In Brazil, odaiko was also reserved for men, particularly during the Brazilian Taiko Association’s Championship Competitions, one of the most formal taiko events of the year in Brazil. When I search through pictures and videos of the championships I attended in 2011 and 2012, I see only men playing odaiko, except for one group of mostly children where an older girl plays the odaiko set up horizontally. The competition featured an odaiko category, where young men played a choreographed solo for two minutes in front of a panel of judges. In 2011, a single woman, Luana from Ryuubu Daiko in Ibiúna, was one of 10 participants in the odaiko category. The crowd cheered for Luana; her participation looked radical and courageous, although she did not win the contest. Somehow, I felt that the exuberant cheers for her performance indicated that she was not taken as seriously as the other competitors. In 2012 the champion of the odaiko was also a man, Yuji from Londrina, and no women competed in the category that year.

Leo contrasted what is normal in Wadō with what he noticed in other groups, saying “We are not a Japanese group. We do what we want.” Indeed, one of the regular odaiko players in Wadō is a woman, Patricia, who often performs with her hair in long braids that she flings and twirls to emphasize certain movements. Moreover, Leo told me that men dance with fans in Wadō, contrasting this decision with those of taiko groups in

the South, and in particular, tensions within the group that came up when composing

Himawari:

There are boys in the group that like dancing and so they dance. But we already have had conflicts because of this. There was a time when we were composing *Himawari*, and some people from a Yosakoi Soran group from Londrina came—and people from these groups in the South are all descendants of Japanese. So they have some views that are very traditional, very conservative. And one person came to us and said, “Look, this dance can only be danced by girls. Because it is a feminine dance.” And at the time I didn’t say anything, but afterwards, I told the group, “This is stupid. Whoever wants to dance should dance. Like Luigi. He knows how to dance. He dances very well. Why can’t he dance? Let’s get him to dance!”

And so today, there are boys that dance with fans. There are girls who use a staff. We here at Grupo Wadō have made taiko something that is more comfortable for us. Maybe we don’t have the same technical level as people from the South. We aren’t as good as them as players. But we have our own identity. We have our own style, and we do things that other groups don’t do. Within the group there are people that don’t like this, and say, “ah, we have to respect tradition.” But I’m in favor of these changes.

In rehearsals, there were men dancing with fans, women dancing with staffs, and everyone learning every part of the repertory they wanted to learn. In 2017, Edu, a young man, danced with a fan in *Haru no Hi* for the Bon Odori festival performance, and Patricia played odaiko in both years. However, bending gender roles in performances was limited. During the 2017 and 2018 festivals, only women danced with fans in *Himawari*; Grupo Sansey joined the piece that year as guest performers, and only men played the chichibu drums and odaiko in the piece.

Sometimes, the search for authenticity and respecting traditional gender norms superseded the desires of queer Wadō members. At certain points in Wadō’s history, outward displays of “tradition” sometimes took priority over the desire of queer members to perform their identities and show support for the queer communities they were a part

of. In addition to the absence of men dancing with fans during the festival, it also manifested in the logo of the group. These conflicts provoked Felipe to leave Wadō because he did not feel represented in the group as an “LGBT.”

Felipe Leaving Wadō

Most queer Wadō members described the group as a space where they felt safe from violence and ostracism. Also, the fantasy spaces of anime helped Wadō members imagine a place where people could be open about their sexuality. However, the fantasy of Japanese culture clashed against how Japanese culture and “tradition” was performed in Wadō and sometimes imposed on its members.



Figure 20: Mariana and Patricia playing odaiko during a rehearsal.

Felipe told me that when the group was new, members tried to make Wadō as “Japanese” as possible. At that time, members viewed the mixing of Northeastern Brazilian genres with taiko as disrespectful. Furthermore, certain practices that members imposed to promote “discipline” were, in Felipe’s opinion not useful to the group and even harmful. These instances made him question his membership in Wadō:

I think that Wadō has the intention to follow the tradition of taiko, right? Tradition of taiko. The movements have to be exact. You have to reproduce them, and the movements have to be exact. And this started to make me feel uncomfortable. Even the way that our practices were being conducted. There were things that were done that didn’t make any sense for us, but we did them anyway.

Like what?

I don’t remember exactly now, but some time ago, right after I joined Wadō, there was a punishment for people who were late. So if you arrived late, you had to sit in seiza—seiza, right? Because for Japanese people it is humiliating or something like that. I don’t know if it is true. Any way. It was to apologize. And that didn’t make any sense for me. Because if I kneel down into seiza, that doesn’t make any sense to me. It’s not saying anything to me. And I don’t think it is saying anything to anyone at the practice... There were a lot of things that didn’t make sense because most of us aren’t Japanese anyway. And I started to perceive that Wadō wasn’t my place. You know? There wasn’t a way to say the group is wrong (to do this) because the purpose of the group was always to produce taiko in a traditional way.

Eventually, a decision that he and one other member felt was homophobic compelled him to leave Wadō definitively. He described the decision as, “a situation that really took away my enthusiasm for the group”:

During Pride month a few years ago, someone changed the logo of Wadō. Instead of a red background, they put a rainbow in its place (Figure 21). I was sure that this was going to be a point of argument within the group, and I knew that if anyone retracted this logo, I was going to be very disappointed, and I wouldn’t be able to be part of the group.

And I was correct! They called a meeting about it on a day that I couldn't attend because I was sick, and they changed the logo back to the original. They said that a rainbow logo was going to harm the identity of the group. I was upset and annoyed that they took out the LGBT logo. They could have at least let the month finish, right? I thought it was a homophobic decision. Especially since half of the group was LGBT at the time. And this wasn't disrespectful just for me, but to the group, you know? They were worrying about people outside of the group so much that those inside of the group were left aside (*deixados de lado*). It wasn't anything so big. It was just the symbol. But then again it was big, right?

And it happened in a meeting of just leaders and administrators and not the whole group. And in a meeting I couldn't attend. If I was there, I would have probably fought to keep the logo. But I was sick. I was upset that I didn't go.

And how did you leave the group? You didn't say anything? You didn't say that you were upset?

No. I think I didn't even comment on what happened, because truthfully, I knew something like this would happen eventually. Even those who were LGBT were not out. And they were young, and I think that they were afraid of what people would think if they came out.

One other queer Wadō member told this story to me and whispered that the situation was an example of homophobia, even within a group where so many identify as queer, citing specific members who were homophobic. While this other member continues to be active within Wadō, Felipe, instead of pursuing taiko, began to work on a degree in dance and spend more time performing as Flaminga. He told me that he considered his work with Flaminga important for queer activism in Brazil, and even a little bit dangerous since he goes out “montada,” or put together as Flaminga, leaving him vulnerable to violence and harassment.

While playing taiko was originally a safe space for artistic expression, it led him to pursue other artistic endeavors, such as drag, a kind of labor he says is “a labor that people like and where I am genuinely myself,” contrasting his work in Wadō. The drag

world, however, had aspects that reminded him of Wadō; Felipe described a local and global community of people working together, sharing resources, and learning together about performance, often online. However, drag was where Felipe felt more represented and where he could work so that someday, a boy like him would see Flaminga and know that there would be a way for him to be seen, represented, safe, and respected.



Figure 21: Pride Month Wadō logo, which stayed on the group’s Facebook page, but was taken down elsewhere.

Conclusion: Utopia on the Horizon

In interviews, Wadō was often described to me as an attempt at creating a “better world,” or a kind of utopia. No one was shamed for their sexual or gender identity, and members tried to create harmonious relationships and resolve internal conflicts

peacefully. There were whispered accusations of homophobia within the group, as well as misunderstandings and arguments between members. Utopia in Wadō was an ongoing experiment toward an ideal. Jose Esteban Muñoz argues that queerness is a kind of utopia, writing, “Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality... It is an insistence on the potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (2019, 1). In Wadō, many described learning about people, getting to know them, and creating a sense of community as a process. The utopia of peaceful relationships was an asymptote leading toward a future of utopian queerness and harmonious relationships. As Marcela said,

Little by little, you start discovering people, getting to know them, and then you perceive that this is a safe space where you can be yourself. And no one is going to get offended if you are gay or if you aren't. Because there are a lot of places like that, right? So this space is important, you know? If you want to work with harmony, with collectivity, this is a space for collectivity.

Collectivity, learning, friendship, and tolerance were values by which Wadō members strove to interact with one another. As Marcela said, it was a space to work with harmony and collectivity, which were guiding values and principles of the group that created a safe space for all members regardless of gender identity and sexuality. The leaders of many of these efforts were queer activists and idealists.

At the Association (ANISA), Wadō members told me that the Nikkei elders, who some accused of homophobia ten years ago, are coming around. Some that were uncomfortable with outward displays of queerness are beginning to get used to the Brazilian, non-Nikkei, and queer people at their events. This presence, according to Joyce, has helped elders understand and accept queer Nikkei youth in their own families who have “come out” in recent years. Being around a diverse group of people, even

though it was difficult at first, contributed to an ongoing project of creating an accepting and loving community where young people could feel safe from violence and ostracism, regardless of their gender and sexuality, even as the creation of this space is still in process, arriving, and contingent.

From Anime to Taiko: Leo Boca's Interview

I end this chapter with an interview with Leo Boca that took place before rehearsal in Barris, Salvador in July 2018. Leo he narrated his life history, including his experiences growing up gay in Bahia, his love of Japanese architecture, and how his identities and tastes related to being a Wadō member. I wanted to feature his story to emphasize the personal experiences of a gay man in Wadō who went from always feeling “weird” and “different” to being comfortable and open with his identity. I also wanted highlight other aspects of his life, including his training as an architect, his travels, and his thoughts on Brazilian masculinity. At the end of the interview, he discusses ideas of “union” and emotion resulting from friendships and togetherness, bridging the themes of the next chapter.

My complete name is Leonardo Bocanera Ferreira. That's why they call me Leo Boca. When I became a Wadō member, there was already someone named Leo in the group, so they started calling me Leo Boca. I became a Wadō member because I was studying architecture. During my second year in school, some of my friends were already playing taiko: Felipe, Thaís, and Thiago, Felipe's boyfriend. Also Vanessa and Rodrigo Kuo. I had already had some contact with Japanese culture from when I was younger. I used to go to anime festivals, and I collected manga. I was interested in taiko because of a video game called Taiko no Taisujin. I don't know if you know it, but I loved that video game. You have to simulate taiko beats. There were beats you had to play on the leather of the drum and others on the rim. I played that before I knew what wadaiko was, and when people said, “I play taiko,” I was like, “oh, you play that videogame.”

I went to see my friends perform with Wadō in 2010 at the Bon Odori. It was the first taiko performance that I ever saw. They played on the grass. I loved it. I thought it was beautiful... marvelous. After that, I started to be interested in wadaiko. At the Bon Odori that year, you could sign up to take a course with the group, so I signed up, went to a workshop, and then took a course that lasted a year. By the next Bon Odori, I performed with the group. I became a member at that time, in 2011.

I have always been a nerd since early childhood. I was always reclusive, and I think that that's because of my upbringing. My mother was very protective, and she didn't let me go outside to play. I lived in a building on a street with very little traffic, and the majority of the children played in the street like it was a small town. Except that my mother didn't let me leave the apartment. I could only go outside if someone came with me. But she never wanted to go outside, and neither did my father, so I ended up stuck inside a lot.¹⁰³ And so I ended up developing an interest in activities that you could do alone. I played video games, drew pictures—I liked to draw, and I watched cartoons. Of all the cartoons, *Dragon Ball* was my favorite. I'm not sure if this was the first anime I saw, but it was one of the first that I loved. I watched other animes too. There was *Knights of the Zodiac*, which was a fever in Brazil.

(*Knights of the Zodiac* is actually very bad. Don't watch it. It's horrible. But it was a fever in Brazil in the 1990s. All the children were crazy for *Knights of the Zodiac*. I loved it back when I was a kid, but I watched it recently, and I thought it was bad. But I love *Dragon Ball* even today. It's very good. I think it's an anime for both children and adults.)

So, I would watch cartoons on TV, and I would play videogames, and actually, I didn't know that the games I consumed were Japanese products. The games I liked were Japanese, but I didn't know that at the time. *Pokémon*. *Mario*. *Nintendo*. I discovered that *Dragon Ball* was Japanese a long time after I started watching it. I consumed Japanese products, and I liked drawing. I liked drawing the characters I saw on television. I started to read manga. I always liked comics. I started with *Turma da Monica*, which is a Brazilian comic. Every Brazilian child has read *Turma da Monica* at some point in their lives. But then there started to be Japanese manga in Brazil. *Dragon Ball*. *Sakura Card Captors*. And then I really dove into manga and anime. During my adolescence I continued this consumption. And I started getting more and more nerdy, more antisocial, and more reclusive because I was also fat. I was overweight as an adolescent. So I wasn't very popular in school. So my universe was all about these things: reading, drawing, watching anime. My whole adolescence was this, practically. I still love these things, except today I read everything, not just manga. Superhero comic books, graphic novels. I don't go to events like Anipolitan anymore, but if I do go, I go with Wadō members. I still like videogames.

¹⁰³ I have translated “ficava preso dentro de casa,” as “I was stuck inside a lot.” The literal meaning of the word preso can mean stuck, but it is also the adjective to describe someone in jail and is related to the word for prison.

I'm from the 1990s, so first, I remember that the first animes in Brazil were on Rede Manchete, which is a television network that doesn't exist anymore. It stopped existing sometime in the '90s. But first they showed tokusatus, which is a kind of series with real people. *Jaspinho* was really popular. And *Ultraman*. There animes that were classics that I never saw because I was very young at the time. There were some that people liked from before I was born like *Shurato* and *Yu Yu Hakushou*. Things that came to Brazil.

I think a lot of people from architecture liked these cartoons because they liked drawing and design. These children that grew up watching anime and reading manga. Even in Wadō. A lot of people in Wadō know how to draw. I think that children who watch these shows ended up being interested in art and design. It's a natural progression. In my case, I was always drawing. One of the first memories I have is that I was known as someone who knew how to draw. If there was something like a mural that had to be done at school, I would be the one to paint it. I would draw things for my father on Father's Day to put on his shirt. And when I started to read comics, I started to copy the drawings from them. I copied *Dragon Ball*. When *Pokémon* came to Brazil, I loved drawing *Pokémon*. And it developed more and more. And it ended up that the way I drew didn't start like a manga style but ended up in a manga style. I created characters. I wanted to write my own manga. I created historical characters. I created worlds and scenes, such as a medieval fantasy world. I also liked Role Playing Games. There was an electronic RPG, a videogame based on Dungeons and Dragons. It had magicians, medicine men, and things like that. And I created a world with various stories and various characters, each with their own histories. I'm a little ashamed to talk about this today. It was a very introspective thing; I created a fantasy world for myself because I didn't have other children to play with. I had to play with my imagination and with my own mind. I would talk to myself, and even today, I still talk to myself. There were good and bad aspects of all this solitude. I ended up being good at reading and loving literature, for example. Many children aren't in the habit of reading, and so as adults, they can't write very well. I think that reading is important. I don't regret anything. I wouldn't change anything about my childhood. I am happy with my life.

When I was a teenager, I also didn't go out much. I was fat, and so I felt excluded, and I was bullied in school. And also I was gay. I mean, I *am* gay. And at the time, that was difficult to deal with, especially as an adolescent. It's like you have an internal whirlwind. Until you understand what it is to be gay and accept yourself and get strong enough to the point where you can express yourself so that other people don't hurt you with their reaction. You know? These days, I can tell anyone I'm gay. I started working at a new company three months ago. Everyone at my job already knows that I am gay because I say so naturally. I'm not going around telling people I am gay, but when they ask me, "oh, do you have a girlfriend?" I say, "No, I have a boyfriend." For me to have been able to get to that point, it took a lot of maturity.

During adolescence, you have to mature. You are becoming an adult. Your body is changing. And on top of that, you have to deal with the question of homosexuality. And you think that you are the only person dealing with it. You can't tell anyone. No one can help you because you can't open up to anyone. And you have to face all of this as a child. Your mind is still a

child's mind. So it's a very difficult time in your life. I think that these days, things are changing. Adolescents are "coming out of the closet," as we say, much earlier, like around 13, 14 years old. I see boys that are 14, 15 years old going out with other boys at school, and I think that's great. Things have changed a lot since my generation. We didn't have the openness to do that.

When I went to college, I came out to everyone. My family, my friends. I started to be openly gay. I started going to parties, having boyfriends. My first kiss was at the age of 19 for you to have an idea of what things were like before. So, I sort of freed myself from these things and tried to live as intensely as possible. And college—the beginning of college was a great period for me. I also did an exchange program. I went to the United States, and there I got to do a lot of interesting and different things. I matured a lot.

