

Cristina ROCHA

## All Roads Come from Zen

### Busshinji as a Reference to Buddhism

This paper explores the historical role of Busshinji temple as a center of Buddhism in Brazil for non-Japanese. Busshinji was established by Sôtôshû as a *betsuin* (branch temple) in the city of São Paulo in 1956. Drawing on interviews with early adherents, I intend to argue that many first attended Busshinji as it was the only Buddhist temple offering meditation in São Paulo. For these followers, it was their first point of contact with Buddhism. Many later left to become leading figures of other Buddhist schools in Brazil. It is thus my contention that Busshinji played a significant historical role in the expansion of Buddhism in Brazil.

KEYWORDS: Sôtôshû — Busshinji — non-Japanese Brazilians

Cristina Rocha is an Australian Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney.

IN SEPTEMBER 1955, Rōsen Takashina Rōshi visited Brazil for three months, travelling extensively to the many towns where Japanese migrants settled in the states of São Paulo and Paraná, which lie in southern Brazil. At the time, he was the *zenji* (abbot) in charge of both main monasteries of the Sōtōshū School: Eiheiji (located in the Fukui Prefecture) and Sojiji (in Yokohama). Takashina came to Brazil by invitation of those Japanese migrants who adhered to the Sōtōshū and wished to have a temple in their new country. Until the Second World War, Japanese migrants still intended to return to Japan once they had acquired enough wealth. However, when Japan lost the war they had to rethink their plans and settled permanently in Brazil. In addition to this, after the war the Brazilian government lifted the ban on the arrival of official Japanese Buddhist missions to Brazil. Given this climate, Takashina was not alone in making the long trip to Brazil with the prospect of establishing a mission in the 1950s. Other traditional Buddhist schools such as Jōdoshū, Jōdo Shinshū, Shingonshū, and Nichirenshū sent official missions to Brazil at the same time. However, unlike other Japanese religions, Sōtōshū would soon have special appeal to an unexpected cohort of followers: non-Japanese Brazilians.

In October 1956, Sōtōshū sent Shingū Rōshi to Brazil to be the first *sōkan* (Superintendent-General) of South America. He was there to establish Busshinji temple as the *betsuin* (the headquarters of the mission) in São Paulo. This paper explores the historical role of Busshinji temple as a center of Buddhism in Brazil for non-Japanese. Drawing on interviews with early adherents, I argue that many of these followers first went to Busshinji as it was the only Buddhist temple that offered meditation in São Paulo. For them, Busshinji was their first point of contact with Buddhism. Many later left Busshinji to become leading figures of other Buddhist schools in the country. Thus, it is my contention that Busshinji played a significant historical role in the expansion of Buddhism in Brazil.

From the outset, Sōtōshū missionaries worked on the expansion of the mission amongst Japanese Brazilians. They travelled to the countryside where many Japanese migrants lived in order to conduct funerals and memorials, and to teach Japanese language and culture.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, in the late 1950s and 60s, some non-Japanese Brazilians were reading about Zen in newspaper articles written by the Brazilian foreign correspondent of the daily newspaper *Jornal do Brasil*, who was writing from New York City. Others were following the development of an important Brazilian poetic movement called Concretista.

1. For more on this, see ROCHA 2004, 163–84.

These poets were influenced by Ernest FENOLLOSA's (1853–1908) *The Chinese Written Character* (1968), the writings of the American poet Ezra Pound (1885–1972), and French Symbolism. They argued for a visual poetry where words as they appear on paper would be as important in expressing ideas as their meaning, rhythm, and rhyme. For the Concretistas, such visual poetry was epitomized in the Japanese character. This poetic movement thus brought the Orientalist ideas of Japan and Zen to educated Brazilians. In 1961, D. T. Suzuki's *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* was published in Portuguese. Once non-Japanese Brazilians started reading about Zen, be it in newspapers, books by American Beat authors, or in poetry, they began to seek Busshinji, the only urban Zen temple in Brazil located in São Paulo.

