Orientalism and Identity in Latin America

Fashioning Self and Other from the (Post)Colonial Margin

Edited by

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To my Cuban Lebanese grandparents,
Emilio (Najib) Camayd and Argelia Zogbe

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Zen in Brazil

Cannibalizing Orientalist Flows

Cristina Rocha

The head of Sôtô Zen or any Japanese Buddhist school is like a prince, a Japanese prince. I experienced this when I was lecturing at the university in Londrina.[1] *When the head of the* Higashi Hongwanji *came from Japan, they invited me for the ceremony since they knew I was connected to Buddhism and was a lecturer at the university. It was a fantastic experience! The way "the prince" behaved was so different! The way he conducted the ceremony, the way he looked at me, his elegant movements. . . . He was incredibly aristocratic! So unlike the Brazilian-Japanese here!*

In considering the Japanese Diaspora in Brazil, I will examine how European ideas of Orientalism mediated the Brazilian cultural elite's perceptions of Japan, Buddhism in general, and Zen. Rather than viewing Japanese immigrant communities in Brazil as a source of the "exotic East," Brazilian artists and intellectuals—and eventually the general public—were inspired either indirectly by ideas of Orientalism originating from cultural centers in the West such as France, England, and the United States, or directly through assumptions about the "authenticity" of Japan itself.[2] As a result, Zen was never confined to the narrow boundaries of the temples established by Sôtô Zenshû (the only Japanese Zen school in Brazil),[3] but has been disseminated in elite culture.

In this light, I start by examining the history and predicament of the reception of foreign products and ideas in Brazil. I contend that such a situation derives from what Edward Said has referred to as the discourse of "Romantic Orientalism" (a nostalgic yearning for a pure and pristine past)

as well as from a deeply rooted set of class distinctions in Brazilian society. While the Brazilian cultural elite were drawn toward fantasies of lost wisdom in ancient Japanese classical ages long past, they did not view Japanese immigrants in Brazil as legitimate carriers of this heritage. These immigrants were either seen as inhabitants of a "modern" and degraded Japan and hence lacking in "authenticity" or lacking in artistic and cultural refinement by virtue of their status as peasants at the time of their arrival in Brazil. For the same reasons, non-Japanese Brazilians very seldom turned to Japanese Brazilian religious practices and beliefs, and did so ouly if they matched their own *imaginaire* of Zen.

Misplaced Ideas: Fascination, Copy, and Struggle for Authenticity

We Brazilians and other Latin Americans constantly experience the artificial, inauthentic, and imitative nature of our cultural life. An essential element in our critical thought since Independence, it has been variously interpreted from romantic, naturalist, modernist, right-wing, left-wing, cosmopolitan, and nationalist points of view, so we may suppose that the problem is enduring and deeply rooted.

The Brazilian literary critic Roberto Schwarz identifies this predicament of inauthenticity in Brazil's 1822 Declaration of Independence, when the newly created empire adopted the British parliamentary system, along with republican ideas of the French Revolution, but kept the colonial system of slavery. In this context, equality, civil liberties, and the separation between public and private were juxtaposed with the slave trade, clientelism, and large agricultural states. This explicit "contradiction between the 'real' Brazil and the ideological prestige of the countries used as models" has since been at the core of discussions of national identity and culture (such as those between nationalists and internationalists) and has adopted different forms.[4]

According to Schwarz, in the nineteenth century the discussion ranged from those who thought the colonial system should be supplanted by new foreign ideas, to those who identified the colonial system with the "real" or "original/authentic/genuine" Brazil that should be protected against the uncritical imitation of foreign models. Although slavery was abolished in 1888 and Brazil became a republic the following year, harsh inequalities

persisted, and questions regarding which foreign ideas had a real place in Brazil and which were just imitative or mimicry were constantly on the agenda. In the 1920s the modernist movement tackled these questions in a different way. Instead of regarding this disjuncture between rural patriarchy and bourgeois ideology as problematic, the modernist Oswald de Andrade (1890–1954) published his *Manifesto Antropófago* in 1928, in which he offered a response to the perceived problem of Brazilian cultural dependency by celebrating creolization's ability for absorbing or "cannibalizing" European metropolitan culture and thus giving it a local flavor. The outcome of these "digested" foreign influences was seen as something new and unique. Andrade's witty pun in his manifesto was the perfect metaphor for such cultural cannibalism: "Tupí or not Tupi, that is the question!"—Tupí being one of the main indigenous peoples of Brazil.

