Catholicism and Zen Buddhism: A Vision of the Religious Field in Brazil

Cristina Moreira da Rocha

In the twentieth century one sees an immense expansion of religions, or as Pierre Bourdieu puts it, the expansion of the market of symbolic goods.[1] After the 1950s, with territory redefinitions, mass urbanisation, implementation of means of mass communication, internationalisation of economy and immense migratory flows, new life expectations were created. Likewise, these changes rendered local worlds permeable to transcultural flows.[2] Inside this complex panorama we will make a study of Zen Buddhism in Brazil, the country with the largest Catholic population in the world.

According to Louis Dumont, in the modern world religious existence stopped being something shared and became an individual choice.[3] The change from social consent to the individual one is among the main characteristics of this new religious field, which is marked by urbanisation. Moreover, due to globalisation, religious practices flow simultaneously all over the world and are hybridised and indigenised locally and by each individual. With this as a starting point, the question that proceeds is: in this context how does the market of symbolic goods present itself? How are the symbols orchestrated? And why do some have more acceptability than others?

Using this perspective, I will try to map the religious field, which is no longer restricted but, as Pierre Bourdieu observes, is disseminated in daily life. This secular life which is amalgamated with the sacred, is a place where the transcendental senses are forged and experiences in the urban societies and mass societies take place.[4]

Catholicism is by definition a transnational and transcultural religion. Consequently, it uses a process of adaptation to allocate cultural diversity inside its discourse. As Gary Bouma states:

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1 Pierre, Bourdieu, *A Economia das Trocas Simbólicas*, São Paulo, 1982.

2 Robert Hefner, 'Multiple Modernities: Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism in a Globalizing Age', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, No. 27, 1998, pp. 83-104.

3 Louis Dumont, *O Individualismo: uma perspectiva antropológica da ideologia moderna*, São Paulo, 1985.

4 Bourdieu, *op. cit.*

> One of the geniuses of Catholic Church order has been the ability to contain within itself the reactions, rebellions and creative energies of a wide variety of types of movements through its religious orders. The compact between Catholic Church and Catholic societies was such as to maintain the appearance of uniformity by the inclusion of diversity.[1]

As a result, the Catholic Church became the official and hegemonic religion of Latin America, mainly Brazil. However, how did it leave room for the arrival of other religious symbolic goods, in this case, Zen Buddhism?

Buddhism in the West

In this century, the West saw a fast expansion of Buddhism, until then confined to the East.[2] With Buddhism, we see a radically different way of thinking and seeing the world because it is based on the absence of God and the idea that everybody is his/her own Buddha (literally 'the enlightened being'). Through the practice of meditation, discipline or devotion (depending on the Buddhist school), anyone can get enlightened and become a Buddha. Moreover, for Buddhism, men and nature are part of the same whole. Nature was not created to serve men as Christianity implies. Furthermore, while Catholicism preaches a better life only after death, in heaven, for Zen Buddhism it takes place in daily life, depending solely on the practitioner. Heaven will not be a granted gift, but something to be acquired through the practitioner's own merit.

In addition, in Buddhism the way to realisation does not involve something similar to the Christic identification. Enlightenment is not seen as a union with a Supreme Being, but as an accomplishment of a supreme state. The knowledge of this nirvanic state, that is, our true intrinsic nature, is obscured by our ignorance. The search for our true nature demands permanent and penetrating attention from us in all our acts, words and mental actions. Therefore, the occult and gnostic character of Buddhism has its

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[1] G. Bouma, 'From Hegemony to Pluralism: Managing Religious Diversity in Modernity and Post-Modernity', *Australian Religion Studies Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1999, pp. 7-27.

[2] Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism in the 20th Century*, New York, 1992, p. viii.

pillars in wisdom and universal compassion for all sentient beings, because, by understanding the roots of our delusions, one can understand all sentient beings. Facing this symbolic construction, the rigid character of Christian moral ethics becomes, for part of the adherents, impossible to comply with. The Catholic Church starts to represent a retrograde position. It ceases answering the expectations and representations generated by society. Although it has undergone a restructuring process in order to assist urban demands, culminating in the Second Vatican Council (1965), this did not provide a real answer to the laicized world. The disillusion generated by World War II and the Cold War made the world not only laic but also a disbelieving one. Indeed, Hannah Arendt calls this widespread disbelief 'widespread evil'.[1] As a result, an individual search for meaning in the world and in oneself starts to take place.

