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## Zazen or Not Zazen?

### The Predicament of Sōtōshū's *Kaikyōshi* in Brazil

In this paper, I discuss the establishment of Sōtō Zenshū missions in Brazil. I contend that the discourse on Zen that emerged from the writings of D. T. Suzuki and the Kyoto School to resist Western cultural hegemony not only fed the Zen boom in the West, but has more recently impacted on the Zen practice of some Japanese. I show that Japanese Sōtōshū *kaikyōshi* who catered to the (mostly) non-Japanese Brazilian community since 1968 embraced Suzuki's ideas on Zen wholeheartedly in Japan, prior to their arrival in Brazil. Thus, while these *kaikyōshi* praised zazen as the main Zen practice, others, who catered for Japanese-Brazilians, favored devotional practices. Their diametrically opposing attitudes towards zazen and rituals created conflicts, which were mirrored in their congregation. Here I will present the *kaikyōshi* side of the conflicts and their evolution through the years to reveal the way the Japanese-Brazilian and non-Japanese communities negotiated their place in the Busshinji temple in São Paulo city.

KEYWORDS: Sōtōshū – *kaikyōshi* – Brazil – Japanese-Brazilian community – Zazenless Zen – conflicts

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ZEN BUDDHISM was introduced to Brazil by the Japanese immigrant community who first migrated in 1908, and by non-Japanese Brazilian intellectuals who became interested in Zen through readings of European and subsequently American literature since the late nineteenth century. Accordingly, since its inception, there have been two conflicting definitions of Zen Buddhism, both sides claiming to practice “authentic” and “true” Zen Buddhism. In very broad terms, while some *kaikyōshi* 開教師 and the Japanese community have asserted that Zen is comprised of devotional practices, worship of ancestors, and funeral rituals, other *kaikyōshi* and (mostly) non-Japanese Brazilian practitioners have claimed that Zen relies mainly on zazen in order to experience enlightenment. The same state of affairs has been observed in many Western countries where Buddhism emerged and developed as a result both of immigration and religious conversion (BAUMANN 1995, 2001; FIELDS 1998; NATTIER 1995, 1998; NUMRICH 1996; PREBISH 1993).

To be sure, this division is a superficial picture of Zen in Brazil. A more contemporary and detailed approach reveals a blurred area where Japanese-Brazilians who have been Catholic for many generations have become interested in Zen through zazen, while some non-Japanese Brazilians have developed a devotional attitude towards Zen. Here, however, I will keep the bigger picture of division so that I can illuminate the approach of Sōtōshū 曹洞宗 and consequently that of its *kaikyōshi* to Zen, which in time generated bitter conflicts between the two congregations in Brazil. I argue that the experiences of the *kaikyōshi* in Brazil and the sides they have taken in the conflicts have been profoundly shaped by the choices they made in Japan regarding these opposing attitudes towards zazen.

### *Modern Buddhism: Constructing the Western Discourse on Zen*

Devotional Buddhist practices carried by *kaikyōshi* often contrasted with ideas non-Japanese Brazilians were receiving from the North American Zen boom of the late 1950s and 1960s. The appropriation and construction of Zen, which took place in many Western countries, had a similar departure point. D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966) and the Kyoto School scholars, particularly its founder and Suzuki’s friend Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), were fundamental to the creation of a Zen discourse in Japan and in the West. Recently this discourse, its creators, and their association with Japanese nationalism have received strong critiques from

\*I would like to express my gratitude to the Japan Foundation for funding my research in Japan through a Japan Foundation Fellowship.

Western scholars, such as Bernard FAURE (1993, pp. 53–88), Donald LOPEZ (2002, pp. vii–xii), John MARALDO and James HEISIG (1994), and Robert SHARF (1994, 1995a, 1995b). Robert SHARF has observed that Suzuki and the Kyoto School scholars were “internationally minded intellectuals” (1995b, p. 108), fascinated with Western culture while at the same time anxious about its universalizing discourse. Attempting to create a response to this discourse, these university-educated intellectuals “appropriated key concepts from the West, while at the same time appearing to challenge the cultural hegemony of Western modes of thought” (SHARF 1995b, p. 124). Furthermore, these purveyors of Zen were writing in the milieu of the so-called Nationalistic Buddhism (*Shin Bukkyō* 新仏教), a movement that also developed as a response to the Western secular critique of religion. In order to secure Buddhism a meaningful place in Japanese modern society, *Shin Bukkyō* intellectuals deployed European ideas of anti-clericalism and anti-ritualism of the Reformation, and the rationalism and empiricism of the Enlightenment to reconstruct Buddhism as “‘modern,’ ‘cosmopolitan,’ ‘humanistic,’ ‘socially responsible’ [...] a ‘world religion’ [that was] empirical, rational and in full accord with modern science” (SHARF 1995b, p. 110).

Influenced by *Shin Bukkyō* and by the contemporary discourses of Japanese uniqueness, Suzuki and the Kyoto School intellectuals recreated Zen as the very essence of Japanese national identity, which would denote the cultural superiority of Japan over the West. According to this discourse, because Zen was constructed not as a religion with its rituals and doctrine, but as an individual spiritual experience that would lead to “an uncompromisingly empirical, rational and scientific mode of inquiry into the nature of things” (SHARF 1995b, p. 111), Zen was able to live through the enlightenment trends coming from the West. By identifying this spiritual experience with a “timeless,” “pure,” and “invariable” Zen “essence,” and differentiating it from its cultural expressions (regarded as degenerate, “impure” accretions), these Zen advocates were able to regard it as transcultural and universal. Zen would not be associated with any particular religion, philosophy, or metaphysics, but would be “the spirit of all religion and philosophy” (Suzuki quoted in FAURE 1993, p. 57). Given that Suzuki and other intellectuals who popularized Zen in the West were not part of institutional Zen sects and lacked formal transmission in a Zen lineage, it is not surprising that they advocated “authentic” Zen as an individual, lay experience that did not require an association with institutional tradition. Indeed, this discourse was so influential that two of the *kaikyōshi* whose lives will be presented here severed their association with Sōtōshū while pursuing “authentic” Zen.