In subsequent decades, the dominant nationalism of the Vargas regime (1932–45 and 1950–54) and the ideology of industrial development in the 1950s kept the question of national identity vis-à-vis foreign culture alive. In the 1960s the rise of the mass media, the internationalization of capital, and the associated commodification of social relations further exposed the country to foreign influences. The United States took over from Europe as the primary source of culture, models of behavior, and worldviews.[5] Schwarz shows that such "hankering for the latest products of advanced countries" has been disseminated throughout the whole of society, be it in the form of popular culture and its products or academia's new doctrines and theories (2). It was not only literary critics and philosophers who were concerned about the autochthonous viability and valence of Brazilian culture. As we shall see, writers and poets also agonized about the originality of their own work and ideas.

Schwarz, however, has identified a viable and interesting way out of this national preoccupation with originality. He concludes his article by saying that copying is a false problem if one realizes that the original and the copy, that is, the foreign and the national, are not real oppositions but are deeply interconnected. Imitation entails translation and the consequent generation of "misplaced ideas," which are distinctively Brazilian.[6] Of course, the process of copying "foreign" repertoires of cultural codes, imagery, and ideas is always framed by historically specific relations of hierarchy and asymmetry.[7] As Schwarz notes, "creation *ex nihilo*" is a myth: ideas evolve from ideas, which are meshed in power relations (17). In a globalized world, the flows and patterns of cultural influence and absorption are inevitably enmeshed in what Doreen Massey calls a "power-geometry" that produces uneven effects on the local spaces over which they traverse.[8]

The complex and dynamic relationship between original and copy, global and local, foreign and national offers a useful framework for understanding how and why ideas about Buddhism, Japan, and Zen that emerged in Europe and the United States made their way into Brazilian culture, initially in the academic and intellectual setting and subsequently in 1990s popular culture. In this context, I will address the historical literary production dealing with the Orient, Japan, Japanese poetic forms, Buddhism, and Zen.[9]

Brazilian Orientalism: The "Exotic East" in Brazilian Letters

As early as the nineteenth century, writers such as Fagundes Varela (1841–75), Machado de Assis (1839–1908), and Raimundo Correia (1860–1911) were drawn to European ideas of Orientalism as a source of images of exoticism, wisdom, sensuality, and serenity. This was in spite of the fact that they themselves inhabited a land constructed as exotic in the European imagination. In his poem "Oriental" Fagundes Varela urges his beloved to flee with him "to the delicious Ganges plains," while in "Ideal" he sets his beloved in "the land of the Chinese Empire, in a palace of red porcelain, on a Japanese blue throne."[10]

In 1914 the Brazilian philosopher R. de Farias Brito addressed Buddhism in his *O Mundo Interior: Ensaio sobre os dados geraes da philosophia do espírito* (The Inner World: Essay on General Facts of Spiritual Philosophy). In this book, Christianity and Buddhism were presented as the two most important world religions and the basis for the greatest civilizations: the West and the Orient. Farias Brito thought his era was marked by religious crisis and loss of faith as a result of the discoveries of science. Nevertheless, by advocating the notion that religion, as the moral basis of society, was "philosophy in practice," he argued that it should still be the most important concern of the human spirit: "The religious problem may only be solved by a new religion that can satisfy the present aspirations of the human spirit. [This new doctrine] shall be the outcome of a fusion between East and West, purifying the best from each civilization into a universal syuthesis that will establish the spiritual unity of humankind. It will be a battle between Christianity and Buddhism, resulting in something completely new."[11]

The word *purifying* is crucial here. For this philosopher, the new doctrine should expurgate "false dogmas and interpretations" that were

imposed throughout time and thus be in accord with the new discoveries of science. Christianity and Buddhism, being religions founded by human beings, were apt for such a task. Farias Brito was clearly influenced by nineteenth-century European Buddhist scholars who, in seeking an alternative to Christianity, constructed Buddhism as "an agnostic, rationalist, ethical movement, [which could become] a foundation for morality in everyday life."[12] In this context, Buddhism could be regarded as scientific and in accord with modern times, since ritualistic and devotional practices and beliefs were thought of as superimposed cultural accretions that corrupted Buddhism over time. Because these European scholars privileged texts over actual practices, they also considered Buddhism a philosophy and not a religion per se. Farias Brito affirms instead that Buddhism is neither materialistic nor nihilistic but "an idealistic religion, derived from a deep and elevated philosophy of the spirit" (112).

The Construction of Japan in the Brazilian *Imaginaire*

In the early twentieth century, Brazilians could gain familiarity with Japan through newspaper articles and books written by the Portuguese writer Wenceslau de Moraes (1854–1929). In contrast to authors who never traveled to the East, Moraes lived in and wrote extensively about the Orient in Portuguese. After living in Macao, on which he wrote many articles for Portuguese newspapers, he moved to Japan in 1898, where he became the Portuguese consul at Kobe. Like the works of Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904), who nevertheless wrote for an English-speaking audience, Moraes's writings depict Japanese daily life and his love for the country. His works include *Dai-Nippon* (1897), *O Culto do Chá* (The Cult of Tea, 1905), *Bon-Odori* (1916), *Oyoné e Ko-Haru* (1923), *Relance da Alma Japonesa* (Grasping the Japanese Soul, 1926), and *Cartas do Japão* (Letters from Japan, 1927).