The influences of the East were brought through Buddhism by the Counterculture movement of 1950s and its development – the New Age. The beatnik movement opened the doors for Zen Buddhism in the United States. The Beats saw in Zen's plea for non-attachment to worldly things the answer to their rebellion against values of the bourgeois post World War II society. Jack Kerouac, one of the movement's main spokespersons, predicted a 'rucksack revolution', where young Americans would leave production and consumption society and would meditate in the mountains. In his book *The Dharma Bums,* of 1957, Kerouac wrote: 'What we need is a floating *zendo* [Zen Hall, that is, Zen meditation room].' The possibility of freeing the mind as taught by Zen Buddhism was confused with freedom from social convention.[2] Zen flourished among artists and intellectuals in the late 1950s. Alan Watts and D. T. Suzuki especially popularised Zen through their books written for a Western audience.

Indeed, from the 1950s on, people in the West were in search of other forms of spirituality outside of Western canons, that is, the Catholic or Protestant religions. People started seeking holistic movements, characterised by symbols attached to nature, to the idea of healing the planet and the individual.[3] Hence, they sought a way

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1 Hannah Arendt, *Origens do Totalitarismo*, São Paulo, 1990.

2 Helen Tworkov, *Zen in America: profiles of five teachers*, San Francisco, 1989, p. 7.

3 'Disease is lack of harmony; it is opposed to healing, which is the way to the psychophysical (physical body), psychological (emotions and feelings) and psycho spiritual (subtle energy) liberation. The path to healing has as a goal health, that is, enlightenment. The way to transform disease into health is the

of life which integrated man and nature. The idea that a new lifestyle, which included meditation and a connection with the sacred, would bring health, happiness, the possibility of individual enlightenment, and union with nature, paved the way for the popularisation of several Buddhist sects, among them Zen. Robert Bellah summarises these trends very well:

> The biblical arrogance in relation to nature and the Christian hostility to impulsive life were both strange to the new spiritual atmosphere. Thus, the religion of the counterculture was not, in general, biblical. It was drawn from several sources, including the American Indians. Its deeper influences, however, came from Asia. In several ways, Asian spirituality offered a more complete contrast to the rejected utilitarian individualism than the biblical religion. To the external accomplishment, Asian spirituality offered inner experience; to the exploitation of nature, it offered harmony with nature; to the impersonal organization, it offered an intense relationship with the guru. Mahayana Buddhism, above all under the form of the Zen, supplied the more penetrating religious influence to the counterculture.[1]

Zen Buddhism and Catholicism were introduced in Brazil with different purposes. Catholicism was established by the Portuguese colonisers with the intention of converting through evangelisation, so that the native population would move on to the state of culture, since they were considered barbarians. Zen Buddhism arrived in Brazil with the Japanese immigrants in 1950s, as a statement of ethnic identity. In the late 1970s, Brazilians of non-Japanese origin imported the Western construct of Zen Buddhism.

Two different approaches to Zen in Brazil

Zen Buddhism was first introduced into Brazil by Japanese immigrants.[2] *Zengenji* was the first *Sôtô Zenshu* Buddhist temple in

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spiritual practices, purification and accumulation of merit and wisdom (through virtuous actions). The Buddhist body is a healthy and enlightened body' (Lama Shakya in a workshop in São Paulo, 1996).

1 Robert Bellah, 'A Nova Consciência Religiosa e a Crise na Modernidade', in *Revista Religião e Sociedade*, Vol. 13, No. 2, Rio de Janeiro, 1986, p. 26.

2 Japanese immigration to Brazil started in 1908. At the end of the nineteenth century, Japan was leaving a feudal system behind and going through a period

Brazil. It was built in the early 1950s in Mogi das Cruzes, a town in the outskirts of São Paulo city. *Busshinji* temple was built in 1955 in São Paulo city in order to be the headquarters of the *Sôtô Zenshu* School in Brazil. These two temples together with the temple in Rolândia, in the state of Paraná, catered for the Brazilian Japanese community for three decades. During this time, their missionary work gained three thousand families of followers.

The aspects of Zen that were emphasised were devotional practices, 'masses' (as they call the rituals, appropriating the Catholic word) and funeral rituals. This population wanted (and continues to want) the temples to perform Buddhist rituals that serve to affirm its ethnic identity.