Faced with a group of non-Japanese speakers, the *sōkan* established a *zazen* group to cater to these non-speakers' needs in 1961. But he was not able to speak Portuguese, and as such had limited access to non-Japanese Brazilians. Therefore, Ricardo Gonçalves, a non-Japanese Brazilian who learned Japanese through befriending Japanese-Brazilians from an early age, was appointed to translate and assist the *sōkan*. He became the first fully-ordained non-Japanese Brazilian. Gonçalves worked at Busshinji from 1961 to 1972, assisting in memorials and funerals as well as acting as the official translator for Shingū Rōshi. Reflecting on his past experience, Gonçalves notes how Buddhism in Brazil was deeply connected with the Japanese missions. According to Gonçalves, it was the interest in Zen in the US and Europe that sparked an interest in non-Japanese Brazilians. Gonçalves notes that,

When I became interested in Buddhism, in the late 50s, *the only gate* into Buddhism were the Japanese missions in São Paulo City.... From the 1960s onwards I started going to Busshinji temple, the official seat of the Sōtō Zen School, headed by Shingū Rōshi. In the US and Europe, Zen was very popular and, as a consequence, this mission was the first Buddhist organization to overcome the boundaries of the Japanese migrant community to reach the non-Japanese Brazilians. (GONÇALVES 2005, my italics)

In September 1965, Takashina returned to Brazil to celebrate a decade of missionary work there. This visit was reported in the local newspapers, and it coincided with both the celebration of the fourth centennial of the city of Rio de Janeiro and the rising interest in Zen among Brazilians and its growing prestige overseas. He was greeted as “a cultural goodwill ambassador from the world of Japanese Buddhism” (SŌTŌSHŪ SHŪMUCHŌ 2000, 15). This indicates that, in contrast with other Buddhist schools, which had been closed to non-Japanese speakers, Zen attracted an interest from the wider Brazilian society almost from its inception.

This phenomenon was strengthened when, in 1968, Ryōtan Tokuda, a new *kaikyōshi* (overseas missionary) interested in working with non-Japanese Brazilians, arrived at Busshinji. Although he was a minor figure within the temple

who taught Japanese to children at the temple school, Tokuda played a central role in the spread of Zen amongst non-Japanese Brazilians. Learning how to speak Portuguese and teaching *zazen* and the doctrine to non-Japanese Brazilians contributed to his extraordinary rapport among these non-Japanese followers. I have discussed at length the life and ideas of Tokuda elsewhere (ROCHA 2006, 45–48 and 58–60), but here I would like to turn to his work with his disciples. Many of these disciples had their first contact with actual Zen practice through Tokuda and even today are still followers of Zen. To others, Tokuda was an important gateway into Buddhism; that is to say, while some became followers of Tokuda and Zen, others became followers of the other Buddhist schools.

### *Travelling South*

Like other *kaikyōshi* in Brazil, Tokuda took to the road to spread the word. Unlike them, however, Tokuda did not go to towns populated by Japanese migrants. Among other regions in Brazil, he frequented the southernmost state of the country to teach to non-Japanese Brazilians: from 1972 to 1975 he made bimonthly trips to Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul. Invited by the owner of a martial arts school, Tokuda spent weekends teaching and conducting *zazen* sessions, overseeing three *sesshin* during that period. In 1998, when I conducted interviews with Porto Alegre's ViaZen group, João Graff, one of the owners of the school, was still there practicing Zen. He stated that after 1975, when Tokuda had stopped coming, another ordained monk from Busshinji, a German-Brazilian named Gerhard Kahner took his place. Kahner was ordained by Takashina during his second visit to Brazil in 1965. He was one of Shingū Rōshi's most respected disciples. In the following years, he continued to travel to Porto Alegre and teach Zen to the people, who eventually established the Zen Group. After he retired, he moved to Porto Alegre to work with them.