Bernard FAURE refers to this Zen discourse as “Orientalism ‘by excess,’ a ‘secondary’ Orientalism, [one] that offers an idealized, ‘nativist’ image of a Japanese culture deeply influenced by Zen” (1993, p. 53). One could also think of a “reverse Orientalism,” where Japanese scholars created a discourse of resistance, appropriating categories that the West deployed to classify them and then inverting the

trend. Indeed, not only did they use the same essentialized categories to refer to themselves (the Oriental vis-à-vis the Occidental), but they also asserted that the Oriental (meaning Japanese) traits were superior to Occidental ones. In sum, by making Zen rational and in accordance with modern science, and thus superior to superstitious Christianity, while at the same time fashioning Japanese culture as embedded in Zen, Japan would have a superior zeitgeist compared to the West.

Donald LOPEZ (2002) has taken a step forward in his critique by linking this Japanese Buddhist response with responses of other Asian Buddhist societies in the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth centuries. For Lopez, the encounter of these traditional Asian Buddhist societies with modernity—mostly through a colonial situation—prompted the invention of a Buddhist tradition that would enable its survival against the Western secular challenge. Lopez called this newly created pan-Asian and Western tradition “modern Buddhism,” for “it shared many characteristics of other projects of modernity” (2002, p. ix).<sup>1</sup> In addition to the characteristics mentioned before, he includes some new features which will help us better understand the kind of Buddhism preached by *kaikyōshi* working with non-Japanese Brazilian adherents. First, modern Buddhism regards the recent past and contemporary practices as degeneration, and seeks a return to the “authentic,” “original” Buddhism of the Buddha, which is the Buddha’s enlightenment experience (LOPEZ 2002, p. xxxi), hence the central role played by meditation in modern Buddhism. Second, Lopez argues that modern Buddhism is a sect, with its own doctrines, lineage, practices, and sacred scriptures. Unlike the traditional master-to-disciple personal transmission confined to a single school, this sect transcends cultural and national boundaries, since its leaders and followers are intellectual cosmopolitans who are in contact with other Buddhist traditions. They seek to create an international Buddhism whose essence would be identical once the “cultural accretions” are removed (LOPEZ 2002, p. xxxix). Third, the distinction between monks and laity is blurred, with lay followers taking up traditional monks’ practices of study of scriptures and meditation (LOPEZ 2002, p. xxxvii). Finally, the leaders of modern Buddhism were marginal figures in their own countries. As I show in this paper, *kaikyōshi* catering for mostly non-Japanese Brazilians embody all these traits: they regard zazen as a central Zen practice; whereas they are marginal in their own country,

1. Martin Baumann has also established a distinction between traditionalist (which places emphasis on the ritual and devotional acts of merit making) and modernist (emphasis on rational, scientific and scriptural elements) Buddhism. However, Baumann adds a third historical development: global or post-modernist Buddhism. The latter would be “a non-Buddhist, expressively non-religious understanding, highlighting individualized ‘healing,’ therapeutic remedy, and psychological well-being” (BAUMANN 2001, p. 22). Since global Buddhism is a development of modernist Buddhism, and part of the larger phenomenon of Buddhism in Brazil, I will disregard it in this paper, keeping the main distinction between modern and traditional Buddhism.

they are highly influential in Brazil; they are in contact with other Buddhist traditions in the country and overseas; they believe there is an identical essence in all Buddhist practices (“the only difference is the color of the robes,” says one of them); and, finally their followers are neither completely lay people nor monks.

### *Sōtōshū's Historical Choices*

Long before conflicts erupted in Western countries, Sōtōshū itself had a history of a dualistic attitude towards *zazen*. Ian READER has argued in his classic works (1985 and 1986) that while asserting that *zazen* is at the core and is the essence of the teachings of Dōgen (1200–1253), Sōtōshū does not promote *zazen* to its congregation and very few of its priests actually practice it. According to Reader, the belief that *zazen* was a hindrance for the popularization of the sect has made patriarchs and the institution alike opt throughout the sect's history for a functional relationship with the congregation rather than emphasis on monastic Zen practices. After Dōgen's death, his successors realized that in order to expand, the sect would have to incorporate more popular customs and practices, such as funeral services and memorial rituals (READER 1986, p. 17). This move has paid off: from the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries onwards the Sōtō sect has expanded greatly and today is the largest Zen Buddhist denomination in Japan. In conjunction with this expansion, current statistics show that the choice of temple-household system over Dōgen's monasticism has prevailed greatly. In 1996, William Bodiford pointed to more than ninety percent of Sōtōshū's priests being married and managing Zen temples as hereditary family business. Accordingly, there were over fifteen thousand family-run temples and only thirty-one monasteries in Japan at the time (BODIFORD 1996, p. 4).

These statistics beg the question of whether this ambivalence towards *zazen* would be a predicament had Sōtōshū not expanded to the West. Participating in the Japanese religious arena as a supplier of funerary and memorial rites, like any other Japanese Buddhist school, made Sōtōshū the largest Zen sect in Japan and no apparent dilemma ensued. However, once it confronted the Zen discourse constructed for and in the West, which prioritizes *zazen*, Sōtōshū saw itself in a predicament. Therefore, one has to keep in mind that it is this difference between Japanese practices and beliefs and Western expectations that creates the predicament I am discussing here.