Similarly to Christianity, Zen Buddhism has gone through a process of 'symbolic adaptation'. That is, it adapted itself to the cultural context in which it settled, without losing its identity core. This semantic strategy used by religious discourse has the intention of expansionism. In order to do that, it offers the symbolic goods that give the most answers to the problems that afflict us.

Brazilians of non-Japanese origin are involved in Zen Buddhism for reasons which mainly have to do with the experience of living in an urban environment and the New Age trends. In general, according to interviews I conducted, they are interested in Zen Buddhism as way of acquiring inner peace, relieving the stress of big cities, learning about Japan and/or acquiring a spiritual practice. Even in the monasteries located in rural areas, practitioners come from the cities to live Zen Buddhism more intensely, in seven-day retreats (*sesshin*) or three-month retreats (*angô*), or even to reside in the places as a life alternative. In this context, it is urban life, and not the identity (as it is for the Japanese community) that should be associated with the way Zen Buddhism is appropriated in Brazil.

This difference in practice and motivations is not exclusively a Brazilian phenomenon. In the United States, Europe and Australia there is also a difference between what is called 'convert Buddhism', practiced by the white upper middle-class that praises meditation as a path to enlightenment, and the so-called 'ethnic Buddhism', of the immigrants, which is basically devotional and oriented to the community.[1]

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of economic difficulties, especially for the rural population. Consequently, the Meiji Government (1868-1912) wished to relieve pressure on the land while creating colonies that would grow food for export back to Japan. The Brazilian Government, on the other hand, needed hands to work on the coffee, banana and cotton plantations, since slavery had been abolished in 1888.

1 For studies on American Buddhism, see Rick Fields, 'Confessions of a White

Brazilians of non-Japanese origin have been building temples, Zen centres and monasteries since the late 1970s. The Zen Buddhist *Sôtô* monasteries of *Morro da Vargem*, in Espírito Santo state, and *Pico dos Raios*, in Minas Gerais state, were founded respectively in 1977 and in 1985 by the Japanese monk Ryotan Tokuda. Today they are managed by Brazilians of non-Japanese origin, who were disciples of Tokuda and studied in monasteries in Japan. According to the Brazilian magazine *Isto É*: 'The Zen monastery *Morro da Vargem* is visited annually by four thousand people and receives seven thousand children of the State, who go there to learn environmental education.'[1] Besides maintaining an ecological reserve and the *Centre of Environmental Education* since 1985, the monastery established the *House of Culture* to support fine artists who can devote themselves to creation away from the city.[2] In addition, *Morro da Vargem* monastery holds eight five-day retreats a year with forty-five people each. The people who attend the retreats are not necessarily Buddhist, as the abbot Christiano Daiju Bitti affirmed: 'In general, people who seek the monastery do not profess any religion. They are in search of spiritual peace.'[3] *Pico dos Raios* monastery is also linked with the external community. Tokuda teaches acupuncture to the monastery's practitioners, who then offer this service to the local population. In 1984, Ryotan Tokuda established the *Sôtô Zen Society of Brazil* (*Sociedade Sôtô*

Buddhist', in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, Vol. IV No.1, NJ, USA, Buddhist Ray Inc, 1994, pp. 54-56; Addie Foye, 'Buddhism in America: a short, biased view', in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, Vol. IV No.1, USA, Buddhist Ray Inc.,1994, p. 57; Jan Nattier, 'Visible and Invisible: Jan Nattier on the Politics of Representation in Buddhist America', in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, Vol. V, No.1, USA, Buddhist Ray Inc. 1995, pp. 42-49; Charles Prebish, 'Two Buddhisms Reconsidered', in *Buddhist Studies Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1993, pp. 187-206. For studies on European Buddhism, see Martin Baumann, 'Creating a European Path to Nirvana: Historical and Contemporary Developments of Buddhism in Europe', in *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1995, p. 64. For studies on Australian Buddhism, see Michelle Spuler, *The Adaptation of Buddhism to the West: Diamond Sangha Zen Buddhist Groups in Australia*, PhD dissertation, University of Queensland, 1999; Roderick S. Bucknell, 'The Buddhist Experience in Australia', in *Religion and Multiculturalism in Australia: Essays in Honour of Victor Hayes*, ed. Norman Habel, Special Studies in Religion Series, no. 7, Adelaide, 1992; Enid Adam and Philip J. Hughes, *The Buddhists in Australia*. Religious Community Profiles, ed. Philip J. Hughes, Canberra, 1996, pp. 7-11.