I am a different person today as a result of these experiences. I still have a lot of traces of introversion. Sometimes I am shy, although people don't see that I am shy because I am able to hide it well, and I feel I shouldn't express myself as a timid person. Because if your only option is expressing yourself as a shy person, you end up being vulnerable somehow. People say, "ah, he's shy." Or "Oh, poor guy." A shy or introverted person isn't someone that people talk about like, "He's going to be a leader."¹⁰⁴ Right? So I felt it was important for me to overcome my shyness and be a person who is—how can I say it?—more resolute, more confident in myself. Because even though I am shy, I *can't not* be the person I want to be because of my shyness. Before, I would miss opportunities. I wouldn't speak to someone I wanted to talk to because I was shy. I wouldn't speak in public. Today, I can't let that happen. I need to be able to ask for a promotion or speak with my boss. I can't let my shyness interfere with this. But this is a process that has taken many years. It was difficult, but it is an experience that makes you strong. Today I feel more confident to be able to face any problem that arises.

When I started studying architecture, I didn't have any idea about what architecture was. I did what everyone did when they take the college entrance exam.¹⁰⁵ I chose something based on a guess. Some people get lucky and like what they end up studying and others don't. I was lucky. I took the exam for architecture because I liked the STEM fields. I was good at math, and to me, architecture has a little bit of art also. A little bit of creativity. I liked drawing, I liked math, and I liked creating things. But it ended up that architecture has a lot more of humanities than sciences. You have to study the history of architecture and art, urbanism, geopolitics, and philosophy. I didn't know it was like that. I probably would have tried to study engineering if I had known, but on the other hand, it was good because it

¹⁰⁴ Being shy and quiet is taboo in Bahia, as it tends to be in the US and other parts of Brazil. Other Wadō members have also discussed this idea in personal interviews.

¹⁰⁵ The college entrance exam, called the vestibular, requires young people to choose their major and take a test based on that major. Some majors, such as medicine, are very competitive. I know many people who have taken several of these tests after not liking their chosen field several times.

expanded my knowledge. When I was 18, I was very close-minded. I had a very narrow vision of things. And I was really a nerd who thought that everything in the world could be explained with math, which is obviously a stupid idea. In college, I started to become interested in other things: sociology, philosophy, psychology, and all of this was because of architecture. It's a very natural thing that happens when you develop a project. Even when you create a fantasy world. When you create a building. Thinking about how people enter and exit, where people will gather, which areas they will stay in the most, their state of mind in that space, and how they feel in other spaces.

I started to become more interested in modernist architecture. Straight, sober lines. Clean, and more minimalist spaces. I started to appreciate architecture like art. I like to look at architecture books and study the images. Unfortunately, today, I haven't had professional experiences in architecture like I had in my internship. I've never worked professionally as an architect.¹⁰⁶ Maybe in the future.

My exchange program opened my mind even more than the first year of college because I learned about architecture with a different approach than what we do here in Brazil, an American approach, right? Studying in an architecture school in the US is different than studying here. You see the techniques that people use there. I started to get interested in 3-D work and printing in 3-D. Here in Brazil this is something that no one talks about in a university setting. And when I went there, students already had projects where they had to create an object in 3-D to print. And I started becoming interested in landscape architecture. In Brazil we call it paisagismo. But it's a very different concept than landscape architecture even though the translation is equivalent.

Paisagismo in Brazil is basically planning gardens and external spaces. But landscape architecture is much more than this. At least in the course I took there. There, it also involved questions about ecology and biology. You had to study plants and animals that inhabit that area and study the relationship between people and nature. And you have to try to create a space that at the same time is nature, but also made for humans. And then, you discuss where you can intervene in a natural space. In the US, it's very common, especially in the Seattle area. And in Asia. In Korea and Japan. But here in Brazil, I think that we don't work with this. We only talk a little bit about gardens and a building's external spaces. These are discussions that you almost don't hear in Brazil. It's very rare to find a job that works with these ideas. I think that kind of work doesn't exist. At least I haven't heard of it. We can see this lack of attention to these ideas our cities. In the space of a park for example, the architect plans a park. They put in a concrete area and a few trees there.¹⁰⁷ Landscape architecture is a study that is much greater than planning a park or green area. It's a study that is much greater than people here do.

¹⁰⁶ Similar to many Wadō members. Most haven't been able to find jobs in their fields.

¹⁰⁷ I did not ask Leo to follow up on this thought, but throughout Salvador, green spaces are little more than concrete and a few trees. Many are empty, unused spaces.

I think that architecture is great because you can work with so many things. You can think about decoration, internal design, architectural projects... you can work with landscape projects, installations, structural calculations, photography, urban studies, history, and theory. There are millions of things.

In Wadō, a few years back, we used to joke that half of Wadō members were architects. But it was actually the case. Many of them have left the group, but I think there is a connection. Many of us, I think, really had an interest in art as well. Architecture is art. Taiko is art. It's visual. And I think that the performances are really beautiful. I think that it goes together. Aesthetics, art, music. I never thought about it before, but maybe my love of taiko also has to do with my love of Japanese contemporary architecture. I love the work of Toyo Ito, Shigeru Ban, Tadao Ando. Tadao Ando is one of the architects I like the most. Clean lines, concrete line with exposed installations. Trying to avoid chaos. Always orderly, always methodical. My architecture is more in this line. And I love the clean lines of taiko too and the orderliness of the way we run rehearsal.

I love Bahian rhythms. I love Axé. I love Carnaval. Every Carnaval, I am there. I have always celebrated Carnaval since I was a child. I won't miss it for anything. There was only one year I didn't go, and it was my first trip to Europe. I saved money all year, and the cheapest time to go was in February, but this was only once in my life. Playing percussion in a Carnaval parade is something that I was never interested in doing. I don't know why, but I never had this urge to play. When I saw a taiko performance, I wanted to play immediately, but I never wanted to play Axé. I love singing and dancing, but I never wanted to be up there playing. I also love forró. I love São Joao, but I never wanted to play sanfona (accordion). I don't know why taiko attracted me in a way other music didn't. Maybe it's because taiko is different. It's different than anything I had seen before. And Salvador is a city that has music in its soul. Salvador breathes music. And taiko is music, but it's very different than what we have here. So I think what attracted me was having friends that practiced. If I didn't know anyone in the group, I wouldn't have known to look for it. I had so many friends in the group. So maybe it's that.

But I also think that Bahian percussion is so common for us. You grow up hearing percussion. You grow up hearing Olodum during Carnival. Seeing Ilê Ayê in the Carnival. And you never think of learning to play or being a part of all of that. Maybe what we really become interested in is something exotic. I think that if there was a group of Bahian percussion in the United States, probably there would be many more people than here in Salvador. Here in Salvador, the people that are part of these groups are people from the communities where certain groups originate, or they have contact with those groups or the people in them. In the family, people play, and people in the community have a group for children. And people are born and grow up in this environment.

Unless you're a tourist. There seems to be a whole infrastructure for tourists to learn to play.

That's what I'm saying. Yes. A tourist is coming to do something different. The same thing as opening a group in the United States. People would come and be like, "Wow! What is

this?” The same thing as taiko here. Capoeira is an example. When I went to the United States, I realized that capoeira is something that is super popular around the whole world. In the entire world, there are small capoeira groups. That’s something that I never imagined. For me, capoeira is something so regional, so traditional from here. Here it’s very rare to see the majority of people doing it, unless you are from a community where there would be a capoeira group. But in other places, there seem to be people seeking it out.

And then maybe you never thought about playing percussion here because you’re from a middle-class family that made you stay indoors all the time.

Right. And no one in my social class thinks, “Oh, I’m going to play percussion. I’m going to put my child to play in Olodum.” That’s something that doesn’t exist here in Salvador. People in Olodum are born there. A person has to be born in Candeal to play in Pracatum. People who are born in Curuzu are going to play for Ilê Ayê. You know? But someone who is from outside of those neighborhoods, that is something rare to happen.

Social projects that deal with percussion also are designed to occupy children. Children who are idle and live in marginalized communities. That is unsafe because that is how children may get involved in drugs and crime. So people start sports groups, soccer teams, and music lessons and then children get involved in music. So there are a lot of social projects here. I think in Brazil there is a lot of this kind of thing. Really putting children in something that is healthy and that can awake their interests and not leave them idle and available for other more dangerous things.

In Wadō there is a diversity of ethnic groups, but no one is from a community like that.¹⁰⁸ I think that in Wadō, most are between lower middle class and upper middle class. But everyone is middle class. The majority grew up in a two-parent household. And majority went to private school. I don’t know if there is someone in Wadō that went to public school.¹⁰⁹ But I think that the majority who went to public school went to a military school.¹¹⁰ Because a public school isn’t as good as a private school at the primary and secondary levels. I think that most of us are from a more privileged economic class.¹¹¹

I think that there is a connection between LGBT identities and taiko. And for sure there is a connection between Japanese culture and LGBT identity, which seems very contradictory,

¹⁰⁸ There was at least one member from a community like this. I believe this shows that certain topics did not come up at rehearsals and gatherings.

¹⁰⁹ A few Wadō members told me that they went to public school. Here, it seems that high school education was not a regular topic of discussion among Wadō members, perhaps creating certain assumptions among group members.

¹¹⁰ One member went to a military school and spoke extensively about the experience.

¹¹¹ Based on my questions about class, most are from a middle-class background, but as Joyce told me, “Some of us have more resources and some of us have fewer resources.”

right. Because Japanese culture is completely, if you look at it, homophobic. Extremely...conservative. But here in Brazil, many people who are interested in Japanese culture are LGBTs. And I think that is due to what I told you before, that adolescence is a difficult time for those that are LGBT. They end up being more antisocial and then having contact with this world—the world of manga, anime, reading, and videogames. I'm certain that there is this connection. If you go to an event, the majority of those doing cosplay are gay or lesbian.

Really?

That's what I see. Because of course there are a lot of hetero people too. I'm not saying there aren't. But if you go to an event, or if you go to the Bon Odori, there are a lot more LGBT people than if you go to whatever other kind of show or event, or, for example, a festival of an Espirita religious association. There are a lot more gay people in the Bon Odori. I'm sure of that.

I think that it may be a form of escapism. The fantastical worlds of anime and manga are a way for you to escape your reality. I think that there is a connection between someone escaping their reality and taking refuge there. Today, I see that—when I was an adolescent, I was one of those people. But in events, I see a lot of adolescents like that. In English there is a great word to describe them, which is awkward. A lot of awkward people. Right. I don't know how to say that word in Portuguese. But people who aren't well adjusted, without much social grace. A little reclusive. A little bit nerdy. A little weird. And I was one of those people. And if you look, if you go to the Bon Odori, you'll see a lot of people like that.

I think that everyone in Wadō must have been an adolescent like that. A little bit awkward. And then there is Gabriel. I don't know if you were in the meeting when Gabriel said that he felt a little bit different from everyone else in the group. It's because Gabriel wasn't an awkward adolescent. Gabriel is a super hetero that probably had a standard adolescence. I don't know for sure, but because of how he is, I imagine that he was. He is super-hetero. He has big biceps and talks about hooking up with women. Different from the others in the group. We all were a little strange. I was a fat metalhead and I didn't want to do cosplay because I was too fat to do cosplay. (Actually, I wanted to do cosplay, but the characters I wanted to play were thin. There isn't a protagonist that's fat.) And there are people in the group that do cosplay. And I think that most of the people in our group were weird adolescents. I also think that when you're a weird adolescent, it makes you someone with an open mind. More receptive. You see differences as strengths, and you know how to live with others' differences better. Because you were different. You were outside of the curve, so what is the problem of living with people that are also outside of the curve?

I think that Bahian music is heteronormative, although this is changing. Now, in Carnival, in Ivete Sangalo's *bloco*, there are only gay people. In Claudia Leites's *bloco*, there are only gay people. In Daniela Mercury's *bloco*, there are only gay people. Daniela Mercury, was of course, the queen of the LGBT public in Salvador's Carnival. Her music is different. Her Axé music is less mainstream and more alternative. Her Axé is roots. She mixes it with other

rhythms and makes art. She dances on stage. Her performances are a visual spectacle with dance, theater. . . I don't know why, but there is something with LGBT people and theater, dance, and music. Daniela was always like that. Her bloco was always the LGBT bloco in Salvador's carnival. Since the time I was a child, I knew that. There were only viados, right?¹¹² Only these days, all of carnival is more or less gay. Most blocos are only 50% hetero now. And this is great. It's marvelous. But this is only up to a certain point. Most songs are heteronormative. Especially Pagode. There are always songs about men going after women. And if you go to a Pagode show, the environment is very hetero.

I don't know if you were there when Gabriel said he wanted to invite everyone to a raleo (club). I said that there were too many heteros there, so I didn't want to go.

I wanted to ask you about that. You don't like—?

I don't like it because I'm afraid of getting beat up. Some clubs aren't so violent, but just being gay—like if I go with my boyfriend and hug and kiss him, there would be some kind of reaction. Without a doubt. It's a space where I don't feel safe. You understand? So it's not really a question of "liking" going to these places or not. It's a question of respect and respecting myself. If it's a space that doesn't respect me, why should I go? Actually, it already happened once that I went to a bar where there was live music here in Salvador. And my ex-boyfriend and I were thrown out. So I don't feel secure in these environments. So I don't want to go. I love Pagode. I adore it. But you will never see me at a Pagode show where I would be unsafe. I like listening to it in my home. I love it in spite of it being machista and heteronormative.

I know that you understand me. Because if I tell other people this, the majority of people will tell me that I'm being biased (preconceituoso). That I'm just imagining my fear of getting beat up at a Pagode show. Even gay people think that. I think that heteronormativity is entrenched into people's minds. They don't see some things. Like they don't see that soccer is an extremely heteronormative environment (nucleo). So when I, as a gay person, say that I don't like soccer, they said, "You're being prejudiced" or "Football is an expression of Brazilian culture. It's a business." And all. Okay, sure. Great, but it's also machista and heteronormative. Because if you go to a soccer game, you'll see people cussing out the referees by calling them veados. You understand, right? Enfim (anyway). Many people from the LGBT community wouldn't agree with me. They would say that I'm exaggerating. That I'm being prejudiced.

But I'm not exaggerating, right? I have to think about protecting myself. It's because some social constructions are so strong that people's own minds end up sabotaging themselves.

¹¹² "Viado" comes from a pejorative term "veado" to describe gay men. The word "veado" literally means deer (as in the animal). The term has been appropriated by the LGBTQIA+ community in Brazil in recent years and changed to "viado." As Leo told me later, "viado" has a connotation that is very positive, empowering, and caring," while "veado sounds sterile," and the spelling with an "e" "shows that the person using the term is not part of our community."

Women too, that are my friends, if they go to a club, they go to a gay club. Because a hetero club is a tense climate. It's like mating in the jungle. Hetero clubs are like that, with the machos grunting, hunting to find a woman. Looking at women like objects. Like a piece of meat. They go and see if she's with a man, and if she is, the other macho goes and inflates himself to defend the female.

In a gay club, there is flirting. Of course there is, but it's a much more respectful climate. Your space is much more respected. The most that has happened to me is that someone touched my butt once. That was the maximum invasion of space I've seen, but I never saw anyone disrespecting a woman or a man.

You were talking about art before and how people think of gay identity and its connection with artistic activity. I don't know what you think about that.

I think there is a bit of everything there. It's a true stereotype. It's constructed and it's also real. It's everything. Of course it's a stereotype because not every gay is like that. Gay people don't all like art. We aren't all creative. Not all gays like dancing and theater. No. So whenever you find an individual that is outside of the stereotype, the idea *is* a stereotype, and you are generalizing a whole population. But it's also true. There is a strong connection between art and LGBT culture. Visual and performing arts. And music. There is a strong connection. I don't know why. It's one of those mysteries of humanity. Homosexuality. Where does it come from? To what extent do experiences inform homosexuality and to what extent is it genetic? Why do so many gay men have so much feminine expression? They dress feminine, speak feminine, and have feminine mannerisms. Why is that? I don't understand, but this is how it is. And it's a mystery.

In taiko, I think there is a little bit of everything. There is masculinity. Using a haragake to show muscles, and there is a certain feminine delicateness. There are dances with fans that use naname, and there are graceful movements. In Japan, things are defined, like who does each role. You will never see a delicate woman playing odaiko in a Japanese group. It's very rare to see. I think that this is something that doesn't happen. And you'll never see a big muscular, hyper masculine man doing a delicate dance. But here we do that! We aren't Japanese. We do what we want. There are men in the group that like to dance, so they dance. We already had conflicts because of this.

At the time that we were composing *Himawari*, that piece that has fans and such, Sansey, a Yosakoi Soran group from Londrina came to help us. All of them are Japanese descendants, so they have a very traditional and conservative point of view of the world. They said things like, "look, this dance, only girls are going to dance it. Because it's a very feminine dance." At the time, I was like, annoyed I was quiet when they were here, but afterwards, I said, "People, this is stupid. Whomever wants to dance should dance. Like Luigi dances very well. Why can't he dance with the girls who want to dance? Let him dance!"