Particularly important to this group was the presence of Alfredo Aveline, a professor of physics at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) from 1969 to 1994. He would soon become the key figure in Zen and later Tibetan Buddhism in Porto Alegre. He was lay ordained in 1989. In the same year, while directing the activities of the Zen group, he organized a course on Buddhism at UFRGS. Tokuda was invited to lecture, and also inaugurated Sangen Zendō, the headquarters of the Zen group. Aveline translated sutras and gave lectures at various locations outside the university. One such place was the local headquarters of the Grande Fraternidade Universal (Great Universal Fraternity, GFU), an occultist doctrine founded in 1948 by Frenchman Serge Raynaud. It is noteworthy that, in 1998, one of the founders of the ViaZen group told me that "the majority of the sangha has come from the GFU." It is well known that Buddhism in the West is associated with the New Age movement (CUSH 1996; LOPEZ 1995; BELLAH 1976). The same is true for Brazil, a country where the New

Age movement has remarkable strength. Indeed, a North American researcher of religion in Brazil described Californian New Age reality as bland compared to the Brazilian one (HESS 1991). Hence it is no surprise that most followers of Zen in Porto Alegre also participated in the activities of the GFU.<sup>2</sup>

Aveline's lectures were fundamental in raising interest in a new generation of Zen practitioners in southern Brazil. In 1994, however, Aveline left Zen and became an adherent of Tibetan Buddhism, but his shift from one Buddhist school to another had started before then. Aveline had participated in the *Kalachakra* given by the Dalai Lama in New York City in 1991, and in the following year helped to organize the Dalai Lama's visit to Brazil. He finally left Zen to become a disciple of Chagdud Rinpoche when Rinpoche moved to Porto Alegre. In 1996, Aveline was again ordained, this time as the first Brazilian Lama of the Nyingma School, receiving the name of Padma Samten. Currently, Aveline is actively spreading Tibetan Buddhism throughout Brazil.

It is noteworthy that in Brazil and many Western countries, followers of Buddhism may participate in more than one school at a time. In contrast to Asian countries, where only one vehicle has been established, in the West there is a "smorgasbord" of schools, often due to migration from different Asian countries. In addition, many Westerners are encouraged to choose from various religions, often ending in a blend of ideas. Modernity as pertains to religion has come to mean the pluralization and privatization of faith; hence, to many, religion has become a private choice (see ROOF 1999). Finally, there is a strong notion in the West that Buddhism has one common essence, and that different schools are only promoting different ways of practicing the same teachings (see BAUMANN 2001 and ROCHA 2006, 39–42). This is clear in Aveline's words:

I believe this freedom allowed me to participate in Tibetan teachings even if I was at the time the head of the Zen group. I never saw it as a rupture and even today examining Zen teachings I recognize them as perfect and wonderful. I remember Tokuda san with fondness. He visited me here in my Buddhist center last year.  
(VERISSIMO 2000)

Indeed, another member of ViaZen I interviewed noted that:

I've been practicing [Zen] for a year, but I haven't taken refuge yet. I started practicing Tibetan Buddhism with Aveline two years ago and was ordained there. So I have a year of Zen and two of Tibetan Buddhism. I like both paths. The technique is different, but the path is only one. I was attracted by the simplicity of Zen, but I intend to continue practicing in both schools.

(Personal communication, February 1998)

2. I have written extensively on the associations between Zen Buddhism and the New Age movement in Brazil in chapter 3 of ROCHA 2006.

When Aveline left, Daigyō Moriyama Rōshi (the *sōkan* for South America appointed by Sōtōshū for the period 1993 to 1995) started travelling to Porto Alegre. Based at Busshinji, Moriyama would frequently go there, conducting *sesshin* twice a year. At first, he followed the steps of Tokuda, giving talks and teaching *zazen* at UFRGS, GFU, and the martial arts school where many had practiced under Tokuda. However, after leaving his post of *sōkan* at Busshinji in 1995, Moriyama moved to Porto Alegre to lead his sangha. He returned to Japan in 2005.

### *Travelling North*

In the beginning, new followers from other states would come to Busshinji in São Paulo to practice *zazen*. However, once they established a connection with the missionaries there, particularly with the Portuguese-speaking Tokuda, many attempted to create local groups of *zazen* in their own states. After establishing these groups, they would then invite Tokuda to come and teach.

