

The Alienation of Second-generation Korean Brazilians from Ethnic Churches in São Paulo*

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Despite the vital role played by ethnic churches in the retention of ethnic culture and a sense of identity, a significant proportion of second-generation Korean Brazilians drift away from their churches. This “silent exodus” from Korean religious organizations in São Paulo raises the question of how Korean Brazilians maintain a sense of belonging and community after their departure. Based on ethnographic research conducted in São Paulo, this study aims to explore the diverse types of experiences of second-generation Korean Brazilians who have become disaffiliated with their ethnic churches in comparison to those who have not. Young Korean Brazilians—whether churchgoers or not—tend to be highly involved in a social life with coethnics, illustrating that not taking part in ethnic churches does not seem to be major factor in their forging of a sense of belonging, community, and identity. The findings further suggest that, influenced by various factors—such as this group’s hybridized sense of culture, its socioeconomic status, and the high presence of a well-established Japanese community—this particular phenomenon should be interpreted in light of the position Korean Brazilians occupy within an ethnically complex and socially and economically stratified Brazilian society.

Keywords: Korean Brazilian, second generation, ethnic church, identity, sense of belonging, Brazilian society

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