So today, there are boys that dance with fans and women that dance with the staff in *Himawari*. I think that we transformed taiko into something that we find comfortable, and is

comfortable for everyone. I think that is wonderful. Because we may not have the technical level that people from the South have, and we aren't as good as they are, but we have our own identity, that is a mixture of all of this. When we go to the Kawasuji festival, which is a taiko festival here in Brazil, people who watch us know that Wadō is playing because we are different from everyone else. And it's not that we are better. Quite the contrary, in fact. We are a group of beginners even though our group has been in existence for ten years. Compared to the Nikkeis in the South, we aren't as technically good. But we have our identity. We have our style. We do things that other groups don't do. There are people in Wadō that don't like this, and they think it's horrible. They say, "We have to respect tradition." But I think it's great. I think it's wonderful, and I'm always in favor of mixing.

People have a very wrong perception of taiko, of wadaiko. Taiko is an instrument that has been around for thousands of years. But wadaiko came about in the 1950s and 60s. It's modern. It's not from a thousand-year-old tradition that you must respect.¹¹³ Wadaiko is very—if you see the Japanese groups, they aren't so worried about this. If you look at Japanmarvelous, they do things that groups from here are like, "Can we do that? Okay, then we'll do it too."¹¹⁴ But we are always afraid to do certain things before a Japanese group does. But that's stupid because wadaiko isn't a tradition that is necessary to respect for you to practice it. I think it's so much more open. I think that Wadō is doing a good job in this respect. But it wasn't always like this. We are more open now. Like, five years ago, it wasn't like this *at all*. We really wanted to gain more technical skills and follow a Japanese method and tradition. We worried about things like how to tie a hachimaki. There were a lot of rules. But we started to free ourselves in time.

How did you all free yourselves?

I think that had to do with the rotation of members. Old members leave and new ones come in. And then old members come back. And through all of this, we mature and and develop our way to play taiko. Because I think that every beginner is worried about doing things correctly. They don't want to do things "differently." Beginners want to do things the same as everyone else and do it correctly. Right? Even in other areas, like if you are going to learn to dance ballet, you don't go into studying ballet by trying to do some kind of different contemporary form of ballet. You learn classical ballet, and then you have your base, and then later, you do a different kind of dance. And I think that we did this as well with taiko. There was a period where we understood that taiko had to do with a traditional techniques and methods. And now, we are more confident to leave this a little bit. And I think that Brazilian taiko is also changing in this way. The performances that happen at the Kawasuji festival now are less traditional than they were before.

¹¹³ In Brazil, Japan and Japanese products, festivals, and performing arts are marketed as "milenar," giving the impression of a tradition that has not changed for thousands of years.

¹¹⁴ Japanmarvelous is a Japanese kumi daiko group based in Fukuoka. Players are from Fukuoka, but also from Londrina, Brazil. They have made many South American and Southeast Asian tours.

And this as well: a lot of members have various personal histories, various visions of the world. And this also creates a mixture of things.

Right. When I came here in 2011, there was a worry about doing everything correct. And now, I see the new song.¹¹⁵ It's very daring.

Yes, yes. We wouldn't have done this song five years ago. Never. Never. Right? We are playing taiko with a baqueta with a pom pom on it. That would never, never happen before! That baqueta wouldn't even come close to touching our taikos. You know? It's an evolution. We are in the process of owning our Bahian identities. At least, that's how I see it. We are never going to be the best group in Brazil. But we are always going to be Grupo Wadō. And we are going to be the best that Grupo Wadō can be. As much as we can, we enjoy and love what we are doing. We are in a more mature phase right now, and more confident in expressing ourselves than before.

I also think that conflict is part of our group identity. We Bahians are very informal. We don't have rules about being careful, you know? We don't walk on eggshells. I think that this is something about Bahian culture in Salvador. We Bahians are very exuberant. We say what we need to say, and we aren't very careful about it. It's not that we are sloppy or disrespectful about it. It's just that we aren't afraid of human contact. I think that we aren't afraid of being human. We say what we need to say, touch people, and hug them and hold their hands. And then we argue when we have to argue. And then we kiss when we need to kiss. We are very much like this. It's part of our identity, part of our cultural expression.

Sometimes this is good, and sometimes this is bad. The good thing is that few conflicts are ever unresolved. We don't hold things inside. This is something we've seen happening in other taiko groups. Problems accumulate, people don't talk, and then people end up leaving the group. Here, there is always some kind of argument in one moment or another, and then it's resolved.

I was surprised to see people crying during meetings. That everyone was so comfortable with it.

That isn't rare. There are always people crying in our meetings. Sometimes they cry out of happiness. Dani and Fuuka often cry because they are happy. But others cry because they are angry or upset. That is also very common.

In our group, there are people that are close friends and others that aren't. Some aren't really friends outside of the group. But I think that we have a very strong union inside of the group. We have gone through a lot of difficulties together. I think this strengthens us. You are always going to hear stories of perrengue—difficult situations in Wadō. Like the bus breaks down, or we have to go and play in the heat at a place where there isn't any water. Or

¹¹⁵ Later called *Irasshai*, as I discuss in Chapter 2.

we arrive at 3am in Salvador after a performance and we have to put away the taikos, and it's pouring down raining. There are always these things. We have a joke that if there isn't a difficult and sometimes humiliating (humilhado) situation, it's not Wadō. And I think that connects us: going through difficult situations together. I remember that some members of Ishindaiko were telling us that in Ishindaiko, the parents are a very strong presence in the group. They resolve administrative problems and financial problems. But here, we do everything. And it's always been that way.

We are older, but when we started, most people were still minors. But we are ten years older now. We were children. We started this group when we were adolescents. And we learned to do things, and I think that this has strengthened our group.

It's wonderful to play together. I think that everyone in the group enjoys performing. Everyone has fun. Before every presentation, whomever is the leader always says, "Hey, when we perform, before we go on stage, we have to say, have fun. Don't worry. Relax. Whether you are playing well or not, have fun. Enjoy the moment of playing music with your friends." When I was the group leader, I always would say that. Because it's like that. The best performances are when we are having fun with our friends and also receiving a certain happy energy from the audience. Seeing that they are having fun watching us. Those are the best, although not every performance is like that. Sometimes they are tense. Sometimes the drum breaks in some way before we go on stage. And the leader gets nervous and starts yelling at people and crying and then we end up going on stage super tense.

Sometimes the audience isn't paying any attention to us, and sometimes, it seems as if they want us to go away. I remember various performances like that. One was a cocktail event for some doctors. It was some kind of medical conference, and I don't know why one of the speakers wanted us to be the opening for his lecture. I have no idea what our performance had to do with medicine. And then the audience was a bunch of doctors. You know, the kind of people who were wearing ties and all of that. All snobby. And then we were playing taiko and everyone was looking at us like they couldn't be bothered with us, wanting us to leave.

But then there are times that we play at outdoor venues and people gather and clap their hands with us, and children come and ask to take pictures with the group. There are all kinds of performances. Right? It depends a lot on the energy of the public. When the audience responds well, the performances are very good, but when the audience doesn't respond to us well, we go out laughing about what a tragedy it was. There are all kinds of performances and sometimes the vibe interferes with what's going on onstage.

And what kind of sintonia (synthesis) do you feel when you are rehearsing?

Sometimes I feel it. When it's a rehearsal for the Bon Odori, yes. We get more motivated and happier. Sometimes we end up being able to do something that we weren't able to do before and we feel proud of our teamwork. This is something rare during rehearsals, right? Usually, during rehearsals, we aren't very motivated. I don't know. Sometimes I feel like I'm

too old to play taiko. I'm not able to do the things I was able to do before. Maybe it's because there was a time that I wasn't taking care of my health because I was studying to take a concurso publico exam.¹¹⁶ And I was depressed during this year. I stopped going to the gym and doing physical activity. But then, I started doing physical conditioning again, but I still feel unwell compared to how I was before. Right? Sometimes I feel unable to play. But I need to get back to playing like I did before.

Practices are sometimes unmotivating, and there are times when no one is motivated. And then we don't play right, and it's just not joyful. We play very *murcho* (mushy), you know? It happens. There are ebbs and flows. But it was always like that. There are times when we feel motivated, and then there are times when no one wants to come to practice.

Every year during the Bon Odori, we invite other taiko and Yosakoi Soran groups to play with us. Always some group visits us. Like Ishindaiko and RKMD, which is an Okinawan taiko group. There was a group from Atibaia that came last year, and TAIKOPROJECT. I was in the group when TAIKOPROJECT came. It's always a good energy when they are on stage with us. At the end of the Bon Odori, we always do a circle, and we always cry from so much emotion. That happened with Taiko Project. Because playing together always has that kind of connection. We felt very emotional with TAIKO PROJECT. They are very loving people. We really felt a connection and friendship with them. They gave us our chappa and atarigane. When they gave us those instruments, we all started to cry.

We play together. We don't play alone. We play in a group. So everyone is playing the same thing. And there is a need for synthesis. Sometimes we are out of sync with one another. And personal relationships interfere a lot with paying together. If you aren't well with the person you are playing with on the same instrument, it's not the same as playing with someone who wants to be there with you. It's different.

¹¹⁶ Many jobs that are stable and have tenure avoid nepotism by testing during application processes to determine who is hired when there is an opening. An entire industry has flourished around preparing people for these "public contests."

Chapter 5: The Body, Utopias, and Peacebuilding in Taiko

Encounter and Intervention, Collective Weeping

The early summer heat was overwhelming the day that Wadō played for the city marathon. The drummers had spent the night together, sleeping on the floor at the Japanese Association to commute together at 4am; they had very little sleep and started the performance already exhausted. The sun came up early and burned their faces while they played for long stretches as they never had before; they were used to performing specific five-minute pieces in 45-minute sets with speeches, audience participation, and time to rest between pieces. Previously, they had argued about whether or not they needed to practice improvisation, but the majority of the members had said that it was not a priority. Consequently, at the marathon, they played the same song “30 times,” which Lara described as “horrible.”

“Also,” Luigi said, “Fabiola and Camila had a misunderstanding.”¹¹⁷

When Camila went to a different side of the road from how they had arranged beforehand, Fabiola yelled, “What are you doing here?” Camila thought that Fabiola was indicating she was not welcome in the group.

Other than this brief and tense interaction, Fabiola and Camila had not spoken for several months. Camila refused to look at Fabiola, much less greet her at the beginning of each practice. The conflict between the two women had been a topic of the previous monthly meetings, so the leaders decided that after discussing the marathon performance,

¹¹⁷ These are pseudonyms.

it was time for the women resolve their differences, or at least begin to speak with one another. The twenty members of Wadō were seated around two large, round tables that were pushed together with chairs pulled in from various places in the building. The fans circulating the air in the windowless room buzzed, and the neon lights flickered overhead.

“I don’t want to talk about this,” Camila said to the group.

“Why not now?” Fuuka said.

“I don’t want to talk.” She then turned to Fabiola, “You treat me badly. I don’t want to talk to you.”

Fabiola apologized, “I like you, Camila. I really do. Please forgive me. Sometimes I can be rude without realizing it, but I’m trying to change.”

“You said, ‘what are you doing here?’” Camila burst into tears as the other members sat in silence for several moments.

Several other group members started to cry with Camila, some with tears rolling down their faces and others covering their eyes and looking downward.

“Camila, you are important to this group,” Joyce said. “Let’s think about talking about this. Let’s think about this situation. We often don’t know what people are thinking. Fabiola may have meant something different than what you thought when she said, ‘what are you doing here?’ You may want to consider this.”

Many group members began expressing their appreciation for Camila.

“You are an important member of this group, Camila,” Leo said. “You’ve been here for eight years, since nearly the beginning. You’re an icon for us!”

“Don’t think about quitting Camila,” Lara said. “Don’t leave the group. Everyone here likes you.”

“We all like you. That’s why so many of us crying when we see you crying,” Joyce said, pointing to individuals with tears in their eyes. “If we didn’t like you, we wouldn’t feel so sad for you that we would cry with you.”

Later, several Wadō members told to me that one person crying during a meeting nearly always caused many people to cry. I noticed these moments regularly, such as when someone would announce they were leaving the group to spend more time working, or express hurt feelings because of something someone had said. Sometimes the tears flowed from a surge of positive emotions, such as when someone would convey gratitude or admiration for another player. Some members covered their faces and others cried openly. Emotions in Wadō were often expressed communally through collective weeping, as well as collective laughter and enthusiasm. Many Wadō members described themselves as empathetic and empathic.

In this chapter, I describe Wadō members’ praxis of peace and conflict resolution through exploring shared emotions, stimulated by regular dialogue and drumming, and facilitated by the group’s democratic organization. First, I discuss *wa*, or “harmony,” in Wadō’s name, as a simultaneously a real, imagined, and idealized Japanese concept of peace, union, and sameness, on which the group is based. Here, I consider the group’s foundation of dialogue, discussing how members learn to communicate verbally, enhancing their sense of union. I describe verbal communication as cognitive and intersubjective, and I argue that practices of union and harmony in Wadō went beyond

verbal dialogue and cognitive activities. I contend that the body was the primary site of peaceful relations and that these relations were practiced in rehearsals where members entrained empathy through intercorporeal connections, and where the boundaries between individual bodies blurred through peer teaching techniques such as placing hands on one another, listening to one another, watching one another, and learning to move and play together. These sensory modes of corporeal practice allowed members to understand one another's bodies and emotions directly, contributing to increased understanding, empathy, and peaceful relations between members that they brought to meetings, encounters, and mediations. I discuss research on mirror neurons and dance therapy practices to explain the foundations of kinesthetic empathy present in Wadō. I argue that bodies extend beyond themselves through senses, intercorporeal encounters, and technologies. They are not limited to the confines of the skin.

Further, I argue that peace was established in Wadō through enacting peaceful relations in repertory performed and repeated. I discuss Wadō's first original composition, *Himawari*, which tells the story of a village recovering from an internal conflict and returning to normal life after war, which mirrors a conflict that nearly ended Wadō. I describe the performance of *Himawari* as utopian, where Wadō members imagine and enact what a peaceful world may look and feel like for both audiences and themselves. Finally, I describe Wadō as a heterotopia, or a world that answers to and contradicts normative spaces in a society (Foucault 1984). Wadō is an "other" space, where members enacted and promoted peaceful relationships onstage and in rehearsals, meetings, and everyday life.

It is noteworthy that this chapter could have been written about a number of taiko groups around the world. Many have similar modes of organization, peer teaching, dialogue, and values. However, I am focusing primarily on how peace was established in Wadō, while only briefly comparing the group's practices to others around the world.

Imagining Peace: Wa, “Japanese Values” Group-Building

Wadō is a decidedly communitarian ensemble, based on both real and imagined Japanese values of collectivism. Members study taiko together without the top-down organization of group with a sensei, as there was no sensei or taiko expert living in Bahia during the first ten years of the group's existence. While the Japanese Brazilian Cultural Association of Salvador (ANISA/the Association) regularly requested a Taiko instructor volunteer through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the only Japanese Taiko instructor living in Brazil serves the São Paulo-based Brazilian Taiko Association and travels to member groups that pay fees to have access to this sensei. Wadō, instead, is member-run and -managed, where small groups take responsibility for various tasks and hierarchies rotate.

Wadō's organization and mission were based on deep dialogue since its beginning. During Wadō's first year, no one played drums. Instead, members sat in a large circle in the Association's courtyard to hash out ideas about what a group is, what is needed for a group to be successful, and what their group would look like. They debated on mission statements, which would determine the group's identity and culture. The practice of a group deciding guiding values together is widespread in the global taiko community, and sometimes a response to top-down, hierarchical models of groups some

members had been a part of (Wong 2019, 201–2; Tusler 2003; Bender 2012, 98–104; Hirabayashi n.d.). Wadō members, however, told me that the idea to start the group through dialogue did not come from another taiko group. Instead, Lika Kawano, the founder of Wadō who wanted to spark interest in Japanese culture among youth, brought the practice to the group.

Kawano’s experience as a coordinator of Grupo Sansey, a Yosakoi Soran and taiko group in Londrina run by youth participants, influenced her decision to create a group run by young people in Salvador. “Working with youth is in my blood,” Kawano told me, emphasizing the importance of developing youth leadership. She said,

The main objective of Wadō is the dissemination of (Japanese) culture. That’s principle. It comes first. But in parallel, it’s a group to help form youth leaders. Because in general, we feel that a spirit of leadership is lacking in here Salvador and in the schools. This is something we need to strengthen, in both Nikkeis and those who are not.¹¹⁸

Kawano described youth leadership positions, dialogue, and guiding values in Grupo Sansey as inspiration for Wadō’s own group values, organization, and methods for keeping the group together.

Dialogue is something that I brought from Grupo Sansey. We even talked about Grupo Sansey, “Look in Grupo Sansey, they have values” We believe that we have to start with values. The values of teamwork and discipline, this is Nikkei. It’s Japanese culture.