1 'O Brasil dos Budas', in *Isto É* magazine, March 12, 1997, pp. 62-70.

2 Paranhos, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

3 *O Estado de São Paulo* newspaper, March 31, 1998.

Zen do Brasil), whose headquarters are in *Pico dos Raios* monastery.

In 1985, the Center of Buddhist Studies (CEB) was created in Porto Alegre (capital of the Rio Grande do Sul state). CEB comprised practitioners of several schools of Buddhism, including Zen. In 1989, Tokuda and CEB's Zen practitioners inaugurated the temple *Sôtô Zen Sanguen Dojô*. Presently the temple follows orientation of Daigyo Moriyama Roshi and his French Disciple Zuymyo Joshin Sensei. Moriyama Roshi has disciples in Brazil, USA, Argentina, Uruguay, France, Germany, Sweden, Austria, Canada, Korea and Sri Lanka.[1]

Continuing his missionary work among non-Japanese Brazilians, in 1993 Tokuda founded the *Zen Center of Planalto*, in Brasília, the federal capital. In the following year, Tokuda and Brazilian practitioners founded the *Zen Center of Rio de Janeiro*. In 1998, Tokuda established the *Serra do Trovão* monastery in Minas Gerais state. This monastery was established to be exclusively for the training of new monks and it holds two seven-day monthly retreats. It is noteworthy that Ryotan Tokuda, like Moriyama Roshi, has a connection with European Zen. He has Zen groups in Italy, France and Germany. In 1995, Tokuda founded the *Ecole Nonindo de Medicine Traditionelle Chinoise* and the *Association Mahamuni*, both in Paris.

This new way of approaching Zen Buddhism came via the United States. Interviews with practitioners show that currently, for Brazilians of non-Japanese origin, the interest in Zen Buddhism happens via the United States, through the media[2], books on Zen, movies[3] and travels. In fact, all of the people interviewed described their first contact with Zen through books. The United States is a strong source of material and ideas on Zen for various reasons. One

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1 'Zen Oferece a Paz', in *Bodigaya* magazine, No. 5, 1998, p. 5.

2 The word 'Zen' is fashionable in the West: one sees Zen perfume, shops, beauty parlours, restaurants, magazine articles and architecture. In Brazil, it is a common expression to say someone is 'Zen', meaning very peaceful and tranquil. Zen has a positive image in Brazil; it is associated with refinement, minimalism, non-tension, non-anxiety, exquisite beauty and exoticism. One illustration of this is the fact that the word 'Zen' appears almost daily in the trendy social column of *Folha de São Paulo*, one of the leading newspapers in Brazil.

3 The recent Hollywood movies 'Little Buddha', 'Seven Years in Tibet' and 'Kundun' were very successful in Brazil. Even though they dealt with Tibetan Buddhism, they are directly associated with Buddhism itself and not specifically Tibet. As we saw in this paper, practitioners may attend various sects of Buddhist temples/monasteries at once.

of them is that English is more accessible to Brazilians than Japanese. In fact, most of the books on Zen translated into Portuguese were originally in English. Moreover, owing to the fact that the practitioners interviewed come from the intellectual upper middle-class and the vast majority are university graduate liberal professionals, many of them are able to read the books in English before they are translated.

Accordingly, the way Zen Buddhism is diffused among the Brazilian upper middle-class could be seen as part of a 'faculty club culture', a term coined by Peter Berger as a process of cultural globalisation. According to Berger, '[the "faculty club culture"] is the internationalisation of the Western intelligentsia, its values and ideologies. It is carried by foundations, academic networks, non-governmental organizations.'[1] Similar to 'convert Zen', the 'faculty club culture' is primarily an elite culture, which 'spreads its beliefs and values through some of the media of mass communication. Some examples of these values are feminism and environmentalism.'[2] Indeed, both are present in Buddhism in the West. Furthermore, Berger places two of the main features of globalisation as the Western, principally American, provenance, and its relation to the English language. According to him, English would be the *lingua franca* of globalisation.[3] As we mentioned before, most of the information on Zen in Brazil is carried through Portuguese translations of English material. In *Busshinji* temple in São Paulo, the abbess, in her weekly lectures, translates passages from books in English, written by Japanese monks while they lived in America. In addition, in *Busshinji* temple there is a *sutra* study group, where one of the practitioners translates, prints and hands out parts of books to be studied. In the Zen Centre of Porto Alegre, many adherents are learning English to be able to speak to Moriyama Roshi without the need of a translator. Following this trend on globalisation of North American Zen, some practitioners even choose to travel to Zen Centres in the US:

> In San Francisco I felt Zen is more incorporated in their culture [than in Brazil]. There, the abbot is a whole unit and it seems Zen is already blended in his personality, emotion, action, intellect, in his whole being. So much so that the lectures aren't on classical texts. People go there and open their hearts, they

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1 P. Berger, 'Four Faces of Global Culture', *The National Interest*, No. 49, Fall, 1997, pp. 23-29.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Loc. cit.*

> open their mouth and speak, what comes out is Zen. Koen san [the Brazilian abbess of *Bushinji* temple] lived in Japan for many years; she comes from a Japanese culture, which sometimes has a difficult interaction with the Brazilian way of being. There [in the US], the monks are American and the community is already forty years old. So they have a local colour, the main core of Zen was preserved, but it is not so much Japanese. I felt more affection there, which is a Western thing. When I left I went to say goodbye to the abbot and he hugged me! When I arrived here, I went to the temple to hug people and it didn't work (Olga, 50 years old, economist).

> After I arrived home from a *sesshin* [retreat], I looked up a book about the experience of *zazen* by an American nun, Joko Beck. Her talks with her disciples were published in two volumes. She is also a Westerner, so she understands well what goes on in the mind of a Westerner who embraced Zen Buddhism. She speaks as we do; we understand very well what she says about the psychic processes, about the psychology of a Western person, in this case of a Brazilian person. I really didn't feel any difference. The American style of Zen is closer to ours (Maria Helena, 49 years old, University lecturer).

> I think the Americans and Brazilians have a similar language to talk about Zen (Cida, 40 years old, astrologer).

Dwelling in the cities, these practitioners seek to relieve stress and to acquire inner peace, changing this symbolic space with a miscellany of religion and leisure:

> I became more focused and my anxiety has decreased with Zen practice. Now I find more satisfaction in life. Zen practice means tranquillity to me, the fruition of living in the present moment (Cida, 40 years old, astrologer).

> I went through various other practices before I found Zen. Zen answered my needs of harmonization. Because my job is very stressful and I have to deal with a lot of people, I need harmony in everyday life. Life in big cities is very stressful (Bernadete, 37 years old, advertiser).

The vast majority of those interviewed were Catholics before becoming Zen Buddhists. They explain their disenchantment with the Catholic religion in various ways, such as its dogmatism, its separation from daily life and its problems, its hierarchical organization, its way of dealing with nature and its almighty God. Another reason for Catholic followers' symbolic migration to other religions is that the Catholic Church possesses a patronising and punitive attitude. Looking for an alternative, Catholic followers try to compose their symbolic universe with something that they can construct by themselves in daily life:

> I have a Catholic background; I used to go to Church till first communion. You go more because of your parents' influence. But after that never more... because I am not interested. Catholic Church is very dissociated from daily life... I guess that's why Zen is so interesting. Christianity is too separated from reality. Zen is not; it is a very practical thing, very down to earth on how to face difficulties. Its pragmatism attracted me (Ricardo, 27 years old, physician).

> [In Zen] I don't need an interpretation; I don't need hermeneutics, somebody telling me which is the correct way. It is Zen itself that says: 'Don't let the *Sûtra* command you, you must be in command' (José Guilherme, 53 years old, university professor).

> What called my attention to Zen was mainly its simplicity. Zen is very much this experience of meditation, it's to practice and observe what happens in your daily life. Zen does not make this separation, as the majority of other religions do, between the religious place, where you practice (the temple, the church), and your normal, daily life. Zen puts these two things together. The practice is not only when you do *zazen* [meditation], but also it is something you'll practice in your daily life (Cida, 40 years old, astrologer).

The close relationship between Buddhism and the ecological movement, as opposed to the Catholic way of approaching nature, is mentioned by a practitioner to explain her religious choice:

> Buddhism has a distinctive trait if compared to Christianity. For Buddhism there is life in all the elements of nature besides men themselves. There is life in the plants, rocks, mountains, and

> water, in everything. But in Christianity things are different. I realized this reading the Genesis, which deals with creation. There it says God created the animals to serve men. That shocked me. Men took their ethnocentrism too far. Men subjugated animals and plants. Today we are watching the destruction of the planet. ... Buddhism has a different way of approaching this problem. And this is fundamental for me. To integrate nature is for me a spirituality that has to do with my life story (Maria Helena, 49 years old, university lecturer).