Although this material was available in Portuguese, France remained the main source of ideas on Japan. The Brazilian elite in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century were heavily influenced by French culture through education, fashion, and travel. Pierre Loti (1850–1923), a novelist of exotica and the author of *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887), together with Anatole France and J. K. Huysmans, were widely read by this sector of Brazilian society.[13] In 1908 films featuring the Japanese dancer and actress Sadayakko, famous in Europe and North America

at the turn of the century, were well received in Rio de Janeiro. In 1920 an exhibition of Japanese art held in São Paulo clearly echoed the Parisian "Japan boom."[14] In analyzing the reception of three Japanese opera singers who performed *Madame Butterfly* in Brazil (1921, 1924, 1936, and 1940), Shuhei Hosokawa has rightly observed, "No doubt Parisian interest in Japan made a stronger impact on opera-goers than the presence of a small Japanese community in the city."[15] Hosokawa notes that Brazilian journalists were more concerned with the physical appearance of Japanese opera singers than with their artistic talent, focusing at length in their reviews on their petiteness and charm. Due to these singers' ethnic origin, journalists readily identified them with the traits of the characters they played, as if they were incarnated Madame Butterflies. Moreover, heavily influenced by French Japonaiserie, reviewers employed French terms such as *petite femme*, *mignon*, and *poupée* to describe these female artists, not unlike in Loti's *Madame Chrysanthème*. Repeatedly regarding the Japanese singers as miniatures, Hosokawa argues, made them manageable, not threatening to the Western observer, "imbued with intimacy, passion and desirability. . . . Miniature is associated with nostalgia and evokes a pristine past, lost objects, and an irretrievable land" (256).

Hosokawa's analysis sheds light on how French Orientalism profoundly shaped the way many non-Japanese Brazilians regarded Japan in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The fact that Japanese immigration to Brazil had started in 1908, numbering close to sixty thousand immigrants by 1930, and that, moreover, Brazil was soon to become the largest Japanese expatriate community in the world, did not challenge the European mediation of Brazilian perceptions of Japan. This situation is due to two main reasons: first, France was perceived as the center of highbrow culture by Brazilians and the world at large and thus enjoyed a cultural authority that Japan lacked;[16] second, the Japanese in Brazil were of peasant origin and lived mostly in rural areas. The few who lived in the cities worked as small shopkeepers, laundrymen, food vendors, and so on. Because of the deep-rooted presence of slavery in Brazilian history, manual labor of any sort has been traditionally associated with African Brazilians and disenfranchised classes. Only those who have had formal education and use their acquired knowledge in their work are to be considered middle or upper class. Even if the Japanese owned property in urban and rural areas, they still did not enjoy social status and prestige in Brazilian society, since their work remained strongly associated with manual labor.[17] Therefore, in the eyes of Brazilians, they too lacked the necessary cultural capital to be regarded as a source of knowledge on Japan.

Haiku and Zen

A good illustration of European mediation in the flow of ideas from and about Japan, as well as its consequent Orientalist tendency and eventual association with Zen, is haiku, the Japanese seventeen-syllable poem (three lines of five, seven, and five syllables). Haiku has evolved throughout the twentieth century into a popular form of poetry in Brazil. According to the Brazilian literary critic Paulo Franchetti, the interest in haiku has been matched only by the interest in martial arts as a source of knowledge about Japanese culture.[18] Haiku arrived in Brazil, first in French and subsequently English translations, in the diaries of European travelers. These short poems were then regarded as exotic curiosities akin to the elaborate Japanese etiquette, the diminutive sake cups, and the communal bath. Julien Vocance's *Art Poétique* (1921) and Paul-Louis Couchoud's *Sages et Poetes d'Asie* (1923) were the main sources of knowledge on haiku in Brazil during the early twentieth century. The Portuguese writer Wenceslau de Moraes was the first to translate haikus to his mother tongue, albeit in a loose format more akin to Portuguese poetry. However, Brazilian poets took little notice of Moraes's haikus, favoring French translations instead.

Afrânio Peixoto (1876–1947) was one of the first Brazilian poets to attempt to compose haikus, which he learned from reading Couchoud's translations. However, haikus would become a renowned form of poetry in Brazil only in the 1930s through the work of the poet laureate Guilherme de Almeida (1890–1969). Like his predecessors, Almeida first learned about haiku in French translations. Yet he later became engaged with the Japanese Brazilian community as well, after meeting a group of haiku practitioners in São Paulo. He even helped establish and presided over the Aliança Cultural Brasil-Japão, a cultural center for the Japanese Brazilian commuuity.