### *An Exported Predicament?*

Naturally, when Sōtōshū sent *kaikyōshi* overseas this predicament was exported as well. However, as in Japan, no open conflict was expected since *kaikyōshi* were sent to continue the temple-household system and cater to the Japanese community. *Kaikyōshi* were not sent to proselytize outside the ethnic enclave. Thus, as in Japan, they were not expected to promote *zazen* or monasticism. Nevertheless,

upon arriving in Western countries these *kaikyōshi* encountered a demand for monastic Zen and zazen by non-Japanese adherents, which grew stronger over the years. At times, this generated acute conflicts concerning the authenticity of Zen practices and evinced Sōtōshū's own dualistic discourse towards the authenticity and legitimacy of its practices. In an interview I conducted, a representative of the headquarters of the Sōtō sect in Tokyo (Sōtōshū Shūmichō) expressed concern over the sect's difficulties in managing conflicts over authenticity in the US and in Brazil where there is a large number of Japanese immigrants, as opposed to the lack of problems in Europe, where there has been a small Japanese diaspora.<sup>2</sup>

Sōtōshū has sent a total of thirteen *kaikyōshi* since it began its missionary activities in Brazil in 1955. These *kaikyōshi* were usually recent graduates from Komazawa University (the Sōtōshū university in Tokyo) and were sent overseas for three to five years to acquire experience. Most of them were part of the temple-household system and went to Brazil to assist immigrants in times of death by performing funerary rituals and ancestor worship.

A good example of this kind of *kaikyōshi* is Zendō Matsunaga. Matsunaga was sent to Brazil in 1959 where he lived until he was transferred in 1964 to Zenshūji 禅宗寺 on the island of Kawai in Hawai'i. Upon arriving at Busshinji 佛心寺 (the headquarters of Sōtōshū in South America located in São Paulo city) to assist Shingū Ryōhan, the *sōkan* 総監 (superintendent) for South America, he was soon sent to the west of the state, where most immigrants were. Matsunaga established himself in the town of Pompéia, but would visit all the other towns built along the Sorocabana railroad. The train lines had been the main means of transportation during the expansion of coffee farming into the west in the beginning of the twentieth century, and the Japanese immigrants had settled in the towns along them. Matsunaga was soon to realize that the zen congregation (*zenshū danka* 禅宗檀家) was small because most of the Japanese immigrants were from the west of Japan, particularly Hiroshima, Fukuoka, Kumamoto, and Okinawa, all sites of strong Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 and Jōdoshū adherence. Therefore, the Sōtō congregation celebrated Buddhist rituals, such as O-bon (memorial day) and Hanamatsuri 花祭り (Buddha's birthday), together with other Japanese Buddhist denominations. Moreover, the Japanese community had adopted Brazilian religious rituals. They also celebrated the Catholic All Souls Day (2 November), for many Japanese had converted to Catholicism in an attempt to be accepted in the country.

*Kaikyōshi* were sent to Brazil by Sōtōshū, but this did not mean Sōtōshū paid them a salary during the mission. Matsunaga, as for other *kaikyōshi* sent overseas, had to find the means to support himself amongst his congregation, which in this case was composed mainly of small farmers and merchants. Matsunaga smiled

2. For a historical overview and current trends in Japanese emigration, see BEFU 2000.

when he told me in an interview how the *dankasan* would give him proper clothes to wear, food, and treats. In fact, he commented that the congregation knew his Buddhist apparel would cause him to be frowned upon and possibly discriminated against in a strictly Catholic country. He soon exchanged his black robes for a white linen suit and covered his shaved head with a white Panama hat donated by the congregation. But that was not enough. In the beginning, the congregation still did not feel comfortable with his shaved head so Matsunaga had to let his hair grow. He told me the same thing happened when he moved to Hawai'i. This illustrates how *kaikyōshi* embodied the process of negotiation and hybridization that occurs when Zen Buddhism encounters other cultures. The classes Matsunaga taught at the *kaikan* 会館 (community hall) of each town provided a source of income. Matsunaga reminisced:

I would stay in Pompéia for one-third of the month and then travel around to Marília, Lucélia and Tupã or go to São Paulo city to report to the *sōkan*. Gradually my acquaintance increased and they asked me to stay longer in Pompéia. The number of students in my Japanese language class, ikebana (flower arrangement), *odori* (dance), and *chanoyu* (tea ceremony) also increased and I was giving two or three classes a month. Once a year we had a flower arrangement exhibition. I taught Japanese language for children as their parents had a hard time trying to understand what the children were saying because they learned Portuguese in regular school. Finally, on Sundays I had a Buddhist service for children in the morning and for the adults in the afternoon. With all these classes, some of the Japanese who had converted to Catholicism started coming too!

(Personal communication, Eiheiiji, October 2000)

It is clear from his memories that expanding Sōtōshū in Brazil in the late 1950s and early 1960s meant allowing for non-sectarianism and giving the immigrants a space to perform and learn about their ethnic identity. The *kaikan* and *kaikyōshi* alike functioned as solid pillars of their culture and as embodiments of their mother country. As a result, even Japanese who had converted to Catholicism took up the activities carried out by the Sōtōshū *kaikyōshi* and the presence of these Catholic converts was, in turn, readily accepted based on their ethnicity. It is noteworthy that since its establishment, Busshinji, like so many other Japanese Buddhist temples outside Japan, has also served as a cultural center where missionaries teach Japanese language, arts, and crafts as a way of maintaining community ties.<sup>3</sup>

3. Zenshūji in Los Angeles and Sōkōji in San Francisco are good examples of Sōtōshū temples in the US doubling as religious and cultural sites. For more on this, see ASAI and WILLIAMS 1999; SŌTŌSHŪ SHŪMUCHŌ 2000; ACTIVITY COMMITTEE & ASSOCIATION OF SŌTŌ ZEN BUDDHISTS 1997. For Jōdo Shinshū examples see KASHIMA 1977 and PIERCE 2000.

*Kaikyōshi Working with Non-Japanese Brazilians*

After Matsunaga left for Hawai'i, new *kaikyōshi* continued to be sent by Sōtōshū to cater for the Japanese community. In 1968, Sōtōshū sent Tokuda Ryōtan (a.k.a. Igarashi Kyūji) to work at Busshinji in São Paulo city. He became a teacher for the immigrants' children at the Mahāyāna Elementary School situated in the temple grounds and assisted in the temple's administration.