Furthermore, *Zen Quarterly*, a magazine published by the *Sôtô* School of Zen Buddhism in Japan, also deals frequently with ecological issues. It is therefore attuned with the Western expectations towards Buddhism.

> As we approach the 21st century with the mindfulness of compassion and non-violence, our Buddhist challenge is to cultivate the Buddhist teachings that will stop the crimes against the environment and will reform our money-oriented world .[1]

Hybridisation and Indigenisation of Zen in Brazil

Through interviews I could verify that although there is a symbolic migration, this does not always mean necessarily the abandonment of the previous religion. In other words, what may take place is an addition. Since Zen Buddhism does not have a supreme god, this divine place may be filled by the original religion. Hence, Zen Buddhism becomes a way of living and not a sacred referential.

Moreover, in a process of *bricollage*,[2] the practitioner chooses characteristics from different practices to condense them into a spiritual quest. Thus, each practitioner constructs his/her religion as a unique praxis, different from all the others mixing various traditions in order to build a new contemporary spirituality.

There are several groups of practices associated with Zen Buddhism, which are recurrent in the interviews: practices of healing

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1 Shokaku Okumura, *Zen Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1998, p. 1.

2 Using the concept of 'bricolleur' created by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *La Pensée Sauvage*, Paris, 1966.

(Yoga, Shiatsu, Do In, Tai Chi Chuan, Acupuncture), practices of self-understanding (many kinds of psychotherapy, Astrology), martial arts (Ai Ki Do, Karate), eating habits (vegetarianism, macrobiotics) and other religions (Spiritism[1], African religions, Mahikari[2], Rajneesh/Osho[3]). As one practitioner says:

> I don't think there is only one line of thinking. Only one line of thinking can't supply all your needs. You have to pick some things that have to do with you, and if you think that something is too radical to one side, you should look for something on the other side. I think you will end up disappointed if you pick only one thing. ... There's a word nowadays that has everything to do with the end of the millennium, when you stop following only one thing, it is 'holism'. You take something without worrying with lines of reasoning. You know I don't care much for strict lines of reasoning. I think you have to get the whole, the essence, because everything is basically the same, all these practices say similar things (Ricardo, 27 years old, physician).

> Meditation, as we are learning here [in a Zen retreat], can be a 'holopraxis' [holistic practice] too. It will never be an affiliation, the exclusive form of work or technique. I'll never do this again in my life. I want to stay absolutely free. The moment we live decides which practice we should do. I think we have to be open to the different praxis, which are offered to us. I like to have a plurality of instruments at hand (Francisco, 59 years old, business consultant).

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1 Spiritism, or Kardecism, as it is known in Brazil, was founded by Allan Kardec (1804-1869) in France. It arrived in Brazil at the end of the nineteenth century. At the core of its doctrine is the idea of spiritual evolution. According to Kardec, the spirit, created by God, goes through several reincarnations until it achieves perfection. In order to evolve, the incarnated spirit (human beings) should practice charity and proselytise. Also, the evolution of the spirit depends on its own effort. In Brazil, it suffered influences of Catholicism. As a result, it emphasizes the idea of healing and miracle, Koichi Mori, 'Processo de 'Amarelamento' das Tradicionais Religiões Brasileiras de Possessão: Mundo Religioso de uma Okinawana', in *Estudos Japoneses*, No. 18, São Paulo, 1998, pp. 55-76, p. 59.

2 Japanese New Religious Movement.

3 Neo-Hindu guru.

Zen Buddhism, for Brazilians of non-Japanese descent, accepts pluralism and diversity. This approach to religious practice is justified using the Zen Buddhist idea of non-attachment. According to Buddhism, what causes suffering is attachment and lack of understanding that everything is impermanent. This ignorance of impermanence creates the expectation things will be the same. There is a famous Zen saying: 'If you see the Buddha, kill the Buddha', meaning you should not get attached to the idea of Buddha outside yourself, it should be in yourself. This is interpreted by practitioners as the impossibility of one religion being the permanent answer to their spiritual needs. The same practitioner above praises Zen Buddhism as a religion that does not request loyalty:

> You have to keep picking the little things you believe in and they will work for you as a step to go further. So, you will leave things behind when you have no use for them anymore. You shouldn't say 'I believe in this....' It's funny because the monk himself said this. 'You cannot get attached to Zen Buddhism' (Ricardo, 27 years old, physician).