In the 1950s and 1960s there was a second wave of interest in haiku, which, like the earlier wave, did not draw its understanding of this poetic form from the Japanese Brazilian community. Instead, the translations and writings of Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908), especially *The Chinese Written Character*, posthumously published in 1919 by the American poet Ezra Pound, were very influential among Brazilian poets from 1955 onward. Fenollosa's and Pound's notion that the ideogram was the core of Chinese and Japanese understanding of the world (since it constructed meaning through juxtaposition and montage) informed the newly founded Brazilian avant-garde Concretist movement established by Augusto and Haroldo de Campos and Décio Pignatari.

Whereas this avant-garde movement associated haiku with the "exotic" Chinese character (*kanji*), the next generation of poets, from the early 1970s through the late twentieth century, identified it strongly with Zen, a connection imported from the works of Reginald Blyth, Alan Watts, D. T. Suzuki, and Jack Kerouac. Suzuki devoted a chapter of his *Zen and Japanese Culture* (1959) to the relationship between Zen and haiku. Paulo Leminski, the harbinger of this Brazilian Zen haiku, would praise its paradoxical, non-Cartesian understanding of the world. In the 1980s and 1990s, through his talks, books, and poems turned into popular songs, Leminski became a highly influential source of ideas about Zen for the intellectual upper middle class of Brazil. In attempting to explain the Brazilian fascination with the haiku, Franchetti has pointed to "a search for an imaginary Japan filled with Zen, feudal ethics, and old contemplative wisdom. In other words, the Japan that exists in Brazilian contemporary imagination seems to be laden with nostalgia, idealization of a pre-industrial world, and life under the Tokugawa regime. In sum, there is still as much exoticism as always" (198).

Indeed haiku is a good example of how global cultural flows from Europe and North America shaped non-Japanese Brazilian perception of Japan and Zen. However, haiku may also be used to unveil how the two groups, Japanese and non-Japanese Brazilians, have related to each other. The strong visibility (in books, newspapers, and lectures) of non-Japanese Brazilians writing haikus obscures the fact that Japanese immigrants, albeit of peasant origin, had been composing haikus since their arrival in Brazil. Masuda Goga, a Japanese Brazilian poet, has argued that the first such haiku was composed onboard the *Kasato-maru* itself, the first ship of immigrants to arrive in Brazil in 1908.[19] Since then haiku clubs and regional and national contests have evolved.[20] Migrant newspapers published in Brazil such as the *Shûkan Nambei* (South American Weekly) and *Brasil Jihô* (Brazil Review), established in 1916 and 1924, respectively, often devoted the same number of pages to poetry as to news stories (Lesser 92). Thus Japanese immigrants and their descendants could have been a more direct source of knowledge on haiku for non-Japanese Brazilians, had they sought them.

It is also worth noting that non-Japanese Brazilians introduced new rhythms into the haiku, and some even added a previously nonexistent title while striving to preserve the connection among haiku, Zen, and Tokugawa Japan. Meanwhile Japanese Brazilians maintained the haiku's traditional format but, curiously, introduced Brazilian *kigo*, seasonal words corresponding to the fauna and flora of their new adoptive land. Thus,

since the arrival of haiku in Brazil, the former group has sought to retain Japan as an essentialized, unchanging, and exotic source of Zen and lost wisdom, while the latter has sought to adapt what they understood as the core of the poem, its seasonal feeling, to the Brazilian environment. Indeed Franchetti has remarked that Japanese Brazilians have constantly been amused and baffled to find the ubiquitous presence of Zen and the overemphasis on the Chinese ideogram in the haikus of non-Japanese Brazilians.

To be sure, there are fewer Japanese Brazilians who compose haikus than non-Japanese Brazilians, but the little integration between both groups reflects two circumstances. First is the fact that their sources of understanding about Japan, haiku, and Zen were different. Whereas non-Japanese Brazilians absorbed the flows of ideas and images of Japan from Western metropolitan centers of culture, Japanese Brazilians embodied or inherited them. Second, the system of class distinction in Brazil prevented both the Japanese and the Japanese Brazilians from being seen as bearers of highbrow culture. Both these factors are paramount if one is to understand the gap and struggle between both groups concerning the authenticity of Japanese culture and, as discussed below, their religious practices and beliefs. So let us now turn our attention to how Zen was imported and has been practiced by non-Japanese Brazilian intellectuals since the late 1950s.