Tokuda was a different kind of *kaikyōshi* altogether. Not belonging to a temple family, he became a Sōtō Zen monk due to a calling, not to an obligation to inherit his father's temple. He had been in the Japanese army, but after a while had deep doubts about it. He tried to find answers in religious literature and read many books on Christianity, Buddhism, and Zen Buddhism. In 1958, while reading books by D.T. Suzuki (whose complete works he collected thereafter) and particularly Eugen Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery* (in Japanese), he decided Zen Buddhism was the way to go. After having what he called "spiritual experiences," where he felt the clear calling for monkhood, Tokuda did his first *sesshin* 接心 (retreat) at Ryūtakuji 龍澤寺, a Rinzai 臨濟 temple. This is not surprising since Suzuki advocated the Rinzai tradition. However, when he decided to enter Komazawa University, he found his interests very different from his colleagues:

In the first year of the university, I had the need to practice zazen. At Komazawa there is zazen, but the first year students don't need to do it. I wanted to sit, but many colleagues who were monks didn't understand that. They used to say to me: 'Next year you'll have to sit, why sit now?'

(Personal communication, Nagoya, November 2000)

This incident reveals the influence D.T. Suzuki and modern Zen had not only in the West, but in Japan as well. Evidence of such influence is Tokuda's expectation that zazen would play a central role in Sōtōshū's educational system as it does in the Western Zen practice. He further told me that in 1968, when the opportunity came to go to Brazil, he knew he wanted to stay in Brazil as long as possible, learn Portuguese and "sit with Brazilians." Paramount to this decision were the facts that he was, as mentioned earlier, on the fringe of his own sect since he did not belong to a temple family, and that his first contact with Zen happened through the literature produced for a Western audience in which the issues of zazen and enlightenment were more highly regarded than ceremonial practices. Moreover, Suzuki's influence ran deeper: Tokuda was also fascinated by early Christian mystics, for he understood the ecstatic state mentioned by Saint John of the Cross and Meister Eckhart as the experience of enlightenment in Zen. Tokuda saw no difference between West and East concerning this state of ecstasy and regarded the Christian experience of union with God as similar to satori (TOKUDA 1997, p. 61). Indeed, in his book *Psicologia Budista* [Buddhist psychology], Tokuda wrote:



As Saint John of the Cross said: the night of senses, the night of spirit, the night of soul. Through this internal voyage, we leave the external world and begin to work with our inner world, diving into our subconscious. When we get to the bottom of this darkness, there is a union with God, with Love. To this experience, Zen gives the name enlightenment, or satori.

(TOKUDA 1997, p. 60)

His interpretation seems to derive directly from Suzuki's bid to equate Zen and Christian mysticism to respond to the challenge of Christian/Western discursive superiority. For Suzuki, because Zen was free from religious, cultural and philosophical traditions, Buddhists and Christians alike could practice it. Indeed, Suzuki asserts: "Eckhart, [and] Zen [...] can be grouped together as belonging to the great school of mysticism" and "I am sure Eckhart had a satori" (Suzuki quoted in FAURE 1993, pp. 61–62).

Tokuda's bridging of Catholic and Buddhist beliefs undoubtedly allowed him to be readily accepted by non-Japanese Brazilians who already had a *zazenkai* 坐禅会 (sitting group) at Busshinji. After four years of difficulties in Busshinji because of his views, Tokuda decided to leave the temple but stay in Brazil leading his group of Brazilian followers. Soon afterwards, he also had to leave Sōtōshū, as his Zen practices and his making a living as a *shiatsushi*, an acupuncture and herbal practitioner, were not readily accepted by the Sōtō headquarters in Tokyo. It is noteworthy that while Matsunaga made a living teaching Japanese arts and language to the Japanese community, Tokuda offered alternative medicine to his non-Japanese Brazilian audience. In Brazil, alternative medicine is frequently associated with the "ancient wisdom of the East" and, incidentally, Zen Buddhism (ROCHA 2001). Hence, a Zen priest connected with acupuncture and Chinese herbs did not raise any eyebrows—quite the contrary, it fulfilled his followers' expectations.

#### *A New Sōkan Arrives: Open Conflicts*

After many years without a *sōkan* for South America, Sōtōshū finally sent Daigyō Moriyama Rōshi to Busshinji temple in 1993. Between 1970 and 1973, Moriyama had been the abbot of Sōkōji 桑港寺, the Sōtōshū temple in San Francisco. There he substituted for Shunryū Suzuki Rōshi (1904–1971), a *kaikyōshi* forced to resign from his post as abbot of the temple because his activities with his non-Japanese American students were not accepted by the Japanese community.<sup>4</sup> Although Moriyama worked in the temple and Suzuki was managing his newly established San Francisco Zen Center, they maintained close contact. When interviewed, Moriyama told me he shared Suzuki's ideas of foreigners having "a beginner's mind" (*shoshin* 初心), that is, "one which is

4. For a biography of Shunryū Suzuki, see CHADWICK 1999.

empty and ready for new things” (SUZUKI 1980, p. 21). This is how Moriyama expressed his discontent with Japanese Zen and his hopes for Brazil:

In Japan, monks are more interested in social practices and money to be received for services rendered to the community, such as funerals and worship of ancestors, than spiritual work. That is why I put my energy in a foreign country; here [in Brazil] Zen Buddhism *can be created again in a purer way...* Traditional Buddhist countries are losing the essence of Buddhism; I think religions are created, evolve, and degrade, and this is happening in Japan now. I feel that here the same thing that I witnessed in California is taking place: in Brazil there is a kind of energy that I don't find in Japan.

(Personal communication, São Paulo, October 1999, my italics)

This resembles the words of Shunryū Suzuki Rōshi: “I came to America to bring the pure way of Zen Buddhism” (CHADWICK 1999, p. 326). Moriyama's words were translated into actions and after three years working as the *sōkan* at Busshinji, he experienced the same problem Suzuki did in 1969. The Japanese congregation was not happy with his preference for the Brazilians of non-Japanese origin and pressed Sōtōshū to dismiss him. As mission temples belong to the congregation rather than to the priest, as is the norm in Japan, the congregation had the right to do so. In 1995 Moriyama was ousted from the temple and from his post at Sōtōshū. He welcomed the change and took his non-Japanese Brazilian students with him establishing two Zen groups, one in São Paulo city and the other in Porto Alegre, the capital of state of Rio Grande do Sul. Today he lives in Porto Alegre and, together with his sangha, is building a monastery in the countryside. Although living in Brazil, his international connections are strong: his oldest disciple runs a Zen center in France, he often travels to Argentina and Uruguay to oversee other groups of students and he has a German disciple assisting him in Brazil.