Daniela, a founding member, described the first meeting and the subsequent process of group building and choosing guiding values that came from Kawano’s experience with Grupo Sansey:

¹¹⁸ Kawano, Lika. Recorded interview with author. May 7, 2017. Barris, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

The first meeting was like a brainstorm... Everything started as a discussion... We started to talk about the structure of the group and a statute, a project that would describe what our group would be... questions of values, principles, the activities that we would have... “What do we want? Do we want to learn to play taiko? What do we need?” Everything was decided little by little in weekly meetings after that. And the meetings were long—three, sometimes four hours.¹¹⁹

Over several months, members decided on five values that would define Wadō: dedication, team spirit, responsibility, discipline, and solidarity. They also chose the name: Wadō, which members translate as “union and harmony.” Wadō’s name (和同) conveys its values of togetherness and team spirit. The kanji 和 also connotes Japanese-ness, as it appears in words such as washoku (traditional food), wagyu (Japanese beef), washi (Japanese paper), and wadaiko (Japanese ensemble drumming; also taiko). Furthermore, the kanji connotes “harmony.” Bauman argues that wa (和) indicates a harmonization of two opposing forces and “an ethical concept whose ideal is to integrate individuals for the harmony and balance of the group” (1994, 12). Wierzbicka identifies the wa, of “Wadō” as a “key word,” or core Japanese value, which “has clear implications of ‘groupism’ and ‘anti-individualism’... It implies a unity that is desired and aimed for” (1991, 354–55). She notes that *wa* is often coopted by Japanese companies in their logos to transmit the idea that group members are “merged in their collectivity” (Ibid). However, this corporate cooptation of the concept does not render the *wa* superficial. Wa connotes consensus and teamwork (1991, 355). The second kanji in

¹¹⁹ Almeida, Daniela. Recorded interview with author. September 26, 2017. Vale do Canela, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

Wadō's name, dou (同), connotes equality, similarity, and agreement. Its Japanese reading literally means "same."

As its name and statute imply, Grupo Cultural Wadō emphasizes ethics like "team spirit," "collaboration," and "solidarity." The collectivism felt through shared emotions was created intentionally, as founding Wadō members regarded Japanese collectivity as an antidote to individualism in Brazil, with symptoms such as the proliferation of gated communities, the privatization of public services, corruption among politicians, and disregard for the wellbeing of others. Founding members Leo Raposo and Thaís Carmo related individualism to the spread of capitalism and consumerism imported from the United States and Europe as a problem in Brazil that they wished to somehow mitigate.

Leo told me:

The United States and England ended up influencing a lot of other societies—especially developing countries. The idea of the individualism is so large... the idea of the market... Mass society makes everyone look for a way to be different. Like, "I don't want to be like everyone else. I want to be on top." And what is the idea of the "top?" Being a good person? No. It's always in terms of material things. The philosophy of materialism within individualism. This a problem.¹²⁰

Further, Leo compared ensemble drumming with concepts of music making in the West, emphasizing the collective nature of taiko and the individualism of Western music:

In the West there is an obsession with playing a lot of notes. And we sometimes forget that music is not just an individual endeavor. In taiko, you don't make music alone. To have a total effect, it cannot be individual. It is beautiful because it exists as an ensemble.... It's not just about the music in and of itself. It's about the group ethos.

Thaís agreed, relating collectivism to Asian culture:

¹²⁰ Raposo, Leo. Recorded interview with author. September 9, 2011. Pituba, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

This is something that we see in Western music. Sometimes you watch performances, and no one wants to share their energy with anyone else. On stage we don't only show taiko music. We show and share ourselves. We show our group. Maybe this has something to do with Asian culture.¹²¹

Wadō was created to be a decidedly Japanese cultural group, and its mission is to teach Japanese values through music, where Japanese values were thought to embody harmony, peace, and collectivity. Marcela, a member since 2014, told me that she learned collectivism as a Wadō member:

I felt part of Wadō by living the principles of the group... You are always in an ensemble, always together with the group. And you know that even having a disagreement with some people, you are going to be with that person. You're going to see her every day... I think that Japanese culture embraces. I feel embraced, you know, even though we have disagreements.¹²²

Takano and Osaka argue that Westerners have often overemphasized Japanese collectivism (1999). This, they argue, results from Ruth Benedict's influential book, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, published in 1947, which outlined Japanese hierarchical structures and argued that group identity is part of Japanese national character. While it has "long been taken for granted that Japanese are more collectivistic than the Americans," the authors argue, there is very little empirical basis for this commonly held view (1999, 312). They review psychological experiments in which US American students showed a "significantly higher level of cooperation than did Japanese students" (Ibid. 322). The authors show that Japanese workers disagree with their superiors more often than US Americans do, although they disagree less "violently" (Ibid. 332).

¹²¹ Carmo, Thaís. Recorded interview with author. September 9, 2011. Pituba, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

¹²² Almeida, Marcela. Recorded interview with author. March 5, 2018. Barra, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

Nonetheless, they argue that the “collectivistic national character alleged by the common view is not indispensable,” noting the cultural necessity for high levels of cooperation between the Meiji Revolution and the end of Japan’s high economic growth (Ibid. 332).

In Wadō, most members had not been to Japan. Only one member spoke Japanese. Instead, members’ concepts about wa were imagined, idealized, and practiced through activities of the group that demanded that everyone do everything together, such as eating, cleaning, and playing. Consensus and collectivism as both a practice and ideology dominated members’ discussions on what it meant to be a group member and what it meant to be a part of a Japanese cultural group.

Organizing Peace: Dialogue as Foundation

Wadō’s organization was democratic. Every year, Wadō members voted on a leader, vice-leader, and secretary to make decisions regarding practice and performance schedules. In 2017 and 2018, these three individuals held private meetings, conducted rehearsals, and decided repertory for each performance, as well as who would perform each part. Sometimes these individuals would be elected for a second year, and sometimes members nominated teammates for leadership positions. Those who did not hold leadership roles divided themselves into “commissions,” comprised of two or three people who took charge of tasks such as teaching public workshops, updating social media pages and websites, keeping storage rooms clean, repairing drums, and applying for grants to fund concerts, instruments, and practice spaces. In spite of members taking responsibility for specific tasks, everyone was able to comment and give feedback on anything pertaining to the group, regardless of seniority.

With few exceptions, all members voted on every group decision regardless of their commission. Exceptions were often responses to requests from elders of the Association, and Lika. Sometimes Luigi, Lika's son, would announce something that the group had "decided," and no one would question these decisions, such as when Roberto Mizushima, a president of the Federation of Japanese Associations in Bahia who was running for city office, requested Wadō members to set up a booth at the Japanese festival to sell imported food products for a friend. The friend of Mizushima and the group would split profits. (Wadō members did not know the terms of how much they would make and how much they would have to work when they "agreed" to this "arrangement.") Other times, requests would come from Lika or sempai, where members would be called upon to attend activities at the Association, such as meetings of the growing seinenkai. These hierarchies underpinned the group, as the Association provided initial support for the group by providing practice space, lending the group's first drum, and providing the name of their non-profit to apply for grants. Other than these (rather significant) exceptions, dialogue and democratic processes defined the group's procedures.

Regular attendance at rehearsals and meetings was required of all members to maintain their membership. Meetings were held monthly, where members would sit in a circle around a table while drinking soda and eating cookies. These meetings usually lasted entire afternoons, with members hashing out decisions such as whether to participate in certain performances, when to hold public workshops, who should be admitted as a new member of the group, and what color the new props for Yosakoi Soran

dances should be. Each decision would often take a considerable amount of discussion before being put to a vote. Differences of opinion and the sharing of personal feelings abounded, but members would eventually arrive at a consensus by trying to convince the others to adopt their point of view. Sometimes, dialogue was not utilized to arrive at a decision, but rather to reflect on past events, such as concerts, where members discussed what was successful, what could have been better, and how they felt about the event.

Dialogue was the foundation of Wadō's praxis of conflict resolution and ethos of teamwork. Peace studies scholars cite verbal dialogue between two or more parties as a means of effective peace building, conflict resolution, and violence prevention. Most case studies on dialogue, particularly in the context of encounter groups, study efficacy in mitigating long-term and large-scale conflict. These cases are vastly different from the



Figure 22: A Wadō meeting

In this image, members are reading written feedback from other players on their taiko practice and contributions to the group from the previous year.

context of Wadō's small and informal peacebuilding efforts. Most proposals for, and critiques of, dialogue groups are part of peace education programs and international diplomacy that focus on goals of peace and reconciliation after civil war, as in the former Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, and Colombia, where communities suffered human rights atrocities and faced challenges of healing from turmoil (Wisler 2010; Portaankorva 2015; Cortés et al. 2016). Other scholars propose dialogue as a way to help communities avoid civil war or prevent violence related to ongoing hostilities, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Chinwe Chikwem and Chikwendu Duru 2018; Schimmel 2009; Brion-Meisels and Brion-Meisels 2012).

That dialogue is a means to prevent and resolve conflicts is a widely held view in many Western countries (Biaggio, De Souza, and Martini 2004). However, many scholars have cited shortcomings and even failures in dialogue groups, particularly in large-scale conflicts and in peace and reconciliation efforts. Schimmel indicates that most participants in dialogue groups are self-selected, and those who may benefit the most from participating in peace education initiatives are those who may not want to participate. He also notes that most dialogue groups are short-term and temporary; when individuals return to their communities, they often revert to prejudices they held before dialogue encounters. Some have suggested that peacebuilding and peace education, based on North American models, often disregard culturally-specific knowledge in communities outside of North America and Europe (Lederach 1995; Stephan and Stephan 1996). Twenty years ago, Lederach cautioned that “trainers should do their

homework and become aware and recognizing cultural assumptions implicit in their [conflict resolution] model” (1995, 21). Kopf, in arguing for peace education based on Buddhist principles writes that the very concepts of “self” and “other” prevent understanding and peaceful relations, particularly when dialogue groups are heterogenous (Kopf 2015).

Nonetheless, many have argued that dialogue groups are efficacious for other reasons. Saunders argues that dialogue requires vulnerability and empathy, even as these are difficult to practice in dialogue groups. He argues:

Dialogue is dangerous; it often involves risk... Dialogue requires participants to reveal to others their deepest interests, hopes, and fears. That can make one vulnerable. Dialogue sometimes requires a participant to give up important human defenses that define her or his own identity as it contrasts to the identity of ‘the other.’ (1999, 84)

Further, Stephan and Stephan argue that since first person narratives abound in dialogue groups, they invoke empathy from other participants and personal understandings of another’s situation (1996). Using case studies from the Palestine/Israel conflict, Chaitin argues that personal narratives, when told to “the enemy” in dialogue groups, can be especially productive when personal suffering is connected to broad social and political contexts, promoting healing and empathy (2014).

While verbal dialogue encounters in Wadō took place in a very different context from communities and countries in crisis cited above, dialogue was fundamental to the Wadō’s praxis, and group discussions were the basis of conflict resolution. Dialogue provided the foundation of the group’s culture, and it was the basis of all rehearsals, feedback sessions, and meetings. Here, peacebuilding in Wadō was what Vayrynen calls

a “mundane encounter,” or a “micro-practice of peacebuilding” (2019a). She argues that “mundane activities and encounters” such as meetings, rehearsals, and conversations, “matter for peacebuilding” (Ibid, 8). Theidon’s arguments on the importance and effectiveness of “micropolitics of reconciliation,” over top-down efforts by governments and NGOs to impose peaceful relations on communities also applies to Wadō (2006). Peacebuilding happens in small-scale, local, and particular ways.

Many members cited participation in the group as a way to learn to speak and to solicit feedback from others. Verbal communication was often solicited during rehearsals and public workshops, with leaders often requesting feedback from participants and members in the form of reflection. Common questions included: “What did you think? What was your experience like?” and “How can we improve?” Sometimes these questions sparked long discussions and reflections among new members about themselves and their identities. At times, new participants would suggest explaining choreography by having someone constantly demonstrate it, or they would commiserate about blisters. Soliciting dialogue always took time, and sometimes caused rehearsals and classes to go over time. Dialogue was a commitment to listen for long periods of time, and it required vulnerability and openness among participants.

Many Wadō members cited becoming more skilled at speaking and listening to others through meeting activities where members reflected on performances, discussed problems, and confronted one another. Luigi Kawano was a child participant during the early years of the group’s existence. He told me that he was too shy to speak before participating in the leadership of the group. I noticed Luigi hesitating to express

disappointment or anger to the group, but he was able to do so skillfully, such as expressing disappointment in members who did not help put away drums rather than accusing them of being inconsiderate. Moments like these, where members were able to articulate negative and complex feelings to the rest of the group, helped avoid future conflict and mitigated feelings of frustration.

Other members cited listening to others to learn to speak and become effective leaders. Mariana, a leader for Yosakoi Soran choreography in Wadō, oversaw teaching short dance routine choreography and giving feedback to dancers. She related communication difficulties with a particular member that initially prevented her from executing her role. However, with time, careful consideration of others' feelings, and chances to practice, she became more adept at understanding how to speak with a defensive member who did not accept constructive criticism and who had begun to isolate herself from the group:

[There was a] member was very introverted, and every time we tried to give her feedback, she took it personally and felt offended. People started pulling away from her, so I tried to get closer to her. We talked about how she felt about the criticisms she received, and I tried to clarify the technical feedback she would receive. We started to talk more about her life, family, and personal problems that she had, and I started to understand her emotions. I had to change the way I communicated with her. I started to talk to her in a way that would make her feel accepted, giving positive feedback and pointing out to her how much she had improved. I also gave her the space to express herself, to say what was making her uncomfortable. Today, I do not have trouble communicating with her.¹²³

¹²³ Kawano, Mariana. Recorded interview with author. March 8, 2018. Barra, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. Mariana Kawano brought her experience as a leader in Grupo Sansey and her expertise in Yosakoi Soran to Wadō.

Speaking intentionally and skillfully, listening to the responses of others, and giving regular positive feedback was a standard practice in the group, and many told me that verbal communication contributed to the unity of the group, particularly when members deployed positive feedback through an annual questionnaire.

Many peace studies scholars are interested in music ensembles as a tool for peace. Robertson's ongoing research deals with an inter-religious choir in post-conflict Sarajevo with a mission to promote peace and reconciliation in the nation (2010), and later, the choir's encounters with a UK-based choir (2018). He concludes that imagining a peaceful future when remembering the past (when interreligious choral groups were "normal"), creating shared musical identities and goals, and imagining a hopeful future demonstrates that "music does appear to have had a positive effect on members... and their audiences in the context of transforming conflict" (2010, 51). Levesque and Ferguson, who explore a "spatial" approach to peacebuilding, argue that sound is space, and they ask peace studies researchers to listen to interlocutors and explore a spatial and sonic understanding of dialogue (2020). Several scholars argue that methodologies from ethnomusicological research place music scholars in a unique position to contribute to peacebuilding and conflict resolution in both local and international contexts (C. Robertson 2016; Pitic 2020; Ostashewski 2020).

In Wadō, dialogue and music practice are closely related. Pruitt specifically studies relationships between dialogue and music, arguing that musical groups can foster effective dialogue and contribute to violence prevention among participants (2011). She examines the possibility of group music practice as an alternative form of dialogue for

those who may not speak a dominant language or who may not feel called to participate in traditional forms of dialogue. Employing case studies from youth organizations in Australia and Ireland that use music to promote peaceful relations between migrant and local communities, she concludes that music practice may help youth to engage in more traditional forms of verbal communication and build unity among teens of varied backgrounds and socioeconomic conditions. Grupo Cultural Wadō also brought young people of various social and racial backgrounds together to play music, which helped them gain confidence to express themselves verbally, while providing opportunities to participate through musical practice for those who may not feel called to speak.

Dialogue is only part of Wadō's praxis. Instead, peaceful relations are practiced and refined at the level of the body through sensory experiences, such as the imitation of one another's movements, efforts to synchronize tempos, and peer teaching moments where members placed hands on one another. I argue that music practice promotes efficacious dialogue because it deals with the body. Vayrynen has criticized the field of Peace and Conflict Studies for treating the body as "an abstract non-living entity" (2019a, 2). I learned from Wadō how to do the opposite. Wadō members used music practice and performance to connect the mind and body. Performance practices train empathy by blurring boundaries between individual bodies, helping members to understand one another in an experiential way that is more immediate than verbal communication. Additionally, members often referred to feeling the "energy" of synchrony when performing together, indicating a palpable, but difficult-to-describe bodily sensation of unity. Their experiences support recent neuroscience studies showing that sensations of

unity and empathy are hardwired into our brains in areas related to movement and sensation.

The Senses in Wadō

Group practice is a sensory experience. To get to rehearsal, you walk through an empty street in the hot summer sun. You see the practice space by the library, descend a ramp next to the entrance, and enter the rehearsal space, which is un-air-conditioned, but full of open windows, creating a breeze throughout the building. You feel the cool temperature of the practice space as a respite from the sun outside, and when taking off your shoes to step on the floor of the practice space, you feel the cool smoothness of the wood under your feet. You embrace other members of the group, feeling their warmth. “I’m sorry. I’m sweating,” they say, smelling like salt. Conversations begin quietly, but soon escalate in volume, and some members begin to shriek with laughter, with the sound waves from their voices bouncing off the walls and floors, resonating through the room. Someone opens a pack of sugary cookies to share that vaguely taste like chocolate and coconut and you take one, noticing that these cookies are sweeter than cookies in North America. More members trickle into the space, and an hour after rehearsal was supposed to start, you sit on the wooden floor of the practice space in seiza, and you notice bits of glitter from someone else’s rehearsal stuck to your shins, while your knee bones dig into the floor. You bow and recite “yoroshiku onegaishimasu” together and notice that others feel pain in the knees, as they shift from side to side with their faces grimacing.