Intellectuals as Cosmopolitans: Accumulating Cultural Capital Overseas

Global flows have always influenced and, in turn, been localized in Brazilian society, yet the origins of these flows, rather than fixed essences, are other flows, perhaps older and regional (not global) but nevertheless themselves inpure. The same principle and pattern of influence and exchange applies to Zen in Brazil. That is, the need for translation into Portuguese and into Brazilian culture guaranteed that Zen would be creolized locally, in very particular ways. Furthermore, like those who had emulated European Orientalism, later elite intellectuals did not see their knowledge of Zen as a mode of appropriation geared toward cultural resistance but as a tool for a two-pronged complementary assertion: first, of their unique role as translators and interpreters of overseas currents; second, of their prestigious position as a cosmopolitan group. As a result, both these assertions afforded them the cultural capital necessary to reinforce and maintain their own class status in their country.

Here I would like to shed light on how this process of imbuing Zen with prestige and cultural capital was initiated in the late 1950s by a small group of intellectuals, who deployed their knowledge of Zen as a marker of social distinction. While in the 1990s the dynamics of popularization within consumer culture allowed the media to play a powerful role in interpreting Buddhism and Zen for a wider audience, in the late 1950s non-Japanese Brazilian cosmopolitan intellectuals were the sole exponents of how Zen and Buddhism should be represented and understood.[21]

Pierre Bourdieu has shown that social identity is asserted and maintained through difference, which in turn is visible in people's *habitus*.[22] According to Bourdieu, *habitus* is both the system of classification (the structuring structure) and the principle with which objectively classifiable judgments are made (the structured structure). In this way, social classes would be defined by their *habitus*, that is, by their internalized unconscious dispositions as well as their relational position in a structure of taste. In other words, a social group would be identifiable by having similar choices in taste derived from a particular *habitus* situated in this system of correlation and distinction. Importantly, this system is eminently hierarchical, so the tastes of the upper classes carry prestige while those of the lower, disenfranchised classes are regarded as vulgar. Because tastes do not have an intrinsic value, the dominant classes who hold economic and/or cultural capital need to make them rare and unreachable (for either economic or cultural reasons) so that they may successfully imbue them with prestige. Conversely the tastes of the poorest sectors of society are regarded as common and identified with vulgarity precisely because they are easily accessible. This entails a constant effort by the upper classes to maintain social distance by always creating new, rarer tastes and imposing an artificial scarcity of the (cultural and physical) products they consume.

In such a structured and structuring system, Bourdieu places intellectuals as part of the dominated faction of the dominant class, for they possess a high volume of cultural capital but do not readily possess economic capital. Their cultural capital is valuable because it is ultimately converted into symbolic capital, and in so doing it accords them prestige and recognition that in turn gives them social power. By striving to retain a monopoly of the production, judgment, and hierarchy of symbolic capital, intellectuals attempt to secure their dominant position within the structure of society. By the same token, I contend that when Brazilian intellectuals translated books and wrote articles about Zen and Buddhism, when they traveled overseas to visit Buddhist places and meet either Western Zen scholars or Japanese Zen masters, they were creating new, rare, and

exotic tastes, which would consolidate their role as bearers of symbolic capital. By translating this knowledge into Portuguese, these intellectuals acquired social and even "mystical" power in Brazil, for their knowledge dealt with matters of sacred and lost wisdom from the Orient. When some of these non-Japanese Brazilian intellectuals were ordained as Zen monks or nuns or became missionaries, the symbiotic relation was complete: they had not only the intellectual and thus Western knowledge of Zen but also the esoteric and practical knowledge of the Eastern masters themselves. Both kinds of cultural capital legitimized their writings and their status in a field where scarcity and monopoly of knowledge prevailed.

"Situatedness" is particularly important in view of the fact that the members of the Brazilian intellectual elite who travel overseas do not do so indiscriminately. Instead they travel to specific places at different historical moments because these offer the highest return in terms of that much sought-after cultural capital. France was the main producer and disseminator of meaning for Brazilian society up until the Second World War; thereafter the United States took its place. It is not a coincidence that intellectuals and the economic elite would learn French and later English and would emulate and travel to these geographically and historically situated cultures.

This phenomenon is not particular to Brazil, of course, as it is part and parcel of the complex relations of power among countries that seek to appropriate the culture of the metropolitan centers. It is noteworthy, however, that centers and peripheries are relational locations; that is, depending on the cultures to which they are relating, centers may become peripheries and vice versa. For instance, given that from the 1960s to the mid-1990s Brazil was not a primary producer and disseminator of meaning about Buddhism, intellectuals had to travel and read in foreign languages to be able to acquire this knowledge. However, this picture changed considerably in the 1990s, when Buddhism experienced a boom and the country, while still maintaining its peripheral location, became a center for the production and dissemination of meaning about Zen for Latin America, Portugal, and even traditional centers such as France and the United States.

In conclusion, the inequalities of wealth and power that divide the world, assigning different locations for the acquisition of cultural capital, have to be taken into account if one is to understand why elite Brazilians travel to specific places at different historical momeuts. Accordingly, travel destinations for cosmopolitan Brazilians may differ greatly from those of their counterparts in the developed world, since the cultural capital to be gained is differently situated and constructed in each case.