Like Tokuda, Moriyama markedly subscribes to the modern/Western Zen discourse. His evocation of a “pure,” “authentic,” “original” Zen, which is to be found in the Buddha's and Dōgen's enlightenment experience, and which is lost in Japan, is all too familiar. In addition, his disciples, like other Western Zen followers, blur the boundaries between laity and monkhood since he places *zazen* and *sesshin* at the core of Zen. Finally, if we accept Lopez's vision of modern Buddhism having its own lineage, doctrine, and practices we could say that although Suzuki did not give transmission to Moriyama, Suzuki was surely a strong influence in his thought. By the same token, by giving teachings and transmission in Brazil and overseas and having close contact with other non-Japanese Buddhist schools in Porto Alegre city, Moriyama is producing his own lineage of modern/Western Zen.

*The Substitute: A Non-Japanese Brazilian Woman*

Ironically, the successor of Moriyama Rōshi and newly appointed abbess was a married, non-Japanese Brazilian nun. Claudia Dias de Souza Batista was ordained in Los Angeles under Taizan Maezumi Rōshi (d. 1995) in 1983, when she received the Buddhist name of Koen 孤圓 (hereafter Coen, as it is spelled in Portuguese). In the same year, she left for Japan where she spent the next twelve years, eight of them at Aichi Senmon Nisōdō 愛知専門尼僧堂 in Nagoya.<sup>5</sup> Coen took the position of abbess at Busshinji in 1995, a post she was able to hold until January 2001.

Although she experienced many obstacles—including her ethnic background, gender, and marital status—she slowly gained the respect of the community. Soon after her arrival she began enforcing all of the activities more strictly than they had been before, and at the same time worked hard at preserving the rituals that the Japanese community expected to be performed. Looking back, one non-Japanese Brazilian practitioner observed that,

When Moriyama was in charge of the temple, he tried to adapt Japanese Zen to Brazilian culture. It was more flexible. With Coen, as she had recently arrived from Japan, she tried to maintain the patterns and rules by which she had lived there. She tried to establish the rhythm, behavior, and discipline of the Japanese practice. (Personal communication, São Paulo, March 1998)

I suggest that because Moriyama was an “authentic” Japanese and a male, he did not have to prove himself worthy of his position at the temple; he even made a point of not fitting their expectations. For instance, he told me in an interview in São Paulo in December 2000 that the congregation expected him to be dressed in fine brocade, but he more often than not wore monk’s working clothes and carried a backpack around. On the other hand, Coen had to work at being accepted by the Japanese-Brazilian community. This included being sometimes more Japanese than the Japanese themselves, that is, being strict, respecting the congregation’s expectations, and speaking Japanese fluently. In an interview conducted in March 2000, when she was still the head of Busshinji, Coen told me:

At first, when I was officiating rituals here in Busshinji they would comment ‘gaijin, gaijin’ [foreigner, foreigner], but when I started speaking Japanese and talking about Buddhism, their attitude changed. I guess the apparent discrimination against gaijin is because they are not sure if we know their way of life, culture, tradition, and so on. Slowly people would start saying to me, ‘so and so are gaijin, aren’t they, Sensei?’ They even felt a bit embarrassed because I lived in Japan for twelve years and some of them didn’t even know how to read Japanese. Some arrived in Brazil really young and felt I knew more of their culture or was more Japanese than them. Nowadays many come to me

5. For a good account of life in this nunnery, see ARAI 1999.

and say they want me to officiate at the mass [*sic*],<sup>6</sup> it is pretty embarrassing sometimes. There are other monks and they choose me. They say, ‘we want you and we want you to speak Portuguese after you speak in Japanese.’

Indeed, by speaking Japanese and Portuguese fluently, she was a successful intermediary between Japanese-Brazilian and non-Japanese Brazilian communities. Furthermore, it was her fluency in both Japanese and Brazilian cultures that prompted Sōtōshū Shūmuchō to send her to Brazil as a missionary because the new generations did not speak Japanese and felt alienated from the temple, which made the number of members fall dramatically. This proved to be the right policy since many young Japanese-Brazilians would come to Busshinji to a grandparent’s funeral and upon listening to her preaching in Portuguese would feel a connection with Buddhism.

Although Coen’s language skills and attitude helped her to become accepted, her gender was a difficult obstacle. Buddhism has had a long history of discrimination against women, and that was no different in Japan.<sup>7</sup> Until the Meiji era (1868–1912), the head temples refused admission to women. When monks and nuns were allowed to marry and choose tonsure (1872 and 1873 respectively), monks were able to adopt the new behavior, while nuns who married and did not shave their heads were not considered nuns by society.<sup>8</sup> Because women were still expected to take care of the family in the first place, those who married were “naturally” expected to abandon nunhood.<sup>9</sup> As a result, while married monks make up the vast majority of Japanese monks, nuns have maintained an ascetic life (UCHINO 1983, pp. 178–80). However, since one of the features of modern Buddhism is precisely the active and visible role of women as ordained nuns and teachers, the non-Japanese Brazilian congregation readily accepted Coen. If Coen’s gender was problematic to the Japanese-Brazilian congregation, her status as a married woman should surely make things worse. Yet, since her husband was a Japanese monk, things were a bit easier as he actually circumvented this gender status issue by reminding the community through his behavior towards her that he was, in fact, hierarchically under her (due to his

6. “Mass” is the common term used for funeral and memorial rites, which indicates a strong influence of Catholicism.

