Introduction

In February 2003, there was heated discussion on the Brazilian e-mail list Buddismo-L over a widely watched, popular Sunday variety program on the TV Globo network. The controversy arose when the program featured a woman who claimed to be a Buddhist but resorted to Afro-Brazilian and French-Brazilian Spiritist beliefs to prescribe a solution for personal problems. One of the first messages posted explained the issues at stake.

Yesterday, by a samsaric \[sic\] misfortune, I was watching the Faustão TV program. A woman, who claimed to be an astrologer, tarot reader, futurologist, Buddhist—obviously a deceiver—was there making predictions. Yes, shocking! At one point, while giving advice to the KLB singer, she said he was carrying the spirit (encosto) of someone he had dated who had later died. In order to be able to date his new girlfriend in peace, this woman advised him to go to a Buddhist center to make a symbolic cremation of this encosto. I immediately received 10 phone calls (including ones from my father, mother and wife). My mom asked me what I have been into in these past four years. My wife wanted details of what this cremation would be. A friend of mine, a convinced atheist, called me, as a joke of course, macumbeiro [a derogatory word for Afro-Brazilian religions, meaning witchcraft, sorcery]. There wasn’t much I could say, but I believe that this notion of encosto does not exist in Buddhism, right? Anyway, I would like to clarify this point because I felt offended by that woman claiming to be a Buddhist. I felt humiliated, really. I believe that TV Globo has to apologize URGENTLY!3

Reading this message, I realized how the theme of and interest in “Buddhism” has expanded over the years I have been pursuing my research. When I started it in 1997, the phenomenon of the rise of interest in Buddhism was still not plainly visible in Brazilian culture. Yet in the intervening years things have changed considerably. Mainstream magazine and newspaper stories feature Buddhism frequently (many times as cover stories), associating it with fashion, high culture, modernity, rationality, nonviolence, and tranquility, while profiling Brazilian and North American celebrities who practice it. Books by North American,
European, Japanese, Tibetan, Vietnamese, and Brazilian Buddhists have become increasingly popular among upper middle-class urban populations. In this context, Buddhism has become desirable symbolic capital to possess as it lends the prestige of cosmopolitanism and foreign trends to its followers. While reading the above message in 2003, I realized that for the first time Buddhism had become more than just an upper- and upper middle-class enclosed phenomenon. Unsurprisingly, it had reached disenfranchised classes through a very popular TV program, and not through the books, newspapers, magazines, and Internet sites written by and to educated classes.

Certainly, this e-mail message shows that in 2003, as in 1997, the meanings Buddhism has acquired in the encounter with Brazilian culture have not changed; they have just become intensified with time and extended in the sectors of society it was presented to. For instance, the writer’s social location (upper- or upper middle-class sectors of society) and his feelings of humiliation and offense when his religious choice was confused with Afro-Brazilian religion (of mainly disenfranchised sectors of society) shows how Buddhism is employed as a marker of social distinction. The same point is exemplified by his friend calling him a macumbeiro, a term historically used to dismiss and condemn Afro-Brazilian religions as witchcraft. In addition, the easy creolization the woman makes among various religious traditions and the placing of the newly arrived Buddhism in this religious matrix shows how tradition creatively incorporates modernity and how plural and porous the Brazilian religious field is. Moreover, the message makes evident the role mass media plays in carrying global flows of Buddhism from metropolitan centers into Brazil—from Hollywood and, more recently, Tibetan and Indian Buddhist movies, books, newspapers, and magazine stories (consumed by the upper strata of society) to TV programs (mostly directed to the lower strata of society).

I have chosen this e-mail message as a point of departure because it evokes many of the themes that I myself found while conducting fieldwork. They include the aspiration toward modernity, the coexistence of modernity and tradition, the intense creolization of religious traditions, the role of global flows of media, people, technologies, and ideas in the construction of an imaginary of Zen, their entanglement with the local, and finally the desire for cultural capital and social prestige as a way of establishing visible markers of social distinction.

WHY ZEN IN BRAZIL?

My aim with this book is not only to expand our knowledge of Buddhism in the West and our understanding of the transplantation of religions across borders, but
also, and more important, to deepen our insight into the interplay of the global and the local, the articulation of modernity vis-à-vis tradition, transformations in Brazilian society, the processes of creolization of beliefs, and the historical anthropology of modernity. Historical anthropology, in the words of Jean and John Comaroff,

tries to dissolve the division between synchrony and diachrony, ethnography and historiography. . . . It focuses centrally on the interplay of the global and the local, treating as problematic the shifting line between them. It pays particular attention to the processes by which transnational signs and practices are welded into the diverse cultural configurations, into the contested realities and multiple subjectivities, of most late twentieth-century social scapes.4

Indeed, this book is fundamentally a study of how the discourse of modernity has historically influenced a sector of Brazilian society—namely, the intellectual elite until 1990 and the upper- and upper middle-class professionals from then onward—to adopt Zen as a sign of the “modern.” Furthermore, this book addresses the changes or, as I call them, creolizations that have occurred in the religious field as a result of this influence. In other words, I am interested in how the global has been historically entangled in the local in Brazil, particularly in the domain of “high” culture among Brazilian cosmopolitan elites. Therefore, Zen is an especially relevant topic of research since it is the Buddhist school that has been carried into Brazil by powerful global flows and has worked as a stage for the encounter and negotiation of practices and beliefs among Japanese, Japanese Brazilians, and non-Japanese Brazilians. In addition, modern Zen was constructed as a response to the discourse of modernity in Japan and in the West.