Non-Japanese Brazilian Intellectuals: Bridging the Local and the Global

Before D. T. Suzuki's *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* was translated into Portuguese in 1961, non-Japanese Brazilian intellectuals could learn about Zen from articles and translations (from English and French) published by the journalist Nelson Coelho in *Jornal do Brasil*, a leading newspaper from Rio de Janeiro.[23] According to Coelho, his weekly column (1957–61) sparked an intense wave of interest in Zen Bnddhism among non-Japanese Brazilian intellectuals. The enthusiasm for Zen was such that although the newspaper owner was a devout Catholic, she was excited by the novelty and the artistic side of Zen and thus allowed the weekly translations of Zen texts, koans, and commentaries. Zen would not pose a threat to her religious conviction because it was portrayed as a philosophical path to self-knowledge.

Another intellectual who was instrumental to the spread of Zen Buddhist ideas in Brazil was Murillo Nunes de Azevedo.[24] Azevedo was deeply influenced by the ideas of the Theosophical Society, whose Brazilian chapter he chaired for nine years. In 1955 he reestablished the Sociedade Budista do Brasil, originally founded in 1923 by Theosophists in Rio de Janeiro, but which soon dissolved. As a professor at the Pontifical Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro, Azevedo taught Eastern philosophy and published articles on Theosophy and Theravada, Tibetan, and Zen Buddhism for *Correio da Manhã*, a newspaper based in Rio de Janeiro. He wrote books on Buddhism and edited a twenty-book collection of translations called *Luz da Ásia* (Light of Asia) for the Civilização Brasileira publishing house, including his 1961 translation of Suzuki's *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, still a frequently cited and highly regarded source among Zen practitioners I interviewed in the late 1990s.

In 1966 Azevedo traveled extensively in India (where he visited the Dalai Lama), Thailand (for the World Buddhist Conference, where he met Christmas Humphreys), and Japan, all the while writing articles for *Correio da Manhã*. In Tokyo Azevedo met with Takashina Rosen Zenji, abbot of Eiheiji and Sojiji, the head temples of Sôtôshû. Takashina Zenji had been to Brazil in 1955 to survey the country for the possibility of sending a Sôtôshû mission, and again in 1964 for the commemorations of the first decade of Sôtôshû activities. At the end of the meeting, Azevedo was officially declared a monk and Sôtôshû missionary for Brazil, receiving the Buddhist name Reirin Jôdo. By also being a writer and translator, he was able to occupy a strategic position in the spread of Zen in the couutry.

Both Coelho and Azevedo followed a path similar to that of other intellectuals. Their initial encounter with Buddhism and Zen was through imported literature, which then led them to seek a place of practice. They found it in Busshinji, the Sôtô Zenshû temple in São Paulo. In 1961, in order to cater to non-Japanese Brazilians, Ryôhan Shingû, the *sôkan* (superintendent general for South America), created a Zen meditation group (*zazenkai*) that met each Saturday. His interpreter was Ricardo Gonçalves, then a history student who would become a professor of Eastern religions at the University of São Paulo. Unlike other intellectuals, Gonçalves had been interested in Japan from an early age, due to his contact with Japanese Brazilian children at school. He was fluent in Japanese by the time he enrolled in the university. His role as translator was paramonnt for the spread of Zen among non-Japanese Brazilians as well as second- and third-generation (*nisei* and *sansei*) Japanese Brazilians, as many did not understand Japanese. Gonçalves preached and celebrated funerary and memorial rites at the temple and homes of the Japanese Brazilian community and acted as an interpreter at lectures by the *rôshi* and whenever a high official from Sôtôshû arrived in Brazil. This was at a time when his university colleagues and other intellectuals frequented the temple.[25] In 1967 he published *Textos Budistas e Zen Budistas*, a seminal book in which he translated Mahâyâna and Zen Buddhist texts. This book is still cited by many Brazilian students of Zen and is suggested reading in Buddhist blogs.

In making Zen accessible to Brazilians, Gonçalves helped break down the language barrier that had been the main obstacle to the proselytizing of Buddhism in Brazil. Until very recently, when Brazilians of non-Japanese descent sought other Japanese Buddhist schools, they were redirected to Busshinji because "they speak Portuguese there, and it is the place for non-Japanese Brazilians," as some adherents told me. Nowadays Japanese Pure Land Buddhist schools (Jôdo Shinshû and Jôdo Shû) already have Japanese Brazilian monks who speak Portuguese and even some non-Japanese Brazilian monks ordained in the tradition.