7. For instance, Uchino remarks “In Buddhist dogma, women were regarded as impure, having a more sinful karma than men, and being unable to attain Buddhahood.... Even nuns, who shunned all worldly attachments, were segregated from and had heavier precepts than monks. Two hundred and fifty precepts were imposed on monks while the figure for nuns was five hundred. In addition to these precepts, there were eight laws, called the Hakkeikai, which were written especially for nuns and placed them under the control of monastic orders. According to the law, no matter how long a nun had been in service, she was required to obey and worship even those monks who had taken the tonsure only the day before” (UCHINO 1983, p. 177). For a contemporary discussion of feminism and Buddhism, see GROSS 1993, and KAWAHASHI and KUROKI 2003.

8. For more on this, see JAFFE 2001.

9. For an account of the role of *jizoku* (priests’ wives) in Sōtō temple life, see KAWAHASHI 1995.

fewer years of training). Consequently, he helped her to be regarded as worthy of the position she held in the temple. But things were not easy at first. According to Coen,

At first, the congregation thought a woman officiating ceremonies as strange; they thought only men could do it. There were comments such as, 'this is a big temple; it is not a nun's temple.' This is the kind of discrimination nuns suffered in Japan; only small temples were given to nuns. Nowadays, nuns do everything monks do in Japan. Of course, in practice things are a bit different, since it is a society that is not totally egalitarian. But there is a strong movement against discrimination in Japan and particularly within Sōtōshū.<sup>10</sup> But the Japanese community here still sees things as Japanese people did before World War Two. Information does not reach here. I was the first non-Japanese and the first woman to become president of the Federation of the Buddhist Sects of Brazil.<sup>11</sup> This was a way to be accepted in the Japanese community, because by accepting me the monks from other schools were saying that I had a high level of understanding of Buddhism.

(Personal communication, São Paulo, March 2000)

But Coen did not stop at asserting her own status. Upon arriving at the temple she realized there were some Japanese-Brazilian nuns who had never been allowed to officiate ceremonies and had been confined to ringing the bells, making tea, flower arrangements, and participating in the *baika* 梅花 (a women's group that chants and plays bells during rituals). She told me these women were too old to learn how to officiate ceremonies, but nonetheless Coen asked them to participate by bringing incense, chanting, and playing the drums as well as allowing them to wear *okesa* お袈裟, the formal robes, which they owned but were not authorized to wear. Asserting the position of nuns in the temple was not the only thing that may have brought discontent and her final downfall in the beginning of 2001. She further told me:

Women didn't vote here! The *fujinkai* 婦人会 [women's association] was forbidden to vote until 1998, when the new board was due to be elected. In 1998, on the election day the president got together with the board and reaffirmed that the *fujinkai* didn't vote. Then I realized the women had never voted in the temple! I checked the bylaws and there was nothing there about it—so on that day I said

10. For more on this, see BODIFORD 1996.

11. The Federation of the Buddhist Sects of Brazil (Federação das Seitas Budistas do Brasil) was established in 1958 as part of the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the Japanese immigration into Brazil. It comprises six Buddhist schools: Sōtōshū, Jōdoshū, Jōdo Shinshū, Nichirenshū, Honmon Butsuryūshū, and Shingonshū. Since its establishment, the Federation has been in charge of the celebrations of the arrival of the first immigrants, of joint Buddhist calendrical festivities, as well as visiting nursing homes run by the Japanese community, and collecting food and clothes to be donated to the homeless.

that everyone would vote. The women didn't even think that was good, they were worried and didn't know what to do. We won that election and for the first time in the history of the temple the old board lost. Even Brazilians started to vote. Only people who paid a yearly fee voted, but no one ever asked the Brazilians to pay it, so they didn't know about it. The old board was offended and went to Japan to say they should send somebody here to substitute for us because it was dangerous to leave the temple in our hands. And in reality the temple was doing really well, the number of adherents was increasing; there were more masses [*sic*], more people for lectures, study groups, and zazen.

After a long period of conflicts, Sōtōshū sent a new *sōkan*, Miyoshi Kōichi Rōshi, to the temple in early 2000. For the next ten months, the presence of both the *sōkan* and Coen in the temple—respectively as the Superintendent for South America and as Busshinji's abbess—exacerbated the conflicts to the point that the situation became untenable. To make matters worse, the rift reached the Japanese immigrant press and even the mainstream press, as Coen was well known by the Brazilian media. She was dismissed in January 2001. Like all the previous missionaries who lost their positions, her students followed her when she left Busshinji. However, unlike others, Coen established a new temple, Tenzui Zen Dōjō, not a Zen center in São Paulo city. Some Japanese-Brazilian families also followed her to the new temple.

Tenzui Zen Dōjō is a good example of how the boundaries between traditional and modern/Western Zen are blurred in Brazil. Coen managed to interest non-Japanese Brazilians and (like them, sometimes nominally Catholic) Japanese-Brazilians in “Japanese” rituals such as funerals, memorial rites, *higan* 彼岸 (spring and autumn equinoxes), and *o-bon* お盆 (return of the souls of deceased forebears to the *ie* 家, the household). She also engaged both communities in “Westerners’ Zen” practices such as zazen and *sesshin*, as well as in “Catholic” activities such as All Souls Day and weddings. Coen is presently in charge of another center in Rio de Janeiro. This is managed on a daily basis by her non-Japanese Brazilian student, and hence dedicated solely to meditation. She also participates in inter-religious meetings, gives public lectures, has established a sitting group at the São Paulo city Assembly of Councils, and leads walking meditations in the city's public parks on Sunday mornings. Her charisma has led her to be frequently sought after by the media to the extent that she is now routinely recognized in the streets of São Paulo city.