After a series of conflicts in the mid-1970s, Tokuda left Busshinji, but he did not leave Brazil. He started working independently with his non-Japanese Brazilian followers. His work was fundamental in the spread of Japanese Zen to states north of São Paulo, establishing groups and ordaining adherents in Ibiracú (Espírito Santo), Belo Horizonte and Ouro Preto (Minas Gerais), Rio de Janeiro, Goiânia (Goiás), Brasília (the national capital), and Recife (Pernambuco).

Some of his disciples were so diligent in their practice that they went to Japan to further their studies. Cristiano Daiju Bitti was one of these disciples. In the early 1970s, he established a hippie community with two other friends, Paulo Tainha and Anibal Jipō, in the tiny village of Ibiracú (Espírito Santo). All three practiced *zazen* and participated in *sesshin* at Busshinji in the mid-1970s. Tokuda even organized for two of them to practice Zen in Japan. While Paulo Tainha went to Japan for five consecutive years to participate in *ango*,<sup>3</sup> Cristiano Bitti trained for five years under Narazaki Rōshi at Zuyōji (Shikoku Prefecture). Upon his return to Brazil in 1983, Bitti became abbot of the Morro da Vargem monastery in Ibiracú. In 1989, Narazaki Rōshi went to Brazil to visit the Morro da Vargem monastery where he taught and ordained many lay followers from São Paulo and Porto Alegre, including Alfredo Aveline. As the monastery was constructed in Japanese style in the middle of the rainforest and in many ways follows life in a Japanese monastery, Morro da Vargem is representative of Zen for many non-Japanese Brazilians. It is also popular in the print media due to its striking features.

### *Staying Put: Busshinji as a Gateway to Buddhism*

Ricardo Gonçalves was the first non-Japanese Brazilian to be ordained at Busshinji, but others were to follow. His university colleague, Eduardo Basto de

3. Literally “dwelling in peace,” *ango* is a three-month period of intensive spiritual training during the rainy season in summer.

Albuquerque, was ordained in 1966. Together with Gehard Kahner, Albuquerque started leading *zazen* sessions at Busshinji in 1972, when Gonçalves left Sôtôshû for Shingon.<sup>4</sup> Although things were difficult because of the lack of a proficient translator, *zazen* sessions for non-Japanese Brazilians continued. According to Basto de Albuquerque, in order to overcome the difficulties caused by his lack of language skills, Shingû Rôshi would give teachings in Japanese, and then a Japanese monk would speak in simple Japanese to a Japanese-Brazilian temple member who would, in turn, translate these teachings into Portuguese.

In the mid-1970s, Shingû Rôshi had a series of strokes. For the next ten years, until his death in 1986, he was bedridden. During this period he lost the ability to lead and, worse still, left the temple without a successor and therefore leaderless. Busshinji is not an average temple wherein the first son inherits his father's position, but a *betsuin*. Successors are thus appointed by the Sôtôshû Shûmuchô, the central office of Sôtôshû in Tokyo. When Shingû Rôshi passed away, it took three years for Sôtôshû to send a new *sôkan* to Busshinji. In spite of this difficult situation, non-Japanese Brazilians continued to go to Busshinji to practice *zazen*. A practitioner stated:

[T]he temple was abandoned. It was still the old house (before the renovation) and the place was not taken care of. The meditation room was full of leaks. There was a monk who spoke very little Portuguese who would come to open the meditation room on Saturdays for us. He didn't speak Portuguese clearly so we couldn't develop our knowledge of the teachings. Most of the people [at meditation] were Brazilians and there was no *sesshin*. We would talk about Zen and Buddhism in general amongst ourselves. There was very little about Zen in Portuguese at the time, so we exchanged books in English.

(Personal communication, February 2000)

Things did not improve much when the new *sôkan* arrived in 1989. Aoki Shunryû spent a mere two years in Brazil. After his home was burgled twice, he and his family decided to leave. Thus, it proved to be difficult to replace Shingû Rôshi in the eyes of the Japanese-Brazilian community. According to a non-Japanese Brazilian adherent who started practicing at the temple in 1959,

Shingû Rôshi was important on many fronts. First, he played a symbolic role as a patriarch of the Japanese community in São Paulo and second, he was a cultural leader. He organized important Buddhist calendrical events, Japanese cultural festivals, the children's school, and activities to assist long-term and recently-arrived migrants. His wife took care of the ladies' association and *ikebana* classes. Both he and his wife worked to maintain Japanese culture for

4. In 1980 Gonçalves changed schools again, this time adhering to the Jôdo Shinshû Ôtani-ha (True Pure Land Ôtani branch). This exemplifies yet again how for non-Japanese Brazilians Buddhism is a religion of personal choice as opposed to family tradition. For an analysis of Gonçalves' Buddhist choices in relation to Buddhism in Brazil, see ROCHA 2006, chapter 2.