Teaching Buddhism to a New Generation

An important point in the trajectories of both Gonçalves and Azevedo is their role as teachers of a second generation of Buddhists and thus as constructors of a particular representation of Buddhism in Brazil. Azevedo, like many other non-Japanese Brazilians I interviewed in the late 1990s, said he was attracted to Buddhism because of the Buddha's recommendation that one should follow one's reason and discernment, not faith, in order to decide whether to accept the Buddha's teachings. This teaching has often been cited as evidence of Buddhism's accord with science and reason. Azevedo's association of rational thought to Buddhism and his deep involvement with the Theosophical Society shaped a particular universalistic and ecnmenical approach to Buddhism, which is revealed in his several published books and which he used while lecturing at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro.

Some of his students at the university went on to become priests themselves, of whom the best known is Gustavo Côrrea Pinto. Pinto has been an active member of the International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies as well as a missionary for the Higashi Hongwanji temple in São Paulo. In 2002 he was frequently in the media because of his project of erecting, in an ecological reserve in central Brazil, the Bamiyan Buddhist statues destroyed in Afghanistan. In early 2002 Pinto made a fundraising trip to Japan and also to Dharamshala, India (to meet the Dalai Lama). His is an ambitious project, involving the carving of a Buddha 108 meters high on the side of a mountain (this is double the original size of the Afghan statues) and the construction of Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Tibetan Buddhist temples, a center for interreligious dialogue, a Buddhist university, and biology laboratories to study the area's ecosystem. The project reflects the ecumenical and universalistic trend preached by his teacher at the university, Azevedo.

Gonçalves, in turn, worked as a catalyst to spread the interest in Buddhism among his colleagues at the University of São Paulo and other intellectuals. Eduardo Bastos, who like Gonçalves would also become a professor of the history of religion and an ordained Zen monk, was the first colleague to start freqnenting Busshinji at Gonçalves's invitation. Bastos and other intellectuals, such as Cecília Meireles, Pedro Xisto, and Orides Fontela (all of them well-known Brazilian poets), Nelson Coelho, Gehrard Kahner (a German immigrant who worked in China and became a translator), Lourenço Borges (a lawyer and founder of the Theosophical Society), and later Heródoto Barbeiro (journalist), would meet every Saturday evening for a sitting session (*zazen*). According to Bastos, in order to sit *zazen* they had to remove the wooden pews used by the Japanese congregation during memorial and funeral rituals at the Buddha hall. This rearranging of furniture suggests that the Japanese Brazilian and the non-Japanese Brazilian congregations used the temple in different ways. This difference in practice is due to the non-Japanese Brazilians receiving Orientalist flows of ideas and images of Zen, which place *zazen* at the core of

Zen practice, while for Japanese Brazilians, devotion to ancestors would come first.

To be sure, the presence of second-, third-, and fourth-generation immigrants complicates this picture, since most of them had converted to Catholicism, and when interested in Buddhism, many tended to adopt the non-Japanese Brazilian construct of Zen. This Western construct of Zen and Buddhism in general, which is strongly inflected by Orientalism, is so pervasive in the West that conflicts have sprung up in many Western countries between immigrants and converts on the issue of what constitutes authentic Buddhist practice.[26]

Notes

Author's Note: This essay was adapted from Cristina Rocha, *Zen in Brazil: The Quest for Cosmopolitan Modernity* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006). The epigraph is an excerpt from an interview with a non-Japanese Brazilian university lecturer who was ordained a Zen monk at Busshinji temple in São Paulo in the early 1970s.

1. Londrina is a city in the Brazilian state of Paraná, inhabited mainly by Japanese descendants.

2. Many scholars have criticized Said's work by rightly pointing out that Orientalism is not monolithic, that different Western cultures have different understandings of and uses for it. See, for instance, Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

3. For an account of how Sôtôshû arrived and spread Zen in Brazil, see Cristina Rocha, "Zen Buddhism in Brazil: Japanese or Brazilian?," *Journal of Global Buddhism* 1 (2000): 31–55.

4. Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture* (London: Verso, 1992), 1–2. Schwarz points out that copying did not start with Independence, but it was not a predicament until then. During the colonial period (1500–1822) it was considered natural for the colony to copy the metropolis—even more so after 1807, when King João VI and the Portuguese court fled to Brazil, fearing an invasion by Napoleon. For fifteen years Brazil became the center of the Portuguese Empire. Strong ties with the court continued after Independence, as Pedro I, independent Brazil's first emperor, was the son of the Portuguese king.

5. On this shift from Europe to the United States as meaning-producing center, see Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

6. See the theoretical background for this argument in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (London: Fontana Press, 1970) and Jacques Derrida, "Des Tours De Babel," *Difference in Translation*, ed. J. F. Graham (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), 188.

7. Gayatri Spivak, *Outside the Teaching Machine* (London: Routledge, 1993).

8. Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 1994), 149.

9. For Orientalist fantasies of the Middle Eastern and Syrian Lebanese immigration in Brazil, see Jeffrey Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 41–79.