#### *Recouplement: Regaining Control of the Temple*

While studying the arrival of Buddhism in Germany, Martin Baumann employed the term “recouplement” (first coined by Michael Pye in 1969) as one of five modes for transplanting a religion to a new sociocultural context. They include contact, confrontation and conflict, ambiguity and alignment, recouplement

(re-orientation), and innovative self-development. Baumann explains that the process of transplanting a particular religion does not need to cover all these modes and need not necessarily occur in this sequence. “Recoupment” or re-orientation is a critique of the ambiguities that have arisen due to the need to blur the boundaries between the new religion and the host culture. Once accepted, the foreign religion then tries to reduce the ambiguities in order to regain its traditional identity (BAUMANN 1994, p. 38).

I contend that Miyoshi Kōichi, the new *sōkan*, is part of such a process of “recoupment.” If charisma and smooth transit among non-Japanese Brazilians and mainstream media are the qualities that brought Coen to the limelight, the new *sōkan* had the opposite task. He was sent to keep a low profile and, in the process, hand Busshinji back to the old and traditional Japanese-Brazilian board, which in fact established and has always funded the temple through *dāna* (donations). For a start, although he had been in Hawai‘i for thirty-three years (first as a *kaikyōshi* at Shobōji, and then as the abbot of Zenshūji), Miyoshi Kōichi never learned to speak English. Therefore, communication at Busshinji has been restored to the way it was during Shingu’s time (1956–1983)—most activities are conducted solely in Japanese. When they are directed to a mainly non-Japanese Brazilian audience, Japanese-Brazilian monks function as translators. Since Miyoshi’s installation, because of the Buddhist boom, which was apparent in Brazil by the late 1990s,<sup>12</sup> new non-Japanese Brazilian adherents have arrived and constituted a new zazen group, taking part in *sesshin* and lay ordinations (*jukai* 受戒). Miyoshi’s lack of language skills is not an obstacle because non-Japanese Brazilians at the temple justify the situation by invoking the Zen belief that communication with a master should be a matter of heart/mind-to-heart/mind transmission (*ishin-denshin* 以心伝心).<sup>13</sup>

However, when I sat through a *hōji* 法事 (funeral) in 2001, Miyoshi preached in Japanese and no translation was offered. The young Japanese-Brazilians who were present showed no interest, keeping their eyes on the floor or on the walls for most of the time. While for people interested in monastic Zen the preaching in Japanese may add to the exoticism and obscurity of Zen, thus making it a desirable religion, for Japanese descendants who have to sit through a long ritual it can mean a further step towards rejecting the religion. Certainly this exodus is not particular to Zen in Brazil: it occurs in other Japanese Buddhist schools in Brazil and in the US.<sup>14</sup> Language skills are so important in attracting young people that, as I men-

12. For more on this Buddhist boom in Brazil see ROCHA forthcoming a and b.

13. *Ishin-denshin* is a central notion of Zen. “It comes from the Platform sūtra of the sixth patriarch of Ch’an (Zen) in China, Hui-neng. He points out that what is preserved in the lineage of the tradition and ‘transmitted’ is not book knowledge in the form of ‘teachings’ established in sacred scriptures, but rather an immediate insight into the true nature of reality, to which an enlightened master can lead a student through the training in the way of Zen” (DIENER et al. 1991, p. 101).

14. See, for instance, GONÇALVES 1990 for Jōdo Shinshū in Brazil and TANABE forthcoming for Jōdo Shinshū in Hawai‘i.

tioned before, Coen was appointed in 1995 precisely because of her Portuguese and Japanese fluency. Therefore, the appointment of a Japanese *sōkan* who does not speak either English or Portuguese shows the power the Japanese-Brazilian congregation exercises over Busshinji, as well as the strength of the process of “recoupment.”

The *sōkan*, like all other *kaikyōshi* I have discussed, exemplify the way missionaries carry ideas when they rotate from country to country. For instance, the group preparing for *jukai* follows a method used by him in Hawai‘i: every student has a notebook where they write down the number of zazen performed, sutras chanted, and the amount of *dāna* (donations) given. The novelty is not only the presence of the notebook (with Coen there was a two-year course before ordination), but also the inclusion of *dāna*, that is, merit-making through donations. It is noteworthy that merit making is the central practice for devout immigrants, whereas it is usually ignored by non-Japanese adherents for whom meditation is the “authentic,” central activity. *Dāna* expresses the dependence of missionaries and temples on the local communities. Therefore, the inclusion of *dāna* in the lay ordination process indicates an overlapping, which bridges the typical separation between the two congregations.

#### *Company Men and Free Agents*

What can one learn from the lives of these *kaikyōshi* in Brazil and the sort of contentions they went through? Jan NATTIER (1997, p. 475) has pointed to the fact that there have been no scholarly studies on the *kaikyōshi* who went to the US and such studies could “raise interesting issues for the study of cross-cultural religious transmission.” She argues that there have been two types of *kaikyōshi*: the “‘company man’ (armed with tracts and doctrinal treatises provided by the home church, supported financially by this institution, and perhaps subject to recall if his form of propagation does not meet their specifications), and the ‘free agent’ (who moves to a new country of his own accord, disseminates his religion as he sees fit, and is constrained only by his own need to make a living).”

From the lives of the three *kaikyōshi* described above I have shown that Nattier’s categories were not quite so clear cut in Brazil. All the *kaikyōshi* belonged to and were sent by Sōtōshū to Brazil. Hence, in Nattier’s sense they were all “company men.” However, since they did not receive a stipend from the institution, and because the temple was funded by the community (through *dāna*), they were subjected to the congregation’s approval while living in Brazil. When the congregation decided the *kaikyōshi*’s attitudes were not acceptable, as in the cases of Ryōtan Tokuda, Daigyō Moriyama, and Coen de Souza, they lost their posts. Moriyama’s case is even more revealing of the congregation’s powers because Moriyama held the high position of *sōkan* for South America. I suggest that Tokuda, Moriyama, and Coen cannot be considered totally “free agents”



since they did not arrive independently in Brazil, and they had to answer to the congregation's needs. When conflicts surfaced, they were dismissed and had their affiliation to Sōtōshū severed (in the cases of Tokuda and Moriyama). Only then did they become "free agents" and "disseminate their religion as they saw fit," as Nattier puts it.