That is probably why being a regular practitioner in one religion does not stop someone from doing the same in another. It is possible that the same person participates in meditations in a Tibetan Buddhist centre, and, at the same time, goes to a Japanese Zen centre. An adherent may be ordained lay monk/nun and receive different Buddhist names from different lineages.[1]

> I go regularly to the Zen meditations at the temple and to Tibetan meetings at the Gompa.[2] You see, Zen Buddhism gives me peace and tranquillity, but it doesn't answer to my needs of ritualism. I am a lay nun in both places so I have a Zen name and a Tibetan name (Laís, 55 years old, psychotherapist).

According to a Brazilian lay monk who works in the temple in São Paulo, many practitioners who come to meditate for the first time are going through a difficult moment in their lives.

> When a new practitioner arrives here, he/she is usually going through a difficult moment, a crucial moment ... His/Her cultural background is Western, it is Christian or Jewish. He/She is very

[1] W. Paranhos, *op. cit.*, p. 155.
[2] Tibetan temple.

> close to the concept of miracle. When you are emotionally sick, you go to a hospital, you go to a Candomblé, Umbanda [Afro-Brazilian religions], to a priest or to a temple. This works as anaesthetics, it calms you down. ... People arrive at the temple hoping that they can find the answer to their troubles here. But when they sit to meditate hoping for tranquillity (this is their goal), everything starts to hurt, the whole body starts to hurt ... and then the mind is in pain too. And when they start to cry? When they start to know themselves? There are people who don't want to know about this. They are afraid, they are looking for a miracle, and they don't want to see the horror of their troubles. Sometimes people leave the temple very agitated. Their idea of meditation is of being in heaven. Only one out of ten people who come here for the first time end up staying (Paulo Hoen, 49 years old, lay monk, computer consultant).

As we can see, Hoen mentions another characteristic of the population who seeks Zen Buddhism – they are in search of relief from personal problems and in order to do so they seek to learn about their 'inner self'. Many practitioners mentioned doing various kinds of psychotherapy and equalled it with Zen as a way of getting in touch with the 'inner-self'.

> I did group therapy. It helped me develop myself. Now my Zen practice is helping me (Ricardo, 27 years old, physician).

One can appreciate how meaningful Zen Buddhism is for its adherents, when one realises that many practitioners use their leisure moments, such weekends and holidays, to go to meditation sessions and retreats (*sesshin*).

> It was Carnival and I was going to Bahia and saw the sign for the Monastery on the road. I felt an irresistible attraction, 'you have to go; you have to go'. It was like a call (Bernadete, 37 years old, advertising).

The consumption of goods is easily identifiable in the sales of books, magazines[1], courses, retreats, clothes and utensils adapted for

[1] There are four magazines published quarterly in Brazil. Two of them are exclusively Zen Buddhist: *Flor do Vazio* is published in Rio de Janeiro, *Caminho Zen*, published in Japan by the *Sôtô* School in Portuguese for the Brazilian market. *Bodigaya* and *Bodisatva* are two Buddhist magazines which comprise articles manly on Zen, Theravada and Tibetan Buddhism.

meditation, as if *satori* (enlightenment) itself were possible to be reached as you acquire merchandise.

> *Samadi*, enlightenment, *satori* appear now also as a fetish, almost as a commercial exhibition, as image of power, as merchandise. The possibility of a trance, of a touch of energy, of a hug of divine love, etc., is so desired in the present social context as the acquisition of a car, of an appliance, of a trip to a famous place. The religious advertisement ... has already incorporated, as any other advertisement of consumption society, the mimetic desire of ownership.[1]