Japanese migrants. Third, he played the role the Japanese-Brazilian community expected from him extremely well. He officiated at funerals and memorials in fine brocade attire and the rituals were beautiful. By doing so, he recovered the dignity that the older Japanese migrants felt they had lost by migrating to Brazil because of discrimination.<sup>5</sup> Before Busshinji was established, the only Sôtôshû temple was Zenguenji in the rural town of Mogi das Cruzes, where many Japanese-Brazilians worked in farms. So it was a “peasant” temple.

(Personal communication, March 2000)

Shingû Rôshi was also admired by the non-Japanese Brazilians. The same practitioner above observed that,

Shingû Rôshi was aware of his role as an example and disseminator of the dharma, which was his hardest task for many reasons. One of them was because the Japanese were not interested in the expansion of the dharma as such, but in Buddhist family traditions. Another was that he couldn't communicate with the Brazilians who were interested because he didn't speak Portuguese. Despite not being able to speak Portuguese, through his charisma Shingû Rôshi could establish a kind of *ishin-denshin*.<sup>6</sup> There were many [non-Japanese Brazilian] people around him.

(Personal communication, March 2000)

Another practitioner who started going to Busshinji in the early 1960s noted in an admiring tone that

Shingû Rôshi was an intellectual. His library was extraordinary. He had the whole collection of the Tripitaka in Chinese!... Despite not speaking Portuguese, Shingû Rôshi had good rapport with the non-Japanese Brazilians. He respected them; he was patient. They would ask the weirdest questions. [They were] people who had been to Spiritism, Umbanda, to many Brazilian religions. He always answered to them in a very traditional Japanese Zen way. He would mention some sutra, add some poetry, write characters on the blackboard, and explain them. It is the traditional style of a Zen master.

(Personal communication, April 2000)

Thus, when he became ill and later passed away, there was a vacuum in the South American mission. This was filled only in 1993, when Daigyô Moriyama was appointed *sôkan*. Under his leadership a new temple was built in the

5. Japanese migration to Brazil started in 1908. Upon arrival they went to work in cotton, banana, and coffee farms in the west of São Paulo and Paraná states. However, by the 1950s they began to move to the cities and enjoy better quality of life. By then they had saved enough money to send at least one child to the university. For more on this see LESSER 199 and LONE 2001.

6. *Ishin-denshin* is a central notion of Zen. “It comes from the Platform sutra 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, 101).



Japanese style where the old house stood. The new Busshinji was inaugurated with the presence of many Sôtôshû officials in 1995.

Despite being leaderless and in a state of disarray, Busshinji continued to attract non-Japanese Brazilians, who would become significant in the spread of Buddhism in Brazil. Ricardo Sasaki is a good example of this. Sasaki's parents were Japanese immigrants, and Sasaki was introduced to Buddhism through Japanese books and films as a child. In 1980, when searching for a place to practice, he came to settle at Busshinji. He told me in an interview that the fact that Busshinji had *zazen* sessions and was the only temple that had meditation practice at the time was what attracted him. These two factors led Sasaki to practice at Busshinji for three to four years. After that he started frequenting the Shin Buddhist temple in São Paulo.