Like LOPEZ (2002, p. xxxvii), Robert SHARF has noted that "one feature shared by virtually all of the figures responsible for the Western interest in Zen is their relatively marginal status within the Japanese Zen establishment" (1995b, p. 141). NATTIER adds, "these men were, for the most part, genuine mavericks, deeply dissatisfied with the current state of Buddhism in their own country and eager to establish what they saw as 'true Zen' in a virgin mission field" (1997, p. 475).

Sharf and Nattier paint an accurate portrait of Tokuda Ryōtan and Daigyō Moriyama and their desire to leave Japan for Brazil. Both *kaikyōshi* held a marginal status in their own country. The former did not belong to a temple family and chose not to marry into one—as is the norm in Japan in order to acquire a position in the institution—but rather left the country to preach his own Zen Buddhism to foreigners. The latter, albeit having his own temple in Japan (Zuigakuin 瑞岳院, in Yamanashi Prefecture, west of Tokyo), has chosen marginality by not offering the regular set of services to the surrounding community. This choice is revealed in a leaflet advertising Zuigakuin to prospect Brazilian students. There one reads:

Zuigakuin (Zen Buddhist Center for Cultural Exchange) temple was founded in 1978 by Daigyō Moriyama and differs from other Zen temples in two aspects: it intends to reestablish Dōgen's Zen practice and it offers Western students access to this practice.

Coen's is a slightly different case, since she reveres Sōtōshū's authority and does not wish to leave the institution. Not being Japanese, she needs its seal of approval to legitimate her own "authenticity." However, her new temple, which has zazen and traditional calendrical rites at its core, further complicates the clear-cut picture of institutional Zen on the one hand, and modern Zen on the other.

In contrast, Matsunaga was meaningful for the Japanese community (who even today hold him in high esteem), as he functioned as an important symbolic connection between the immigrants and their homeland. He did not, however, engage in spreading Zen outside the ethnic enclave. This attitude can be attributed to the fact that in the early 1960s, when Matsunaga lived in Brazil, there were very few non-Japanese Brazilians interested in Zen Buddhism. He was and still is part of Sōtōshū's establishment, currently holding a central position in the institution as the head of the International Department at Eiheiji 永平寺 (in Fukui Prefecture). Miyoshi Kōichi may be placed in the same category—"company man"—as Matsunaga. Although he does cater for non-Japanese Brazilians and Japanese-Brazilians interested in zazen, since unlike Matsunaga he has

arrived at a time when Brazil is undergoing a Buddhist boom, his main task is to work for the Japanese immigrants and descendants who own the temple. His almost monthly visits to Japan to oversee his own Japanese temple and his absence from the non-Japanese Brazilian Buddhist circuit has reduced Busshinji to the low profile it used to have before 1993, when Moriyama arrived.

These two groups of missionaries reflect the tensions which at times evolved into open clashes between Japanese traditional practices and Western expectations of Zen informed by modern/Western Zen. Matsunaga and Miyoshi have been able to continue their careers inside the institution because they delivered what the Japanese congregation overseas expected from them. Coen managed to keep her connection with the institution by accepting Sōtōshū's injunctions. Tokuda and Moriyama may not have had a long career at Sōtōshū, but both, together with Coen, have been "genuine mavericks" for the expansion of Zen amongst non-Japanese Brazilians. In the past thirty years Tokuda has established more than fifteen Zen centers all over Brazil and ordained thirty people; four of them have trained in main Sōtō monasteries in Japan such as Zuiōji 瑞応寺 (in Ehime Prefecture) and Eihei-ji. Tokuda left Brazil for France in the 1990s but continued to go to Brazil for a period of three months every year to oversee his Zen centers and ordain new disciples. In 2000, Sōtōshū recognized his non-stop proselytizing work and installed him as the official resident *kaikyōshi* of Eitaiji 永代寺, a new international temple established in the south of France by Tokuda to be the basis of Sōtōshū in Europe. In 2002, however, Tokuda moved back to Brazil to establish Zen Horyuzan Eisho-Ji, a monastery dedicated to the formation of monks in Pirinópolis, central Brazil. Moriyama and his students are presently working at building a monastery significantly called International Buddhist Monastery Dōgen Zenji in Rio Grande do Sul state.

### *Conclusion*

Zen in Brazil is not isolated from the trends and global flows of Zen in the West. As I have shown in this paper, Sōtōshū *kaikyōshi* appointed to Brazil were previously or subsequently sent to other countries where there was a large Japanese immigrant population. Since Brazil was part of the circuit of Sōtō *kaikyōshi* sent overseas, and at the same time received flows of the Western construct of Zen Buddhism that attracted non-Japanese Brazilians, Brazil had similar conflicts to other countries that had an extensive Japanese diaspora. However, because the Zen boom of the 1960s happened on a much smaller scale in Brazil, clear conflicts did not really arise until the 1990s, when a Buddhist boom took place in the country.

During the 1990s, what were differences of understanding and Zen practice turned into a battleground where *kaikyōshi* who dared to align with non-Japanese Brazilian practices constantly lost power to the Japanese community. These

*kaikyōshi* were dismissed from their posts at local temples, lost their position with Sōtōshū, and ended up establishing their own independent Zen centers. In this process, Sōtōshū's dualistic attitude towards zazen was not only revealed, but the institution leaned towards the temple-household system when it disavowed the choices of its own *kaikyōshi*.

As a result of such a situation, one cannot help but ask what will become of the Sōtōshū's mission in Brazil when the old Japanese immigrant congregation dies out. Since the majority of young Japanese-Brazilians are not interested in belonging to the temple anymore, how will Sōtōshū survive its own predicament? In an interview conducted in Tokyo in December 2000, I posed this same question to the representative of Sōtōshū Shūmuchō in Japan. He gave me a surprising answer: "we need more non-Japanese Brazilians to come here to train as priests so that they can go back and spread Zen in Brazil." I am sure the old Japanese immigrants would be more than a little shocked. The answer nevertheless reveals Sōtōshū's attempt at some flexibility in dealing with the crisis.

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