During the drumming practice, your body reacts to what the other bodies in the space are doing. Someone pulls your hips away from the drum, indicating that you are

playing too close to it, and you stagger backwards. You struggle to drum in time with the senior members during drills, knowing what your tempo should be, but your wrists become tense and can't keep up at the fastest speed. You remind yourself to relax as you pause, try again, take a deep breath, and settle into the beat with your feet grounding into the floor. When you practice a song that you are learning, you "feel" the movements of your sempai out of the corner of your right eye, allowing you to more quickly memorize the repertory you have been trying to master. Throughout the weeks, your body becomes part of the group. It changes to accommodate the movements you have been trying to master. Your shoulders are sore, your hands become callused, and your stamina increases. Your body starts to remember the repertory on its own. You no longer have to think about what you are doing or recite *kuchi-shoga* in your head, but you still rely on the sensations you feel from the other bodies in the room when you perform. You and your body are never alone, never independent.

In *Wadō*, dancers' and musicians' bodies move in relation to one another, creating community through *convivência diaria*, or mundane corporeal interactions in rehearsals, performances, and meetings. Rivera-Servera wrote: "In the *convivência diaria* of dancing along with others, witnessing bodies on display, [and] displaying one's own... one discovers that a sense of community emerges. Dancers move in relation to each other's movement" (2012, 154). *Wadō's* choreographic community was strong, consistent, and theorized. In *Wadō* rehearsals, touch, sound, and sight blur the boundaries of individual bodies, creating collectives of bodies. These sensory experiences result in members feeling supported and "perceiving oneself in the group". Moreover, it emphasized that

intersubjective relations are intercorporeal relations. Weiss argues that “to describe embodiment as intercorporeality is to emphasize that the experience of being embodied is never a private affair, but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with human and nonhuman bodies” (1999, 5). In Wadō, experiences are mediated through bodies before cognitive processes and relationships.

Touch

Chichibu style drumming requires open hips and hamstrings. To execute the beginning pose properly, the drummer extends her legs in front of her hips while seated on the floor. The ankles, elevated on the drum stand, frame the drum. The chest is open, and the arms extend behind the plane of the back before striking the drum, particularly where there is an emphasis on a beat or the beginning of a phrase.

The first time that Newton tried Chichibu style drumming in a public workshop, he had difficulty keeping his back straight and his shoulders open. His lower back rounded backwards compressing his spine, and his shoulders hunched forward. Lara, who was teaching the other drummers, stood behind Newton, pushed his lower back forward with her hands and then placed her hands on his shoulder blades, encouraging them to slide downwards toward the sacrum (Figure 23). Although it was difficult for him to maintain Lara’s corrections on his own, his body exerted the effort needed to lengthen his spine and open his chest after she had left. Lara’s corrections had been instructive; they had taught him the basic feeling of the position through manual support. Her touch allowed him to feel corrections more directly than verbal corrections would have allowed, and her support likely prevented a future injury.



Figure 23: Lara helping Newton with Chichibu style drumming while Luigi watches



Figure 24: Marcel helping Mariana find correct shoulder and arm positions while practicing Odaiko.

Touch is, perhaps, the most immediate of the senses in taiko training. In a meditation on touch in the transmission of embodied knowledge in Japanese dance, Tomie Hahn notes that touch denies the separation between bodies, negotiating “the very boundaries of our physical self. During a tactile experience the boundaries of one body and another conjoin,” she writes (2007, 102). She describes how a teacher’s touch allows a student to feel a teacher’s dance directly (Ibid.). In Wadō, touch allows peers to understand the expertise of one another and to correct posture and movement (Figure 24). It is also used to clarify movements, prevent injury, and strengthen personal relationships (Figure 25).



Figure 25: Marcela, Luigi, and Lara sharing space during a break, touching arms and shoulders.

Sound

Sound is also a form of touch, as sound waves touch the hairs in the inner ears, sending signals to the brain that humans experience as sound. The body also feels sound in other ways through vibrations hitting the body or feeling sound vibrations in the floor. Lederach and Lederach note that sound “surrounds... The sensation of being surrounded creates spaces of feeling the potential and perhaps the reality of being accepted” (2010, 142). Sound is more immediate than language. Kapchan argues that sound and learning to listen creates community, emotion, and affect, transforming the space and the self (2009).

In Wadō, the most common disagreement about sound is tempo. During rehearsals, some members complain that everyone is accelerating the timing of the pieces they are training, while others protest that the tempo is dragging. Basic training, or “kihon” attempts to bring members’ sense of time into synchronicity through repetition. Each week, after warmups, group members play basic rhythms—usually straight beats and horse beats—for ten minutes while a practice leader keeps time on the kane while watching a metronome. The leader then begins to slowly accelerate throughout the ten minutes while other members attempt to follow. (This is a difficult feat for many new members.) Sometimes the leader decelerates. Everyone must listen to and follow the leader. Listening brings the group into a common tempo, where the metal sound of the kane dominates.

Wadō members listened to each other play while playing, working to match their internal rhythms with that of a group, arriving at a negotiated tempo. Through listening, they learned to imitate one another’s style of playing and learn one another’s

compositions. Matching one another's sound helped members to literally feel that one cannot play taiko alone.

Sight, Mirror Neurons, and 'Shared' Emotions

Like many taiko groups in Japan, North America, and Brazil, Wadō's rehearsals always began in a circle, with all members present seated on the floor in seiza.¹²⁴ In a circle, all members were able to see one another and follow one another as they touched the floor, bowed, and began rotating their shoulders and neck, warming up the body in unison. A visual acknowledgement of everyone set the precedent for the rest of rehearsal, where members often relied on watching more advanced members in front of them, imitating their movements when learning a piece. Sometimes those that did not practice, sitting out because of injuries or choosing not to learn certain pieces, unconsciously began to mark the movements of the piece with their hands. The sight of another performing movements also penetrates the body of the observer and provoked imitation, or "marking."

All sight is also touch. As light waves touch the retina, sending signals to the brain, we can also feel another's movements. Seeing human movement results in kinesthetic sensations. Dance scholars and neuroscientists have speculated that these sensations are the basis of empathy.

¹²⁴ Several authors who write about taiko describe the practice of bowing and sitting in a circle, which separates practice space and time from mundane space and time and shows respect for teachers and peers (Varian 2013, 97; Tusler 2003, 315–35). As I discuss in Chapter 2, Bender describes practicing sitting seiza in great detail to "overcome" the deficiencies of "new Japanese bodies" (2005, 204).

In the 1930s, dance scholar John Martin described the sensation of feeling the movements of another person's body through observation. Describing the experience of a spectator watching conceptual and non-conceptual dances, he explained the physical sensations matching that of the performer (1933, 11). In pantomimic dance, the spectator recognizes the gestures and feels the same movements through muscle memory. When watching a non-pantomimic dance, however, Martin claimed, "exactly the same thing" occurs (Ibid., 12). "Through kinesthetic sympathy you respond to the impulse of the dancer which has expressed itself by means of a series of movements. Movement, then, is the link between the dancer's intention and your perception of it" (Ibid.). Later, Martin described the sensations of people who feel "sickened" when watching contortionists and further described body movement as "a medium for the transference of an aesthetic and emotional concept from the consciousness of one individual to that of another" (Ibid., 13). He was describing the sensation of mirror neurons firing in brains of audience members observing dance seventy years before neuroscientists began to speculate about a neurological basis for empathy. In 2011, dance scholar Cristine Greiner asked: "Is it possible to open the body to the experience of the other before formulating language, a logical discourse, or a rationalization of judgments? Mirror neurons have helped to respond to this question, explaining how the phenomenon of empathy arises" (Greiner 2010).

Mirror neurons were discovered in the 1990s when Italian researchers working under Giacomo Rizzolatti discovered that the same neurons in the region of the brain that controlled the muscles of the hand fired both when macaques performed a task and when

they watched another individual perform the same task (Rizzolatti, Fabbri-Destro, and Cattaneo 2009). These findings were unexpected, as the experiment was simply meant to understand motor activity in the brain. Iacoboni, a scientist on the team, wrote “neither [the team] nor any neuroscientist in the world could have imagined that motor cells could fire merely at the *perception* of somebody else’s actions, with no motor action involved at all” (2008, 11). He noted that it was difficult for the researchers to believe their findings at first, but several experiments with monkeys, and later with humans, using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) confirmed the phenomenon (Ibid). Observing hand grasping movements showed activity in the frontal and parietal lobes of both humans and macaques, which are areas associated with abstract thinking, personality and behavior, and bodily sensations, temperature, touch, and pain, respectively. Mirror neurons may explain how the visual and motor systems cross, how visual cues evoke emotions and sensations, and how we are almost literally able to “walk in another’s shoes” (Iacoboni 2008). Mirror neurons may demonstrate the physiological basis of moments when, “it is as if the other’s intention inhabited my body, and mine his” (Merleu-Ponty: 1962, 215).

Several studies on facial expression and mirror neurons followed, questioning whether mirror neurons may form the basis of human empathy. Using motion capture and facial electromyography, Livingstone et al found that singers who were instructed to watch and later practice and perform other singers’ facial expressions unconsciously mirrored similar expressions while observing the performance, and after their performance (2009). The authors conclude that “Facial expressions also occur during the

perception of music, illustrating a form of facial mimicry, or emotional synchronization, which may reflect internal processes such as attention and recognition, and could conceivably implicate the involvement of the mirror neuron system” (Ibid.). In another experiment, researchers had subjects inhale scents that produced a feeling of disgust, followed by showing them video clips of people showing facial expressions of disgust. The researchers found that the insula, an area of the brain connected to both movement centers and the limbic system, showed activity in both instances, suggesting “a unifying mechanism for understanding the behavior of others” (Wicker et al 2003). Further studies showed subjects videos of humans receiving painful procedures. In a study where researchers showed acupuncture needles being inserted into the hands, feet, and mouth regions, those who were unfamiliar with the procedure showed neural activity in the insula somatosensory cortex, an area associated with emotion and pain (Cheng et al. 2007).

Some researchers have argued that studies on mirror neurons and their promises of understanding empathy “have not held up too well,” as studies on patients with damage to areas of the brain associated with movement were still able to perform and understand movements that others show them (Hickok 2014). In the early 2000s, some researchers hypothesized that problems in the development of the mirror neuron system were responsible for autism, or “the broken mirror,” as they called it, as people with autism do not spontaneously mimic people they are interacting with. This hypothesis has been refuted in studies that have shown that facial mimicry and imitative responses are

intact among teenagers and adults on the autism spectrum (Schulte-Rüther et al. 2016; Schunke et al. 2015).

Mirror neurons, however, continue to hold promise in understanding neurological processes behind imitation, learning, empathy, and emotion. Most importantly for thinking about taiko, neuroscience studying the mirroring of physical activity demonstrates that imitation is the basis of kinesthetic learning and corporeal habits. In 2005, researchers studying the mirror neuron system of ballet dancers found that brain activity is especially strong when someone observes an activity with which one is familiar, as if the brain “prefers” activities what it knows (Calvo-Merino et al. 2006). In another study, right-handed smokers and non-smokers watched movie scenes where characters smoked while undergoing functional magnetic resonance imaging. Smokers showed greater activities in areas of the brain associated with hand gestures, demonstrating that “smokers spontaneously represent that action of smoking when viewing others smoke, the consequence of which may make it more difficult to abstain from smoking” (Wagner et al. 2011). Practitioners of Dance Movement Therapy regularly utilize mirroring and movement exercises among clients and support groups, and they contend that imitation exercises can help clients increase emotional understandings, read emotional intentions of others, and develop empathy skills (McGarry and Russo 2011).

Iacoboni has argued that “mimicking others is not just a form of communicating nonverbally; it helps us to perceive others’ expressions (and therefore their emotions)” (2008, 111). He argues that mirror neurons are evidence that understanding others is not a

“cognitive, deliberate, effortful process,” but is rather automatic and “fairly unconscious” (Ibid., 73). Observations of Wadō’s activities, as well as sensations members describe and demonstrate, suggest that members’ mirror neuron systems become strong during rehearsals. Members learn to play through imitation, and they often “catch” one another’s emotions, often resulting in collective laughter or weeping. Wadō members described many these sensations of synchronicity as “energy,” and often recounted joyful moments of feeling part of the group during performances.

Eduardo Santiago articulated the sensation of connecting with others in a non-verbal way.¹²⁵ He described standing behind Diana while copying her movements (Figure 26). He explained to me that when “you move with someone in unison, you learn something about her.” When pressed, he said that he does not know exactly what one can learn about a person through movement, however he “feel[s] connected to that person somehow”:

The moment that we are playing together is very intimate, and it feels good. It’s a kind of relationship that we create as a group and as individuals (...) When we are synchronized, we understand each other in a way that is unexplainable. Of course, we can explain the movements that we do and the timing, but not the sensation when even without looking at one another, we can feel that we are synchronized.

The opening of the body to the experience of another human allows for synchrony in practice and performance. The understanding that Eduardo felt for Diana could be empathy, as well as a kinesthetic understanding of how Diana moves.

¹²⁵ Santiago, Eduardo. Recorded interview with author. Barra, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. September 11, 2017.



Figure 26: Four images of Eduardo mirroring Diana's movements in the piece Haru no Hi

Extending the Individual Body: Space and Non-Human Beings

Key to arguments that observing movements and emotions in others provokes matching sensations in our own body are the following questions: Where are the limits of the human body? Can the body extend beyond the confines of the skin? Arguments about collectively held emotions, empathy, and the limits of human bodies center on the argument that the human body can extend beyond itself and that its limits are permeable, malleable, and expandable.

The idea that human bodies' limits extend beyond the skin is common in everyday English language expressions. Children are taught to consider their classmates'

“personal space,” in school, showing that boundaries of touch can extend an arm’s length or more from a person’s skin. Many describe computers, smart phones, and planners as an extension of the self, particularly the brain, where imagined cerebral synapses take place outside of the human body. Several scholars have described how basic objects and technologies extend the bodies beyond themselves. Merleau-Ponty famously described the cane as an extension a blind man’s body, where the cane transmits sensory data, allowing the man to perceive objects that he cannot “see” (Merleau-Ponty 2005, 165–66). He also described a woman wearing a large hat, who was able to “feel” the feathers in space, “just as we feel where our hand is” enabling her to keep distance between the feathers and objects that could damage them (2005, 165). Here, objects become part of the sensations of the body.

Scholars of music and dance have also described props and musical instruments as prostheses and extensions of the body. In her autoethnography of Japanese dance, Tomie Hahn describes the fan (*sensu*) as an extension of her hand:

The grasp of a fan is particular, though there are many different ways to hold it... The end, where the bones are hinged together, is cradled in the well of the palm, the thumb against the metal finding. As my fingers comfortably spread out along the bones and stretch to conjoin with them, the fan becomes a huge hand that extends my limb outward.” (2007, 99)

Similarly, *Wadō* members and *taiko* players around the world learn that the *bachi* that they use to hit *taiko* lengthens their arms to extend beyond themselves. During workshops, leaders teach new students how to hold their *bachi* correctly, instructing them to lift the arm forward, upward and diagonally from the shoulder, extending the *bachi* outward and creating a straight line from the shoulder, elbow, fingertips, and tip of the

bachi (Figure 27). The long lines should never be broken with bent wrists or elbows jutting out to the sides of the body.

The practice of teaching beginning students that bachi are an extension of the arms and the body is not unique to Wadō. I have received similar instructions in other Brazilian and North American groups. North American written sources describe how the bachi should relate to the rest of the body (Varian 2013, 88–93; Wong 2019, 36, 50). The relationship between bodies and bachi in taiko illustrates an intimate relationship between bodies and objects in taiko, which Wong discusses in depth, describing rich material culture in taiko, which are more complex than “thing-human” (Wong 2019, 55). Here, I describe the relationship between bachi and body in Wadō, thinking about objects as part of humans and implications for the treatment of humans. Like Merleu-Ponty’s man with the cane, bodies perceive and feel the drum through the bachi, which become a way to feel the sound as it is created. The bachi is an instrument, and it is part of the line of the arms. Similar to Merleu-Ponty’s woman with a feather hat (Merleu-Ponty 2005, 165).

When Wadō members learn to play katsugi style, carrying okedo drums with a strap hanging over the right shoulder, and supporting the drums with the hip, they learn to feel how far they need to be from other players so they do not collide. Personal space was extended to the limits of the drum and the bachi, and these are technologies that extend bodies into spaces outside of themselves and render them hybrids, or cyborgs, or “hybrid” beings “composed of organism and machine” (Haraway 1991, 1). “The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self”

(Ibid., 163). Wadō members are music-making hybrid bodies comprised of arms, legs, eyes, hips, drums, bachi, chappa, and bodies.