As with other practitioners, for Sasaki, Busshinji was a first step into Buddhism. Once he familiarized himself with the only temple where this meditation practice was carried out, he then left to join other schools. His interest in Buddhism took him first to the US, where he practiced Korean, Vietnamese, and Japanese Zen at the same time. He later visited India and Thailand, where he studied Theravada Buddhism. According to Sasaki, what attracted him to Theravada Buddhism was its clear and detailed instructions on meditation. In 1989, Sasaki returned to Brazil to establish the Nalanda Buddhist Center in Belo Horizonte. Since then he has been publishing one of the most popular Brazilian websites on Buddhism, created the first Buddhist email list in the country, translated and published Buddhist books, and organized visits by Thai, Singhalese, and Burmese Buddhist monks to the country. Like Aveline, who is now the leading figure in the dissemination of the Nyingma School in Brazil, Sasaki continues to read books on and is still connected with Zen.

Another practitioner for whom Busshinji was a gateway into Buddhism and who afterwards settled for Theravada Buddhism is Arthur Shaker. An anthropologist and professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo, Shaker started attending Busshinji in 1984. He noted,

My first Buddhist option was Zen. Some friends and I were really interested in religion. We were studying several religions to see which options we had. We were checking if it was Catholicism, Islam, and Buddhism [that we would choose]. Choosing a spiritual path is a difficult decision because you cannot enter and leave a religion lightly. Each religion has its own path, its masters, and commitments. After evaluating deeply what my choice would be, I chose Buddhism [because] I felt it was a path that was akin to my nature. And also because I am from an Eastern background—Armenian, Arab, Orthodox Catholic. Things from the East are close to me and so I started going to Busshinji.

(Personal communication, February 2000)

But Shaker wanted a more meaningful experience, one that he could devote his life to. He heard about the monastery in Espírito Santo, where non-Japanese Brazilian monks were in charge, and decided to move there:

After two years practicing at Busshinji I went to the monastery. The buildings were under construction, I met Daiju, and we became friends. In fact, I am still friends with all the Zen people. I used to go there often and did several *sesshin*. I also helped build the *zendō*, the kitchen, and the accommodation. Daiju put me in charge of the new people who arrived. It was easy for me to teach Buddhism and *zazen* because I was a university lecturer.

(Personal communication, February 2000)

Shaker says that he was involved with Zen until 1988. A month before he was to be lay-ordained at the monastery in Espírito Santo by Narazaki Rōshi on his only trip to Brazil, Shaker left for Asia. He lived in India for two years, and then moved to Thailand. Like Sasaki, he became fascinated by Theravada Buddhism. Shaker told me that he found the Vipassanā meditation method very didactic, hence it would be easily understood in the West. Zen, he said, is often misunderstood because its method is too subtle and Western countries have no previous Buddhist tradition, like Japan or China, for instance. While in Thailand, his Buddhist teachers encouraged him to establish a Buddhist center and disseminate this meditation method in Brazil. In 1991 he, his wife, and a friend (who at first also practiced at Busshinji and then moved on to Theravada) created Casa de Dharma, a small Theravada center in São Paulo where they are currently lay instructors. Since then he has teamed up with Ricardo Sasaki to bring Theravada monks to give teachings and conduct retreats in São Paulo and Belo Horizonte.

All of these cases are examples of how Brazilians and Westerners relate not only to Buddhism but religion in general. Religion, then, may be regarded as a journey for personal improvement. In his study of alternative spiritualities in Brazil, Robert Carpenter observed that

esoteric networks thriving of late in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and other Brazilian urban centers in many ways seem more attuned to the highly individualistic “seeker” culture and “self-spirituality” of postmodern Western Europe and North America than to the traditionally communitarian religious culture of Latin America.

(CARPENTER 1999, 242)

As previously mentioned, the New Age movement, with its themes of authority of the individual, spirituality as journey, and quest culture, is part of Buddhism in Brazil. Furthermore, like in other Western countries, Brazilians subscribe to the idea that Buddhism has one true, universal essence, which can be found when it is stripped of its cultural accretions. Because of this belief in one universal essence, practitioners may frequent various Buddhist schools at the same time, as in the cases of Aveline, Sasaki, Gonçalves, and Shaker. This

belief has its origins in the nineteenth-century emphasis on the study of Buddhist texts rather than rituals and cultures. As Lopez has noted,

By appealing to Buddhist texts with their representation of the dharma as a transcendent truth, which the Buddha was only the most recent to discover... Buddhism could be construed as a transhistorical and self-identical essence that had benevolently descended on various cultures over the course of history. (LOPEZ 1995, 7)

From this perspective one can “migrate” to different Buddhist schools and be affiliated with several Buddhist schools and/or other religions at the same time depending on one’s current needs. Many praise such “migration” as an enriching experience.