In the 1990s, Japanese, Tibetan, Korean, Thai and Singhalese Buddhist monks were increasingly present in Brazil. *Dharma Centres* (Buddhist centres managed by Brazilians) bring their spiritual mentors from abroad so that they can give workshops, promote spiritual retreats and disseminate their teachings. Many followers undertake trips to centres which originated the religion, such as the United States, Japan, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand or Nepal. Currently in Brazil, there are fourteen Zen Buddhist centres and temples, three Zen Buddhist monasteries, thirty four Tibetan Centres and seven Theravada centres. The increase of Buddhist centres and practitioners in Brazil is in consonance with the decline of the Catholic Church. Pierre Sanchis writes about the 'end of Catholic hegemony in Brazil'. According to statistics, in 1980, 88% of the Brazilian population declared itself Catholic; in 1991, the number decreased to 80%; and in 1994, 74% of the population said it was Catholic.[2] Obviously, the increase of the number of Buddhist adherents is not the only cause of Catholic decline. The recent expansion of Evangelism and Pentecostalism among the lower classes has had a much more important role in this decline.

Furthermore, in 1988, when Catholics who attended church once a week were asked if they believed in reincarnation, 45.9% said they did.[3] Since reincarnation is not part of the Catholic doctrine, one can see how permeable the borders of the Catholic world are in Brazil. The idea of reincarnation was introduced in Brazil by

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1 José Jorge de Carvalho, 'Características do Fenômeno Religioso na Sociedade Contemporânea', in *O Impacto da Modernidade Sobre a Religião*, São Paulo, 1992, p. 153.

2 Pierre Sanchis, 'O Campo Religioso Contemporâneo no Brasil', in *Globalização e Religião*, Petrópolis, 1997, pp. 103-115.

3 Carlos Rodrigues Brandão, 'A Crise das Instituições Tradicionais Produtoras de Sentido', in *Misticismo e Novas Religiões*, Petrópolis, pp 25-41.

Spiritism at the end of the nineteenth century, a religion that has since been extensively accepted by Brazilian society. According to a Brazilian scholar of religions, 'In many aspects, the Spiritist world-view became part of the national ethos, as much as Catholicism, and more recently Protestantism.'[1] In this sense, Spiritism paved the way for the acceptance of the Buddhist idea of reincarnation.

Nevertheless, the same survey showed that 89.7% of the people classified as of 'no religion' declared they believed in God, 55.9% declared they believed in Heaven and 44.1% believed in Hell. As we see, the Catholic world is spread beyond its borders, carrying its influence even to groups that are distant from its world-views.

If the Catholic Church was once able 'to contain within itself the reactions, rebellions and creative energies through its religious orders', as Gary Bouma wrote, nowadays it seems to be losing ground for diversity outside itself. However, one has to bear in mind that Buddhism is a minor shareholder of this process in Brazil. Protestant religions, particularly Pentecostals, and New Religious Movements, which appeal to lower social classes, have the larger share of this market.

Conclusion

Christianity and Buddhism have a long tradition. How are these two religions composed in the same field? How are the two traditions articulated? Or are they not articulated? Are they exclusive?

As it was presented here, in Brazil, Buddhism has a tradition of on the one hand, ethnic affirmation and, on the other hand, a search for a religious identity that better assists urban demands. We focused on the issue of a search for a religious identity, of those who made a symbolic migration. The data from interviews showed us that most of the practitioners of Zen Buddhism were originated from Catholicism. Why the abandonment of this tradition? The main answer that puts in evidence this migration is that 'Catholicism does not answer to reality anymore', among others. Conversely, 'Zen Buddhism teaches us to live daily life, to search for inner peace, to have a more holistic viewpoint'.

The hypothesis of my research is that adhering to one symbolic universe does not exclude an adherence to another. Globalisation

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[1] José Jorge Carvalho, 'O Encontro de Velhas e Novas Religiões: esboço de uma teoria dos estilos de espiritualidade', in *Misticismo e Novas Religiões*, Petrópolis, pp. 69-98.

renders religious borders permeable so that a process of bricolage can take place. As a result, the individual plays a central role, choosing different practices in order to mould his/her own synthesis, his/her 'private' religion, that is, an ephemeral combination adapted to the present moment of the individual's daily life. Catholicism that once answered the daily life problems has distanced itself, even after Vatican II, when the Church tried to answer these urban pleas. As a result, ritual became empty of myth and therefore empty of meaning for the 'I at the present moment'. Other religions answered these demands better in Brazil. While the lower classes sought meaning in the Afro-Brazilian, Evangelical Churches and New Religious Movements, members of the upper middle-class, a more intellectualised population, turned to Zen Buddhism and Buddhism in general. However, even if many followers left Catholicism behind, its world-view is very much present in the Brazilian ethos.