Figure 27: Students in Wadō's taiko course study the bachi as an extension of the arm.

Bennett argues that environments act on and shape human bodies, challenging the notion of human bodies as independent entities. She asserts that landscapes and nonhuman objects and entities act upon and disrupt human bodies and activities. She argues that non-human bodies possess “vital materiality,” or aliveness:

Vital Materiality captures an ‘alien’ quality of our own flesh, and in doing so, reminds humans of the very radical character of the fractious kinship between the human and the nonhuman. My ‘own’ body is material, and yet this vital materiality is not fully or exclusively human. My flesh is populated and constituted by different warms of foreigners. (2010, 112).

Bennett radically argues that agency is not exclusive to humans. “Non-humans — trash, bacteria, stem cells, food, metal, technologies, weather—are actants more than objects” (Ibid., 115). She borrows the term “actants” from Latour, who defines them as “something that acts or to which activity is granted by others. It implies no special motivation of human individual actors, or of humans in general” (9). Bennett concludes that nonhuman objects are agents, often interrupting the needs of humans.

In Wadō, nonhuman objects such as drums and props sometimes take precedent over human needs, and they generally override human musculoskeletal concerns and time constraints. Practice rooms must be cleaned regularly in spite of human desires to sit and chat rather than tending to the space. Drums must be protected and stored carefully even when the humans that care for them complain of low back pain or tiredness, prompting the humans to carry the drums to the storage room. Many taiko groups train practitioners to treat the drums as a live entity, often citing that drums contain the spirit of the tree that was cut to fabricate it; taiko are alive and sentient (“History of Taiko” n.d.). New members in Wadō, like those of nearly all groups throughout the global taiko community, are trained to never to place their bachi or other objects on the drums, even if it is the most convenient way to place them. They are also told to treat their bachi with respect and not to place them on the floor haphazardly; they are instruments with value.

One day, after a conflict resolution that took place during a monthly meeting, Joyce implored her team members to avoid conflict by treating one another well. She said, “treat all people as you would treat a drum.” Then she corrected her statement: “Treat all people as you would treat a drum, or even better,” she said. Other members

repeated Joyce's phrase to one another, "Yes, we should treat each other as we treat a drum, or even better." Wadō members understood that drums and bachi become parts of bodies in a taiko group, but they also chose to uphold the human part of the body as more important than the drum without the human playing it, even as the drum is considered sacred, and at times, housing a spirit (Bender 2012, 56, 182).

The notion of treating people as objects, even sacred ones, may be viewed as problematic, and rightly so. Bennett notes that many believe that an ontological divide between humans and objects must be kept in place to prevent the human "instrumentalization" of other humans. However, she argues that by recognizing a common materiality between humans and non-humans, we can find commonalities between all human bodies: "A newfound attentiveness to matter and its powers... can inspire a greater sense of the extent to which all bodies are kin in the sense of inextricably enmeshed in a dense network of relations" (Ibid.,13). Respecting objects and respecting bodies are one and the same, as bodies extend beyond themselves and objects become part of human bodies, she argues. However, Joyce and Wadō members emphasized respect for humans, and particularly other group members, as a highest priority.

Nonetheless, many members told me that human bodies are not independent, but part of their environments and objects. Felipe, a trained architect, dance scholar, and former Wadō member asserted that our bodies change constantly depending on environments and who we are interacting with.¹²⁶ In an interview, he even rejected the

¹²⁶ Jacobina, Felipe. Personal interview with author. August 17, 2018. Barra, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

notion that bodies are independent entities, much like Bennett: “A person is not only a body,” he argued:

She is the relationship with other bodies and the relationship with space. So you are not the same person here as you are in the elevator in your building. Because your relationship with space changes. And this changes you and causes changes in the space as well. People occupy spaces and modify them, and spaces change people.

In Wadō, the idea that bodies extend beyond themselves is a practice for the group, as members imitate one another and train to become part of a group. However, the union and harmony that the group strives to attain among members also extends to relationships with space and objects. The core value of respect in Wadō’s statute implies respect for spaces, drums, bachi, communities, and people, with humans taking the highest precedent, while recognizing the interconnectedness of human bodies and relationships to non-humans.

Enacting Peace: *Himawari*

In early 2018, Wadō members began organizing an event to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the group’s founding. After rehearsal, they spontaneously gathered in a circle in the practice space, some seated on the floor, seated and leaning against one another, and others lying prone, with faces angling toward one another, elbows spontaneously touching, everyone in each other’s personal space (Figure 28). They began to imagine a concert and a party where all members, past and present, would gather and celebrate. They recalled repertory they hadn’t performed in a long time, beating rhythms of semi-forgotten songs on their knees, and reciting kuchi-shoga. Luigi sang fue melodies in high-pitched falsetto, prompting everyone to roar with laughter. They imagined a

series of concerts, including a pre-Carnival parade that would feature all of the costumes the group had ever created. There would be parties, new repertory, and invitations to taiko ensembles throughout Brazil's Northeast to attend and participate.



Figure 28: A spontaneous conversation, planning in a prone position

The mood turned serious, however, when they discussed whether they would invite all past members to these celebrations as they recalled difficulties from 2013, the year that a second and secret group had formed within Wadō with a supposed goal of overthrowing the leadership and separating Wadō from the Japanese Association. Many current members still felt hurt by the incident and did not wish to see people who they felt had betrayed them. Some, however, argued that even negative moments were an important part of the group's history. The group had remained unified despite the split,

and many members from this secret group had returned to the Wadō, even if temporarily, while some current members had continued friendships with these former members.

I learned about this conflict that almost ended the group while learning about the history of Wadō's first original composition, *Himawari*. The piece opens with two chappa players dancing together, four chudaiko players playing chichibu style, and an odaiko at the center of the stage produces a deep and loud bass beat. A man emerges with a staff that he beats on the ground, synchronizing his movements with the odaiko, and a fue begins to play when women with yellow and purple fans emerge from the wings and dance. While the piece was collectively composed with input from Grupo Sansey, a Yosakoi Soran and taiko group from Londrina, Daniela Almeida, a founding member, created the concept of the piece, which was originally intended to be a three-part movement called *Energy*. She said, "What we see with energy is that it can be transformed... We can use energy to create, to destroy, to create again." She said that the first movement of the piece would be about war and destruction that devastates an imaginary village, but the second movement would tell the story of peacebuilding and recovery,

Which would be represented by the himawari, the sunflower, that would transmit the idea of a village coming back from a period of chaos... and so they celebrate the coming of the sun, returning to work, returning to festivities, and enjoying everything that nature can give during springtime.¹²⁷

Daniela told me that *Himawari* came to represent the group's identity and principles:

[We experimented with the question of] what we want to show about our identity...The name of our group Wadō means "union and harmony." So you can

¹²⁷ <https://vimeo.com/232487345/875968aa19> | <https://sites.google.com/view/taiko-samba/chapter-5>

imagine that we needed [union and harmony] to create it. So if we think about war, it's a complete process of discord, lack of harmony, and with this we can't move forward. We destroy ourselves. We sabotage ourselves. So maybe this is one of our messages: union is not competition, trying to overrun one another. It is not discord. I think that because of discord we end up not reaching our potential. So maybe that was the message. Unconsciously, thinking about it now.

Was this message created because of something in the news? Is there some kind of relationship? Did something happen in Brazil during that time?

Politically, I don't remember what was going on when we started composing *Himawari*, but coincidentally, our group was going through a process of discord. A lot of confusion, a lot of cliques and secrets, people wanting to sabotage one another.

Sabotage one another?

You know what sabotage means, right?

Yes.

There was sabotage in our group.

A disgruntled member created a group that he named the "White Ninjas," and he recruited many new members to join him. Those who were not invited would be called the "Samurais," implying a contrast between (real or imagined) covert skills of new members and an entrenched bureaucracy surrounding Wadō's sempai and the Japanese Association. The White Ninjas kept the group a secret, with communication taking place on a secret Facebook page. Their purpose, according to many current Wadō members, was to win an election, take over the leadership, and oust certain members, including Lika, the group's elder founder and coordinator. Current members asked me not to reach out to former White Ninjas to ask them about their decision to create the group, even though I met casually with some of them several times at events around Salvador.

Therefore, reasons behind the group's formation here are speculations from current Wadō members and are limited to their memories of the conflict.

Some Wadō members speculated that the group was formed because the White Ninjas wanted to make the group better, but they felt that their ideas were not taken seriously. "They created another group because they felt that there was a lot that was unfair," Marcela hypothesized. The group was more hierarchical at the time, with long-term members holding more decision-making power than new members. "They felt that people who were in the group longer were being treated better, particularly by the leadership. For example, more attention was being given to founding members than new members. So they felt bad," one founding member told me.

Some speculated that the ringleader of the group felt hurt by criticism from Lucas Muraguchi, a teacher from Ishindaiko in Londrina, when performing at a festival in São Paulo. Muraguchi had accused Wadō of disrespecting the drums and bachi because the group had created choreography where performers beat their bachi against the floor. According to another account, a teacher told them, "Your piece was very good, but it wasn't taiko."¹²⁸ The White Ninjas leader wanted to make changes to the group's repertory and improve the group's technique, some said, but Wadō members resisted his ideas. Most disagreed with the methods of the White Ninjas, who gossiped about the "Samurais" on their Facebook page, at times personally writing insulting things about

¹²⁸ I discuss the gatekeeping of taiko in Chapter 2, exploring questions of what taiko is and is not according to practitioners in Brazil.

them. “When I saw what they wrote about me, I was shocked,” Daniela said. “These were people that I thought were my friends.”

One member informed Wadō directors and leadership of the White Ninjas, sending screenshots of the Facebook group. In turn Wadō leadership outed the White Ninjas to the rest of the group in a meeting where elections were to be held. Lika, the ANISA director, abruptly cancelled the elections and facilitated a meeting with heightened emotions where members expressed feelings of betrayal and outrage. In interviews, Wadō members recalled heightened emotions of this meeting, where members were seated in a circle on the floor of the practice space.

People were shaken. Many people cried. Someone punched the ground. I remember one of the senior members said, ‘I don’t believe this. You’ve betrayed us. Why did you create another group? You already are part of a group!’ People were angry, crying, I remember these scenes, even though I was a new member and didn’t know what was going on.

Others reported lasting damage to close friendships, as well as some members quitting taiko altogether:

There was one person in that other group that I considered a good friend. I had no idea that this other group existed and that they felt excluded. They wanted to sabotage my chance at being leader... I was running for president. I was really hurt when I read things that they wrote about me on Facebook. It’s like they wanted to really hurt me. To my face, we had such a strong friendship, but behind my back, it was something else.

Some hurt feelings remain, and many friendships have not been reconciled after this conflict. Others, however, have been repaired and strengthened through opportunities for convivência. Some Wadō members met former White Ninjas regularly after the incident for going out, sharing meals, and dating. Most importantly, dialogue and understanding resulted in the group continuing, even though some of the White Ninjas were demoted to

the level of trainees and asked to study the statute of the group, focusing on “team spirit.” One member told me that said that while he was hurt at first, he came to understand reasons behind the White Ninjas forming an alternative group. “They wanted to make the group better and they felt that their ideas were not being heard.” Further, he apologized for his initial anger when learning about the group and regularly meets with these former members.

Peace studies scholars acknowledge that reconciliation after a conflict is not a goal that can be measured. There is no “before” and “after,” reconciliation. Rather, it is an ongoing and long-term process (Lederach and Lederach 2010; Lederach 1995). Five years after the White Ninjas nearly split Wadō into two groups, reconciliation continues to take place through discussions of whom to invite to public events and parties, who can be members, and who may or may not return to the group. It also takes place through informal meetings and friendships that remain. During the time I spent with Wadō, I saw conflicts arise and resolve, and I witnessed processes of peace, with memories of past group conflicts influencing decisions. I also witnessed the return of one White Ninja to Wadō who became an important member, bringing knowledge, resources, technical ability, and group organization to Wadō.

The process of reconciliation and post-conflict was enacted and practiced through composition and performance of *Himawari*, where Wadō members opted not to choreograph war and discord, but focus instead on enactments of renewal and peace, and writing the values of the group into the choreography. Using examples of dancing in queer Latinx nightclubs in the 2000s, Rivera-Servera argues that performance offers

opportunities for humans to practice creating community and resolving interpersonal conflicts. He describes dancers asserting their space by traveling across the dance floor or creating tight space with a partner, excluding unwanted attention. Further, he argues that “attract and repulse strategies” and “the sharing of kinesthetic resources” help dancers learn to set boundaries with one another and assert space by performing “back and forth” movements (2012, 152–54).

Wadō members similarly enact conflict resolution and *convivência* during musical practice through verbal and non-verbal negotiations such as adjusting tempos to those of the group, verbally arguing over questions of group management, critiquing one another’s compositions, and negotiating memories of choreography. They practice, perform, and teach one another how to negotiate bodily relationships on stage and in rehearsal, in terms of both space and time, when dancing and playing with one another. These instances show how musical practice also serves as a practice for settling conflict in everyday life; members negotiate differences and sometimes intervene in conflict to resolve it. *Himawari*, however, is especially significant because it enacts a utopia (or heterotopia) of a post-war and conflict-free society when performed, helping Wadō members imagine what peaceful relationships and utopian human connections in the both the group and society may look and feel like.

Are the spaces of Wadō’s rehearsals and performances imagined utopias? Bagchi argues that imagined utopias offer “simultaneously a locus of possibilities for human development, as well as a sense that this conceptualization, being speculative, idealized or fictive, might be difficult or impossible to actualize in reality” (2012, 1). Many have

utilized the term to describe visions of future possibilities for a more just and peaceful world, or even the impossibility of constructing one. Kumar argues that utopia “describes a state of impossible perfection which nevertheless is in some genuine sense not beyond the reach of humanity. It is here if not now” (1991, 3). Dolan theorizes the possibility of theater to create utopias, describing them as “living phenomena” that take place in “glancing moments” within performance where both artists and audiences explore “possibly better ways to be together as human beings... Taking part in the intense present of performance offers us... expressions of what utopia might feel like” (2001, 457–58). *Himawari* is a constructed and continuously reenacted expression of a peaceful and joyful utopia on both a local and global scale, and it allows members to feel the results of their constant praxis of peace. Indeed, performance and rehearsals are part of the practice of creating utopian worlds and scenarios. Reconciliation is constantly enacted when Wadō members rehearse and perform *Himawari*. The piece’s creation and constant performance allowed members to enact the result of creating and maintaining peaceful relations. It imagines, presents, and enacts a utopia on stage, helping members to imagine what peace feels like through its constant repetition.

Foucault argued that utopias are “sites with no real place... They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal places” (1984, 3). Instead, Foucault offers the idea of heterotopias, which are spaces that are somehow “other,” or different from normative spaces. He even describes the stage as a type of heterotopia, as it juxtaposes one space into several spaces; the box of the stage simultaneously becomes the setting of an enacted

world (Ibid., 6). A heterotopia is ultimately a “simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live” (Ibid., 4). Using a mirror as an example of a heterotopia, he argues that these “other spaces” reflect and disrupt reality, exerting “a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy... it makes this place that I occupy... at once absolutely real... and absolutely unreal” (Ibid.). *Himawari* similarly enacts a state of possibility in an undefined future. While the imaginary village of the song does not exist in real life, it exists temporarily on a stage, and it articulates possibilities of peaceful human relations at a later time and space. It contrasts the normalized space of everyday conflict, where knowledge of war around the world is constant. Dolan’s utopia and Foucault’s heterotopia are similar, in that they are simultaneously real and unreal. Both are “other” spaces that answer to and attempt to disrupt the normalized world of mainstream society. *Himawari* is also real and unreal. It is an imagined scenario occupying time and space while, reflecting and disrupting reality.

The utopia/heterotopia of *Himawari* deeply impacted Wadō. In interviews, members reported that the group was more harmonious than ever. They articulated their friendships with others in the group, and most reported that they participated in Wadō to be closer to one another. I also witnessed Wadō members teaching *Himawari* to new members, expanding its message of peace and reconciliation, as they negotiated the space around and between bodies in rehearsal and onstage.

Peace as an Ongoing Practice: *Wa* and the Negation of Individual Desires

Lika Kawano, Wadō’s coordinator from the Japanese Cultural Association of Salvador, often reminded me that human relationships are “complicated,” but worth the

time and energy that we spend on them, even when they are difficult. Human relationships in Wadō were a series of ongoing processes requiring time and energy, since disagreements, gossip, cliques, and ignoring certain people remained a problem in Wadō at the end of 2018. While Camila and Fabiola became friends again after the dialogue described at the beginning of the chapter, Camila had stopped speaking to other members of the group. In meetings, some complained about members who were not present. Hierarchies in the group existed, largely based on “likability,” and these hierarchies became apparent when a “well-liked” member would propose an idea that had previously been rejected when proposed by a someone who was “less well-liked,” receiving enthusiastic praise. Many members resisted responding when I asked them about these incidents. Some regularly pointed out to me members who did not do their fair share of work.¹²⁹

Other members told me that they were angry because the group wastes so much time talking when they should be rehearsing, causing the practices to run to six hours when they were originally scheduled for four. Others were frustrated that so many members would arrive late, and still others felt that many people were not pulling their weight when it came to manual work such as hauling drums, cleaning, and polishing drum stands, making few members more responsible for various tasks. At least two

¹²⁹ Robertson also extensively describes interpersonal conflicts in his research on choirs and peacebuilding in Bosnia and in a cultural exchange between a Bosnian choir and a UK-based choir with different learning methodologies (2016; 2010). I believe that it is important to point out the work that it takes to maintain positive relationships in music groups, which can be fraught and delicate spaces. Stories of musical groups are inherently complex and messy.

members told me that they were planning to leave the group for these and other reasons. Interpersonal problems in Wadō abounded.