To be sure, not all non-Japanese Brazilians who follow Buddhism subscribe completely to these New Age tenets. As I discussed elsewhere (ROCHA 2006, chapter 3) there are a number of ways in which Brazilians adhere to Buddhism. On the one hand, people may read a book on Zen and mix it with other New Age and alternative practices (such as reiki, yoga, and tai-chi). On the other hand, followers may become serious adherents, receive full ordination, and go on to study in Japan. The followers analyzed here may mix and match among diverse Buddhist schools, but they do not hybridize Buddhism with other practices. Shaker clearly stands at the extreme end of the continuum since, although he felt that he could choose the religion that best suited his needs, he also believed that once one chooses a path he or she should pursue it. This is a very different position from the New Agers mentioned above, who feel they can mix and match amongst different religions.

Finally, it is worth noting that while all of the followers mentioned here first practiced Buddhism at Busshinji, they had to travel overseas when they wished to learn about other Buddhist schools. Aveline participated in the Kalachakra in New York City, Sasaki went to the US to practice Korean and Vietnamese Zen and, like Shaker, lived in India and Thailand to learn about Theravada Buddhism. Gonçalves is an exception to the rule, as he continued to practice Japanese Buddhism and was able to change schools in Brazil.

### *Conclusion*

In this paper, I showed that although Busshinji was funded by and established for the Japanese-Brazilian community, it became frequented by an unexpected group: the non-Japanese Brazilians. Due to the prestige Zen enjoyed overseas, Busshinji became a beacon for non-Japanese Brazilians seeking Buddhism: like their Western counterparts, non-Japanese Brazilians would read about Zen and meditation and search for a place to practice it. Even when Busshinji was leaderless and there was no one to teach non-Japanese speakers, non-Japanese Brazilians continued to practice *zazen* at the temple. Other Japanese Buddhist schools

were not an object of their interest as they did not include meditation in their proceedings. The significance of using *zazen* to attract non-Japanese Brazilians was demonstrated in the late 1990s by some Jōdo Shin temples. They introduced meditation sessions specifically to attract this group due to the dwindling Japanese Brazilian membership (MATSUE 1998). Had Busshinji not included *zazen* amongst its activities, there would be few Japanese Brazilians interested in frequenting the temple.

This continued to be true in the decades to come. In 1998, a member of the Zen group of Porto Alegre told me that he lived in Londrina (in Paraná state), a city with an extensive Japanese migrant community. In his youth he read *The Three Pillars of Zen* (KAPLEAU 2000), *Zen in the Art of Archery* (HERRIGEL 1989), and D. T. Suzuki's books. He did, however, say that "there is no Zen in Londrina, just other Buddhist schools. But because I already had an idea of what Zen was, I didn't want to go to the other schools of Buddhism. So I waited until I could come to Porto Alegre" (personal communication, February 1998).

Once these new followers made inroads into Buddhism at Busshinji, it was easier for them to explore other Buddhist schools. In order to do that, some had to leave the country as, until the early 1990s, Japanese Buddhism was the primary form of Buddhism existent in Brazil. In this paper, I explored the lives of these followers who left Busshinji to become central figures in the spreading of other schools of Buddhism in Brazil. I also showed that others continued practicing Zen, went to Japan to train, and established their own Zen centers upon their return. Both these experiences, which had their beginning at the Sōtō temple, evince the crucial role Busshinji played in the history of Buddhism in Brazil.

Furthermore, I showed that these followers felt that they were entitled to first choose their own religion and second follow more than one school of Buddhism at the same time. The former religious attitude can be examined in light of religious modernity, which encourages Westerners to mix and match from diverse religious practices. The latter attitude can be explained by the fact that Buddhism is regarded as having a common essence in the West. Thus migrating from one school to the other or following more than one Buddhist school is regarded as enhancing one's understanding of Buddhism.

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