10. My free translation of "Lá nas terras do império chinês, / Num palácio de louça vermelha / Sobre um trono de azul japonês" in "Orientalismo na Literatura Brasileira," *Dicionário de Literatura* (Porto: N.p., 1981), 772.

11. R. Farias Brito, *O Mundo Interior: Ensaio sobre os dados geraes da philosophia do espírito* (Rio de Janeiro: Revista dos Tribunais, 1914), 105, my translation.

12. Charles Hallisey, "Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravâda Buddhism," *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*, ed. Donald Lopez Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 45.

13. On the influence of French culture in Brazil, see Jeffrey D. Needell, *A Tropical Belle Epoque: Elite, Culture, and Society in Turn-of-the-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

14. Nineteenth-century Europe, particularly France, underwent a fad known as Japonaiserie or Japonisme. In the 1850s French artists discovered Japanese woodblock prints (*ukiyo-ê*), which would arrive by way of wrapping paper for imported porcelain pieces. By the 1860s most French Impressionists were collecting Japanese prints. Japonaiserie also involved literature (*Madame Chrysanthème*), music (*Madame Butterfly*), jewelry, and *objects d'art* (lacquer, metal work).

15. Shuhei Hosokawa, "Nationalizing Chô-Chô-San: The Signification of 'Butterfly Singers' in a Japanese-Brazilian Community," *Japanese Studies* 19.3 (1999): 256.

16. See, for instance, Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* (New York: Schocken, 1978).

17. Takashi Maeyama, "Religion, Kinship, and the Middle Classes of the Japanese in Urban Brazil," *Latin American Studies* 5 (1983): 57–82.

18. Paulo Franchetti, "Notas Sobre a História do Haikai no Brasil," *Revista de Letras* (São Paulo) 34 (1994): 197–213.

19. Masuda Goga, *O Haicai no Brasil* (São Paulo: Oriento, 1988).

20. Tsuguo Koyama, "Japoneses na Amazônia: Alguns Aspectos do Processo de Sua Integração Sócio-Cultural," *A Presença Japonesa No Brasil*, ed. Hiroshi Saito (São Paulo: Edusp/T. A. Queiroz, 1980), 17.

21. For an account of Zen Buddhism and media and popular culture in 1990s Brazil, see Cristina Rocha, "The Brazilian *Imaginaire* on Zen: Global Influences, Rhizomatic Forms," *Japanese Religions in and beyond the Japanese Diaspora*, ed. Ronan Pereira and Hideo Matsuoka (Berkeley: Institute for East Asian Studies, University of California, 2007).

22. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984).

23. Nelson Coelho, *Zen: Experiência Direta da Libertação* (Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia, 1978).

24. Murilo Nunes Azevedo, O Caminho de Cada Um: O Budismo da Terra Pura (Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 1996).

25. Ricardo Mário Gonçalves, "A Trajetória de Um Budista Brasileiro," *O Budismo no Brasil*, ed. Frank Usarski (São Paulo: Lorosae, 2002), 171–92.

26. See Martin Baumann, "Global Buddhism: Developmental Periods, Regional Histories, and a New Analytical Perspective," *Journal of Global Buddhism* 2 (2001) 1–43; Charles Prebish and Kenneth Tanaka, eds., *The Faces of Buddhism in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Writing and Memory

Images of the Japanese Diaspora in Brazil

Karen Tei Yamashita

In 1975 I traveled to Brazil as a Thomas J. Watson Fellow to research the history and anthropology of the Japanese Brazilian community. At least, that is what I proposed to do. I was a young sansei from California just graduated from Carleton College, traveling to South America for the first time, heading out with a crash course in Portuguese, conversational Japanese, and the hubris of youth. I knew about my own Japanese American community in Los Angeles; I knew something about my ancestry in Japan; and I knew from spending a year in Japan that I was not really Japanese. I did not know what it meant to research history or anthropology; my knowledge was bookish and intuitive. Somewhere in that year, I came upon the stories that I believed could be woven into a historical novel, and I turned from history and anthropology to a project that was fiction. Again, I did not know what would be involved in researching a historical novel or even what would make it fiction, or a novel. In the next three years I researched and interviewed my subjects relentlessly, and for the decade after that I wrote and rewrote and wrote again and again until I found the threads and the voices that would complete a novel. The resulting book, published finally in 1992 by Coffee House Press, *Brazil-Maru*, represents a long journey to my future in a process I could only know by doing, and a wandering through a puzzle of questions that I did not know would still remain questions.

The story of *Brazil-Maru* is based on the lives of a small population of Japanese immigrant settlers arriving in the 1920s. Japanese immigration to Brazil has followed patterns of their exclusion from the United States. In 1908, when the Gentleman's Agreement was signed to limit Japanese