The concept of wa as a group value that inhibits personal growth is a feature of Grupo Cultural Wadō (Bauman 1994). While most members have said that friendships attracted them to the group, and they were happy to spend ample time socializing during rehearsals, others wished to become better musicians, and group members who did not show up on time to rehearsals or spent more time socializing than practicing hindered these ambitions. When discussing Wadō's newest membership and how the group chooses members, one person told me of his group mates: "they choose members based on the Japanese values of the group, such as arriving on time and having discipline that they do not follow themselves." Many planned to leave because of the "little fights" and lack of serious musicianship. One person told me, "To be honest, I am planning to leave at the end of the year. I don't have time to invest in a group that views music as just a hobby. The group demands a lot of time from you, and then spends it on these little arguments and discussions. It just isn't working for me anymore." Some Wadō members, disgruntled with certain practices of the group have told me that Wadō is not a utopia, nor is it a model for peace. The group is not different from other human communities that have problems.

Nonetheless, many members I interviewed remained committed to the group, telling me that Wadō was like a second family to them. In a particularly long and intense meeting, Joyce told her kouhai (younger members), "it's hard to be in a group, but don't let these misunderstandings affect our families. Like all families, we have problems."

Playing taiko and being a member of a group is a challenge and a process. It is a space where bodies transform to become part of a community. It is a constant negotiation. Wadō is an ongoing experiment and an alive and dynamic endeavor with constant conflict, reconciliation, and a continuing effort to create harmonious relationships between humans, non-humans, and their bodies. Here, as in the previous chapter, I would like to emphasize that Wadō is an example of a space of queer utopian futurity. Muñoz's assertion that utopia is a process, always arriving, and always on the horizon describes Wadō's praxis of peace. Wadō's practices, rehearsals, and performances are both utopias and heterotopias; they contest social realities of war, violence, and conflict through the very physical acts of performance, dialogue and music practice.

Group Practice as Rebirth: Marcela's Tunnel of Bodies

In this chapter, I have argued that practicing peace, particularly in Wadō, consists of imagining peaceful relations, choreographing these relations, and repeatedly enacting them. I have shown that bodies are not independent, but they are connected to humans and non-humans in the world, and that bodies are cyborgs, or conglomerations of space and relationships. Further, corporeal relationships support dialogue, and they are the foundation of peace, as is planning for a collective culture within a group.

In Wadō, peace is not an endpoint, but it is a process that requires constant recalibration, supported by physical and sensory training as well as regular dialogue. Wadō may not be a utopia that has arrived, but the group continuously enacted utopias on stage and in practice rooms, bringing them to life and allowing members to explore

possibilities of peace that seemed impossible in the real world. Moreover, Wadō is a heterotopia in Brazil; it contrasts with everyday life through its peacemaking practice where members learn to live with and embrace difference.

I close this chapter with a segment of a longer interview, where Marcela argued that her participation in Wadō sparked a rebirth as an embodied member of a drumming group, and where a personal rebirth as a group member takes place constantly:

I was in a performance class last semester. And I really remember an experience that I had in the class, because we work on ensembles of bodies. Sometimes performance is you performing alone and also—or also performing in ensembles, performing in groups. You know. And I did a lot of activities, a lot of exercises of body movement and body union, of body fluidity. I think that I defined harmony in you as being in an empty room and there being a lot of bodies around and you have to walk and try to fill all of the empty spaces while you walk. You know? Everyone walking, everyone looking for space to fill. When one person leaves, another enters. I think that this is bonding and harmony, connection, you know? And I remember another part of the performance class where—it seems strange—we were all lining up on hands and knees, making a tunnel of bodies and everyone was entering in this tunnel and then coming out of this tunnel of bodies, being reborn. Inside this tunnel, you know? I think it was like a rebirth inside of a body tunnel. I know, I'm going off topic.

No! I'm liking this!

And I think that's it. A rebirth. And everyone comes into this tunnel of bodies and leaves. And harmony and Wadō is like this body tunnel where people enter and leave and get reborn in another form to be reborn again. It's a cycle, you know? Also, I think that you have to fill the emptiness, the empty spaces at the same time. Walking and filling them, you know? Can you imagine it?

Yes. I think I can. And so during rehearsals, you feel something like this?

Yes. There are moments that I do. Truthfully, there are moments in life like this. You see and feel. It isn't just in the rehearsal. I think it's when we live there. You start changing. The process of rebirth takes time. You know? But everyone is reborn there, in that tunnel of bodies.

Even if you don't make a literal body tunnel?

Exactly. It's you living everything there inside, like you are walking to come out and be born inside of people.

Yes, I'm following (what you're saying).

When you write this, make it better. Or I'll help you.

Perfect. I'm going to send you the text, okay? Because really, are relationships in the world are with bodies. Our bodies in communication.

Birth and rebirth all the time. If we allow it, of course.

Conclusion: Wadō and Nataka Toshia from 2018-2022

My last rehearsal with Wadō was our final practice before the 2018 festival.

During a break, the group sat in a circle on the cool and smooth wooden floor. Through tears, I announced it was my last rehearsal with the group. I thanked everyone for letting me be a part of Wadō and for telling me their stories. They thanked me back. I told everyone my plans for writing, and I passed around small gifts: salonpas patches for sore muscles, cards, and colored pencils that I bought with Joyce in mind. But we needed to rehearse. We stood up and ran our entire performance one last time and then packed away the drums for transport. The following week, I was onstage for the first (and last) time as a Wadō member, playing fue and dancing Yosakoi Soran in *Himawari*. I wanted to feel the ecstatic sensation of being onstage and connecting with the audience and the other players, and I certainly felt the energy of the audience, but I felt absent. I was thinking about all of the other things I needed to do: interview Nikkei from other areas of Bahia, work in a booth selling Sakura food products to raise money for the group, perform with the Japanese language choir, and record and photograph as much as possible. For the performance, I had borrowed someone else's shoes to wear, which felt stiff. I had a sore throat. I was hot and uncomfortable, and the floor of the stage were risers, so it felt a little wobbly. But I was overcome with gratitude when the group celebrated my birthday on the last night of the festival with a chocolate cake and having the audience sing to me. A week later, Wadō members held a goodbye party for me. The next day, I watched the sunset at the Barra Lighthouse on the beach one last time with Take, Mago, and Ako. I

ate acarajé with Rodrigo, and a few hours later, I was on a plane to São Paulo and then LA. Then my life in Riverside, California resumed.

Many ethnographers have critiqued the idea of “the field,” arguing that the field does not have to be so far to “do fieldwork,” but I hadn’t anticipated that “leaving the field” would feel so abrupt. Reading about “the field” did not prepare me for this feeling of being so far away and disconnected. To connect with my interlocutors from afar, I lurked on Instagram, watching my friends’ lives through tiny boxes and communicating with heart emojis and short comments. I wondered: what did it feel like to leave “the field” before social media and email? I also connected with Wadō and Nataka Toshia members through the recordings of their voices when I transcribed their interviews. The hyper-embodied experience of playing music with people and speaking to them in person contrasted so much with the digital world of social media and the recordings and notes I worked with. Everything was mediated through a screen.

I saw many changes in the lives of my interlocutors in the following months and years. Joyce visited Ishindaiko in Londrina for a second time. Luigi moved to São Paulo. Vinicius became a public figure on social media, working for media companies and earning grants to start up and support arts activities in his rural hometown. He accompanied the taiko group Japanmarvelous on an Asian tour, posting photos from Malaysia, and then becoming active as a performer upon his return. Travelers from Nataka Toshia continued traveling, posting sumptuous photos of gorgeous natural settings, including underwater landscapes. Some returned for the 2019 and 2020

Carnivals, which several Wadō members participated in. Nataka Toshia and Wadō became “official” music partners.

I also saw new love relationships forming. Some interlocutors who never talked about being queer with me in interviews were suddenly “out” on social media, posting selfies with partners and declaring their love. I wondered: was Wadō a majority LGBT group when I was there? Should I have asked more people about their sexuality? Families formed. A couple who met at Naoyado hostel married and had a baby. Daniela had a baby at the same time I did. We messaged one another about baby care over Whatsapp.

The sociopolitical landscape in Brazil also changed rapidly. At the end of 2018, Bolsonaro was elected president of Brazil, as many members had feared, prompting many to protest the election. Even in 2022, as I write this, many members use the hashtag #forabolsonaro (out with Bolsonaro) on social media, and they superimpose the hashtags #elenão (not him) and #forabolsonaro on their profile pictures. When Covid hit, many Wadō members were vocal on social media about social distancing, then masking, then getting vaccinated. Many went out and protested in support of the Black Lives Matter movement after the death of George Floyd, denouncing corrupt police practices and racial profiling in their own country. They criticized the Bolsonaro administration’s response to the Covid pandemic.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Bolsonaro’s response to Covid included downplaying the risks of the disease, undermining local governments trying to contain the virus with their own lockdowns or mask mandates, and focusing on unproven cures like ivermectin.

Future Directions Since Covid

Japanese Music and Social Causes

While I was in Salvador, many Wadō members told me that they wanted the group to participate in social movements and use the group's activities to raise money and awareness for various causes. Some complained that the group could never find consensus on which causes to support. During Covid, however, the group moved toward their goals of contributing to the goals of social and charitable organizations. Both Wadō and the Bahian Nikkei community stayed active and took action to help mitigate some of the negative effects of Covid. They turned Japan festivals in the Northeast into YouTube Live events, showcasing Japanese music, art, dance, and scholarship for all of Brazil (and the world) to watch and comment on. Through these events, they collected donations for programs alleviating hunger and supporting organizations serving Nikkei with disabilities and providing social and medical assistance.¹³¹ ANISA and Yoohei Kaito, a former Kodo apprentice from Taubaté, São Paulo, organized an online meeting of taiko groups from the North and Northeast of Brazil. Funds from inscriptions were donated to an organization that cares for children with HIV and AIDS in Salvador.

Social causes and fundraising are deeply embedded in the Nikkei community and connected with arts events. In São Paulo, the admission price for many Japanese music concerts is a pound of non-perishable food, donated to organizations that feed vulnerable populations in the city. Satomi writes about Japanese music practices in Brazil as spaces

¹³¹ Kibo no Ie, Kodomo no Sono, Enkyo, Ikoi no Sono, and Agua no Feijão were the organizations the event served.

of care, solidarity, and philanthropy. In her ethnographic work on the Miwa-kai koto school, she argues that the koto was not only a musical instrument, but also a way to promote solidarity and philanthropy (Satomi 2018, 152). She notes that the one of the founders of the Miwa-kai, Miyoshi, was also a pharmacist who provided care to Nikkei in his community during World War II, when the only hospital in the community was seized by the government. His daughter, Miriam Saito, practices care for her students, often inquiring about their health and offering medicines to help them feel better if they are unwell (Ibid).

While I have written about the care that Wadō members take with one another, including by teaching one another with touch, the care that Wadō members had for others and their community expanded during the Covid 19 crisis. Future directions in research in Japanese music in Brazil could explore the histories of social causes in the Nikkei community and how music intersects with fundraising, benefits, and efforts to uplift local communities where Japanese Brazilian music groups practice.

The Intersection of Mental Health and Music

Covid increased stress for many people around the world, including in Brazil, which suffered high rates of death early in the pandemic. Even before the pandemic, many people living in Bahia spoke to me about the stress of living with high crime, poverty, structural racism, sexism, and classism, and a dearth of professional opportunities for young people. Some Wadō members spoke openly with me about their mental health struggles. In interviews, many described how it felt to suffer from depression and anxiety, and some related their mental health issues to wider social

problems, which they shared with other young people. One member courageously told me about a suicide attempt that brought him to Wadō. In interviews, several other members told me that music practice assuaged negative emotions, and others told me that when they stopped practicing music, they began to suffer from depression.

Future research on music in Brazil, especially post-Covid, should account for the intersection of music, performance, mental health, and structural stressors, such as racism and classism. I believe that ethnomusicologists are well-equipped to attend to the nuances of music practice and structural problems while considering the individual inner lives our interlocutors narrate. I believe that celebrating the power of music as a therapeutic modality is not the answer. Music has limits, and I hope future research on mental health and music practice explores both limitations of music and performance and well as possibilities to change the status quo.

Taiko and Samba Around the World

Covid-19 accentuated and furthered many communities' online connections that were already present before the pandemic. Throughout this dissertation, I have discussed Wadō and Nataka Toshia as bounded groups, focusing on the local context of Salvador, Bahia. However, I have not attended to connections with taiko groups outside of the city, except for when an interviewee mentions them. As Joyce's interview indicates, many Wadō members found taiko online. Wadō's first workshops were taught by members of Ishindaiko from Londrina, and they have received teachers from São Paulo and North America. Wadō also supported the start of a taiko group in Barreiras, in the West of Bahia, and in Juazeiro, near the border of Pernambuco. Taiko groups in Brazil and internationally are deeply connected. Many of Wadō's practices I describe here are shared with a global taiko community. Future research can and should place taiko in Brazil within a global context, discussing shared values and contrasts between countries and histories of taiko in various countries.

Reflections

Master nationalist narratives about Brazil celebrate racial mixing and resulting mixtures of music, dance, and art. These mixtures are beautiful and unique in the world. Many Brazilians, however, have become increasingly aware of violent histories around its mestiçagem and have acknowledged that mixing has not erased differences or created a unified Brazil. Those that recognize these violent histories and disparities clash with neoliberal ideologies in Brazil, along with narratives about "personal responsibility" for one's situation in life. Further, meta-narratives arguing that Brazil is not a racist country

because of its mixing die hard. They exist in the imaginations of many people, including those in power, and they continue to influence reality in Brazil.

The story of Brazil as heritage of “White-Black-Indian” that form “the Brazilian race” is a strong part of the mythology of Brazil. Museums about Brazil in Brazil display these stories, minimizing the disparities between these groups. Acknowledging that Black Brazilians are more likely to live in poverty than White Brazilians, as well as an Indigenous massacre taking place daily under the Bolsonaro regime does not honor the components of the Brazilian “race” equally. Further, stories about the formation of Brazil rarely mention Asians. In many parts of Brazil, they are conflated with “White,” or relegated to the category of “others,” or eternal foreigners.

I have traced histories of Japanese migration to Bahia, as well as the governmental policies and racial relationships in Brazil that informed these migrations. I have explored how narratives about Nikkei in Brazil have positioned them as eternal foreigners, and how taiko pieces emphasizing Brazilian rhythms contrast these narratives. Racial relations in Brazil both inform and impact music practice in Brazil, with enduring and contested stereotypes about Japanese and Nikkei playing out in taiko and samba. I have argued, however, that racial stereotypes are deeply intertwined with histories of migration, nation-building, and colonialism.

Mixing and acceptance is also fraught when it comes to differences in sexuality and gender identity in Brazil. As I discuss in Chapter 4, Brazil is a country of contradictions for LGBTQAI+ rights and safety. While protections under the law are the norm, Brazil can be a violent and heterosexist country, with anti-queer violence

increasing since right-wing politicians ousted President Rousseff in 2016. In everyday life, jokes about gay people and homophobic slurs abound, while in contrast, gay celebrities are celebrated in the media.

Wadō is a different space than the rest of Brazil. It is a heterotopia the contests and answers to the space of the nation-state and its narratives about mixing. It is a space of learning about difference rather than negating it. It is a space where Asians are Brazilian and Bahian and where outsiders negotiate their place in the music practices of “others,” forming relationships between Nikkei Brazilians, non-Nikkei Brazilians, and Japanese travelers and expatriates. Members acknowledge and respect differences in sexuality and gender identity with care and concern for one another. Wadō is a space for those in the middle who feel that perhaps they do not fit into the mainstream, and for those who want to learn about others and connect through music. I have shown how relationships between Nikkei, non-Nikkei, Japanese, and Bahian can be loving, intimate, and based on mutual admiration, or be contentious, but are always in process. I have shown how people deal with difference, living together, and learning “harmony and union” through the utopian possibilities of performance and music practice.

I view my work as a continuation of other scholarship on music in Brazil, focusing on non-culture-bearers who have become culture-bearers in Brazil. In Brazil, music is an important part of national expression. It is a way that Brazilians often understand themselves and their national history. There is a huge body of work on AfroBrazilian performance practices, with many focusing on Northeastern genres, samba (and its historiography), Candomblé music and dance, and Carnival. There is also

excellent scholarship on sertanejo, rap, and samba de coco. Music practices in Brazil are vast and range from music that defines the nation to small-town festivals. The amount of scholarship on Japanese music in Brazil, however, is much smaller. Some research argues about the separateness of the Nikkei community, with Hosokawa calling it an “ethnic enclave” (1998). Other studies analyze how Nikkei Brazilian musicians perform being Brazilian, and how Okinawan communities view themselves as more Brazilian than Naichi (Mainland Japanese) communities in Brazil (Lorenz 2007; 2011; 2016; Satomi 1998; 2004; 2018). Fuchigami has focused on the participation of non-Nikkei in Japanese Brazilian music (2014). My work continues to explore non-Nikkei in Nikkei organizations and how Japanese and their descendants negotiate their *Brasilidade*. Further, my work focuses on the local, thinking about Japanese music practices and practitioners in Salvador and how non-Nikkei adopt Japanese cultural practices in the context of Bahia. It focuses on mixtures of Japanese music and Bahian genres. I have also considered the intersection of LGBTQAI+ identities, Japanese music, and mass media in Brazil. In *Wadō*, queerness was directly related to utopian worlds in anime and manga, where characters were able to embody a wide variety of gendered expressions.

Wadō tells the nation that mixtures of music do not erase differences. Mixtures can explore the self and the other at the same time and offer opportunities for learning about difference. Difference in Brazil—of race, class, sexuality, and gender identity—can be explored through performance and the intimacy of listening and creating music together. Intimate connections created through music and dialogue engender peaceful relationships with others. Performance allows practitioners to feel union with others

physically and emotionally, and they can explore the boundaries between self and other through movement and music practice. I have described ecstatic feelings in performances and shared sensory experiences in both performances and rehearsals. Further, the heterotopias of the stage and of music practice, contrasting everyday violence many experience first-hand or see on the news.

This project proposes an ethnomusicology of connection, which explores shared experiences and negates the idea that individuals are separate from one another. Instead, it argues that relationships between people are always intercorporeal. Music practice highlights intercorporealities through shared sensory experiences. Performance, especially in a community taiko group, invites practitioners to connect with one another through touch, sound, and sight. Tactile connections in peer teaching, hugs, and spontaneous leaning into one another conjoin the boundaries between bodies. Listening to one another drum and speak is also a form of touch, with soundwaves from one person allowing for matching rhythms and emotional understanding in dialogue. Mirror neurons firing during practice and performance allow practitioners to see themselves in others, building empathy and connection.

Human bodies form relationships with one another, environments, and non-humans in the space we live in. The physical sensations and emotions of sharing space, listening together, and creating sound together affect how people think about themselves, others, and their shared experiences in the world, which ultimately influence social realities. In music, connections with the audience can transmit energy and teach about utopian themes present in music. Dreams and desires about the music of the “other” and

hoping to express a part of the self-drove Bahians and Japanese to meet, intersect, and play each other's music. Their bodily practices and connections with one another support their hopes for a better world and futuristic utopian possibilities.

An ethnomusicology of connection was also methodological for me, and the transcreations I present here aim to show my connections with the people I interviewed. My transcreations show the intimacy of listening to people and their stories several times: in the initial interview, while transcribing, while editing the transcriptions, and again, while receiving feedback about the transcreations.

As a finished text, the transcreation is meant to dialogue with and support arguments in the chapters it follows. However, it is also a representation of a moment that is meant to stand alone as its own text with its own arguments and stories. Further, transcreations are artful because they reflect the poetics of how people talk and how they articulate stories about themselves, their thoughts, and their experiences.

Further, these transcreations are in conversation with one another, and they form arguments and counterarguments together. The stories of Akemi, Joyce, Take, Leo, and the short interview segment from Marcela show differences of race, class, sexuality, life experience, citizenship, and education present in Bahia. However, they work together to form a consensus around some of the ideas they present. Here, I want to demonstrate intersections of these transcreations that work together to form their own arguments about public/shared physical space. Space becomes a motif, weaving these transcreations together. There are other motifs that appear in each of these interviews, such as insiderness/outsiderness, connections with ancestors, and body movement, but I chose to

focus on the motif of space or topos because of the ideas of utopias and heterotopias I discuss in Chapters 4 and 5. (Note that the different fonts below represent the different voices presented here.)

In the transcreation for the first chapter, Akemi discusses informal housing in Salvador as both an urgent problem related to class inequalities and a space where public and private lives intersect:

Here in Salvador, 70% of the population live in informal constructions. There is a great difference between people in terms of economic levels, and this is something you see in housing. The question of housing here in Brazil is very critical. Also, I have always liked the characteristics of informal occupations. When people build and occupy buildings and they show their identities and character.

Akemi is discussing a problem that is both local and national in Brazil: informal housing where the working poor live. She also notes the creativity that those who live in informal constructions show, but she also addresses the very real problem of infrastructure and inequalities in Brazil.

In Chapter 2, Joyce discusses what happens in spaces of conflict, arguing that spaces can and should be shared regardless of differences:

I remember when we went to the Kawasuji Festival in São Paulo, and there was a group of people that were sitting at a table. And when another group of people from the same ensemble sat down near them, the first group got up and left. They said, “Fulano came.” And they left, you know? This is something that doesn’t make sense for us, this, “I don’t want to look at this person.”

In this small passage, Joyce contrasts those who do not want to resolve conflicts with Wadō through exploring what it means to share space (or not) and when. She is also

making an argument that Wadō is a space of friendship, contrasting it with other spaces in Brazil and in the taiko community.

In Chapter 3, Take narrates how a public space engendered close friendship and opportunities for creativity and fun:

And in the park, I saw a clown, doing pantomime. And he chose me for his performance. And then he told me to choose a girl, a woman for the performance, and we did a pantomime of a wedding. I was like, “that one.” Afterwards we introduced ourselves. She was there at the park with her sisters. And they invited me to places around Mexico City. We went to a lot of places together. Her name was Hortensia. And one day, I don’t remember, I asked her to be my girlfriend. I had a great time with my girlfriend Hortensia and my best friend Ivan, and her two sisters, my good friends. I was always having fun with them.

There is potential for friendship with outsiders in shared and public spaces. It builds community and is crucial for making connections with others. Public space also affords opportunities for creativity, art, and performance.

Leo also addresses public space as community-building in his interview. His interest in landscape architecture and how it takes into account the intersections of humans with other humans and non-humans, expressing a need in Brazil for an attention to all living things. Further, he relates attention to space directly to taiko:

Paisagismo in Brazil is basically planning gardens and external spaces. But landscape architecture is much more than this. At least in the course I took in the United States. There, it also involved questions about ecology and biology. You had to study plants and animals that inhabit that area and study the relationship between people and nature. And you have to try to create a space that at the same time is nature, but also made for humans. And then, you discuss where you can intervene in a natural space. It’s very rare to find a job that works with these ideas. I think that kind of work doesn’t exist. At least I haven’t heard of it. We can see this lack of attention to these ideas our cities. In the space of a park for example, the architect plans a park. They put in a concrete area and a few trees there. Landscape architecture is a study that is much greater than planning a park or green area. It’s a study that is much greater than people here do. In Wadō, a few years back, we used to joke that half of Wadō members were architects. But it was actually the case. Many of them have left

the group, but I think there is a connection. Many of us, I think, really had an interest in art as well. Architecture is art. Taiko is art. It's visual. And I think that the performances are really beautiful. I think that it goes together. Aesthetics, art, music.

Public space can be beautiful and can connect the human and non-human worlds. Taiko can also connect individual words through its beauty and sound.

Finally, Marcela's tunnel of bodies discusses the physical space between people as transformative, and how interacting with others results in peaceful relationships between people:

I think that I defined harmony in you as being in an empty room and there being a lot of bodies around and you have to walk and try to fill all of the empty spaces while you walk. You know? Everyone walking, everyone looking for space to fill. When one person leaves, another enters. I think that this is bonding and harmony, connection, you know?

The coming and going of people in the spaces we share and inhabit can provide opportunities for creating community, physical connection, and renewal.

The shared spaces of informal housing constructions, a table, a public park in a city, and a room where performers walk around all make an argument for the importance of sharing our world, for the making of community, for the importance of convivência with human and non-human others. These stories are arguments for the importance of physical spaces where people can meet, make friends, follow creative pursuits, and resolve conflict. They also argue that we are not alone in the world, just as we cannot perform in a percussion ensemble alone. We live with difference, they say, and these differences are opportunities rather than hindrances.

I have argued that the spaces of performance and rehearsal are heterotopias, which contest the nation-state, and utopias, which help us to imagine what a better world

can feel like by enacting and feeling peaceful relations in performance. Performances, in turn, can impact how people think about relationships they have with others and how we share our world. Outsiders become insiders, friends, and lovers. We see our connections and learn about ourselves and others, acknowledging difference.

Glossary and Participants

Japanese Terms

Bon Odori	Dancing for Obon festivals. It was originally a dance to welcome and honor the spirits of deceased ancestors during festivals. In Brazil, “Bon Odori” and “Obon festival” are often used interchangeably. The festival in Salvador has an altar in honor of the deceased and a series of dances for the public to participate in.
Chudaiko	Mid-sized barrel drum in a taiko ensemble with two heads. It is generally two feet tall and can weigh 50 pounds or more. This drum may also be called Nagado-daiko.
Dekassegui	Guest worker. Refers to someone traveling to a foreign country or area outside of one’s hometown to save money and then return.
Fue	Flute, generally refers to shinobue, a transverse flute.
Ganbare	To try hard, to work hard. To see a task through
Happi	Part of a taiko uniform, originally a coat worn during festivals with loose sleeves and tied below the waist. In Japan, they are made of cotton. In Wadō, they were made of synthetic materials, like a lot of clothing in Brazil, with the purpose of being fast-drying.
Iemoto	A grandmaster teacher. Also a system of relationships between teachers and students in Japanese art and performance practices. The word literally means, “house origin,” indicating that teachers are the heads of “houses,” which may be of family origin or not.
Issei	First generation Japanese immigrant / Japanese immigrant.
Kaikan	Building to house a Japanese association or other Japanese club.
Ken	Province in Japan
Kenjinkai	An organization of people from a specific province in Japan.
Ki-ai	A vocalization, often short and sharp, that is often used to unify an ensemble or give energy to other players or audience members.

Koto	Zither instrument, related to the Chinese zheng. It often has thirteen strings, but there are versions with more or less.
Kouhai	Junior, underclassman, or younger people. Often refers to incoming freshmen in school or a more inexperienced person in an organization or industry.
Nihon	Japan
Nihon-buyō	Japanese classical dance
Nihon gakko	Japanese School
Nihongo	Japanese language
Nihongo gakko	Japanese language school (often used interchangeably with Nihon gakko).
Nihonjin	Japanese person
Nikkei / Nikkei-jin	Japanese descendant
Nisei	Second generation Japanese descendent. Child of immigrants.
Obi	A sash or piece of material tied around the waist or hips in, for example, martial arts uniforms and kimono. Kimono obi are often wide and have elaborate ways to tie them.
Odaiko	Large barrel-shaped taiko drum with two heads. Some odaiko can be up to ten feet in diameter. This is also the name of the piece by the group Kodo, which is a solo on the instrument.
Okedo Daiko	Barrell drum with two heads, tuned by a rope stretching across the body, connecting the two heads. Can be carried to make it katsugi style.
Omiai	Arranged marriage, matchmaking or “picture marriage.” In Brazil, the families of potential mates would send photos and arrange marriages to go to Brazil. The term literally means “look meet.”
Sansei	Third generation Japanese descendant. Grandchild of first immigrants.

Seinenkai	Young people's organization, an organization of young people within a Japanese larger organization.
Seiza	Literally means "correct sitting." Sitting on the floor on top of one's heels.
Sempai	An upperclassman or more experienced person within a school, company, or organization.
Shakuhachi	Iconic bamboo flute played longitudinally.
Shinto	Indigenous Japanese religion, characterized by the worship of nature kami (gods) and a belief in local spirits.
Shogakko	Elementary school
Undokai	Exercise gathering, a social event where Nikkei enjoy foot races, soccer games, and other sports-related activities
Yonsei	Fourth generation Japanese immigrant. Great-grandchild of immigrant.
Yukata	Cotton kimono, often worn during summer festivals.

Portuguese Terms

Acarajé	Street food popular in Salvador and the reconcavo baiano, consisting of a pastry of black-eyed pea flour fried in dendê (palm) oil, and filled with vatapá, dried shrimp, diced tomatoes and onions, and hot sauce. In Salvador, women dressed in all white, and presumably associated with Candomblé terreiros make and serve these foods. This food was originally used as an offering for the goddess Iansã during rituals.
Bainanidade	"Bahian-ness," or qualities Bahian identity.
Baqueta	Drumstick
Berimbau	Instrument used in capoeira, characterized by a bow that holds a string and a gourd that gives resonance to the string, which is tapped with a small stick.
Candomblé	Afro Brazilian religion characterized by devotion to Orixás, which are described as gods, saints, spirits, or guiding spirits. Rituals often consist of

music, dance, and trance, where the orixás “descend into the heads” of certain practitioners.

Capoeira	Afro Brazilian martial art that resembles dance and accompanies movement with music and song. It is said that enslaved peoples disguised training to fight as a dance so that they would be allowed to continue their practice. Songs are often about space, place, and outsmarting slaveholders and overseers.
Ginga	Swing. An agile and flexible movement of the body. The name for the basic movements of capoeira. Also connotes flexibility and skill in navigating challenging situations in everyday life.
Ijexá	Rhythm played in Afoxé carnival groups and in Candomblé houses. The term comes from the Ijexá nation, venerating the Goddess Oxum.
Meio	Literally means “middle.” In Chapter 3, refers to a middle-sized drum.
Repinique	Small high-pitched drum. Plays the “melody” in samba-reggae pieces.
Samba-reggae	Music genre created in Salvador as part of Black pride movements. A mixture of samba with reggae, as the name implies.
Surdo	Low-pitched drum that keeps an underlying rhythm in a samba or samba-reggae ensemble.
Vestibular	University entrance exam. Students must choose which subject they want to study and take the exam for that subject.

Organizations

ABT	Associação Brasileira de Taikô	Brazilian Taiko Association	
ANISA	Associação Nipo-Brasileira de Salvador	The Japanese Brazilian Association of Salvador	
BUNKYO	Sociedade Brasileira de Cultural Japonesa e de Assistência Social (Burajiru Nihon bunka fukushi kyokai) ブラジル日本文化福祉協会	Brazilian Society of Japanese Culture and Social Assistance	São Paulo-based organization established in 1955 to “represent the Nipo-Brazilian community and promote the preservation and dissemination of Japanese culture in Brazil and Brazilian culture in Japan, and also to promote and support initiatives with this objective.”
FEDERAÇÃO	Federação Cultural Nippo Brasileira da Bahia	Nipo Brazilian Cultural Federation of Bahia	Group of Japanese associations throughout the state of Bahia. Their purpose is to support one another.
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency		

People

2017-2018 Wadō Members

Luigi Kawano	Co-president of Wadō
Lara Sampaio	Co-president of Wadō
Akemi Tahara	
Aline	
Caroline Yokohama	
Daniela Almeida	
Diana Dias	
Eduardo Almeida (Edú)	
Eduardo Santiago (Dude)	
Fuuka Sunano	
Gabriel Alonso	
Iasmin Carqueija	
Joyce Neri	
Leo Bocanera	
Marcel Sunano	
Marcela Almeida	
Mariana Kawano	
Nataly Oliveira	
Newton Menezes	
Patricia Teixeira	
Ramon Mattos	
Rodrigo Kuo	
Thauan Costa	
Vinicius Honda	
Xaline Rocha	

Former Wadō Members cited

Felipe Jacobina
Leo Raposo
Thaís Karmo

2018 Nataka Toshia Members

Naoya Sawada	Founder of Nataka Toshia and owner of Naoyado Hostel.
Takamaru Kiyama	Rehearsal leader, teacher, and Nataka Tokyo leader.
Junior	
Kazuhiro Hanawa	
Kenichi Tanaka (Ken)	
Lumi	
Ryuichi Magori (Mago)	
Sanae Tsunemi (Tsune)	
Shiori	
Tatiane Marinho	
Wataru Hashimoto	
Yoshie Nagashima	
Yuho Toge	
Yui Arisawa	
Yumiko	

Other Interviewees Cited

Ako	Japanese teacher at ANISA. Capoeirista, samba dancer.
Hernesto Miyamoto	ANISA member, festival volunteer coordinator. Nisei, born in Amazonas.
Hirosuke Kitamura	Photographer. Former JICA employee and Brazilian permanent resident.
Ikuku Sasaki Britto	Issei who arrived in Bahia as a child.
Shigeki Nishimoto	ANISA member and business owner. Nisei born in Bahia.
Lika Kawano	Wadō founder. President of ANISA in 2018, and Arts director in 2017

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