By contrast, other Japanese Buddhist schools have until very recently been confined to the Japanese and Japanese-Brazilian communities, while other Buddhist traditions have not been as historically significant in urban Brazilian “high” culture. From this perspective, this research attempts to address Sahlins’ injunction: “if the world is becoming a Culture of cultures, then what needs to be studied ethnographically is the indigenization of modernity—through time and in all its dialectical ups and downs, from the earliest develop-man [sic] to the latest invention of tradition.”5 Ambiguously situated as it is “on the borderlands of the Western world”6 and constantly yearning for European and North American modernity, Brazil is a rewarding site to examine how global flows acquire local forms, and consequently how multiple modernities have emerged.
Whereas Buddhism in the West has become a new area of study in the United States and Europe in the past decade, Buddhism in Brazil has received little scholarly attention. This book in English is the first to illuminate the Buddhist boom that has been gathering momentum in Brazil since the mid-1990s. In this short period, Brazil has become the only country in Latin America where Buddhism has a growing adherence, resulting in a substantial expansion of the market for Buddhist books, media coverage, web sites and e-mail lists, organization of events, visits of the Dalai Lama, and so on. As a result, Brazil has become an important center of information on Buddhism for Latin America because of geographical proximity and for Portugal because of language similarity.

Flows of Buddhism into Brazil and their indigenization is an area that requires study—not because it is widespread there, but because its adherents are part of a little-studied but important stratum of society: the white, upper middle-class intellectuals and professionals. This sector is significant as it disseminates information and embodies cosmopolitan as well as local experiences. Clifford has observed that “studying up” (studying elite institutions) is becoming a more common practice among anthropologists, as it aids in the understanding of an increasingly interconnected world. Gupta and Ferguson have highlighted the constraint that colonial geography—privileging fieldwork in Third World countries—still exerts over the choice of anthropological site. According to them, even when anthropologists work in the United States, they are expected to research ethnic and racial minorities. The same is true for Brazil, where “First World” Brazilian anthropologists and sociologists—the educated descendants of European colonizers and immigrants—study mostly disenfranchised classes and ethnic minorities such as indigenous populations. Regarding religious traditions, most scholarly research has historically been on Catholicism and more recently on Pentecostalism, which has challenged the hegemony of Catholicism among disenfranchised sectors of society. New research has been addressing alternative spiritualities, a phenomenon typical of the same sector of society that adheres to Zen. Nonetheless, this new direction in anthropological studies is still a minor trend. By focusing on upper- and upper middle-class urban Brazilians, I aim to shed light on this little-studied group as well as employ their cosmopolitanism as a route to follow global flows of modernity and their creolization in Brazil.

**TRACKING FLOWS IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD**

From the outset I realized that establishing historical and transnational connections was central to an understanding of how and why Buddhism in general and
Zen in particular have found a place in the Brazilian religious field and urban culture. Undeniably, there are a number of historical factors that have a bearing on the story of present-day Zen in the country. Among them are the legacy of slavery, which established an indelible distinction between educated and uneducated classes; the postcolonial condition of Brazil as a peripheral country eagerly absorbing and recreating metropolitan cultural production (a case in point is the adoption of the European and North American Orientalist imaginary of Japan and Zen); the arrival of Japanese immigrants, which provided a counterpoint to this Orientalist imaginary; the presence of kaikyōshi missionaries of the Sōtō Zenshū (the only Japanese Zen Buddhist school represented in the country); the advent of religious modernity with its trends of privatization of religious choice, pluralism, and turning to the self as source of meaning; and the impact of globalization.

It was thus clear from the start that I should embrace fully the disciplines of history and anthropology and that if I wanted to encompass the transnational flows of Zen into Brazil, my field should be a multi-sited one.

In the past decade or so, several anthropologists have been reflecting on the implications of globalization and transnational communities for the ethnographic method. From this perspective, traditional conceptions of the anthropological field as the territorially fixed, stable, localized, and bounded community have become inadequate. For instance, Marcus has called for "multi-sited ethnography" as a way of "examining the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space." For him, "multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography." Even within single sites, Marcus sees the awareness of a much larger world system in the subjects’ consciousness and actions as crucial. In the same vein, Clifford has observed that in such an increasingly interconnected world, "the ethnographer is no longer a (worldly) traveler visiting (local) natives," rather, both are travelers as well as dwellers. According to Clifford, if one is to understand "local/global historical encounters,...dominations and resistances, one needs to focus on hybrid, cosmopolitan experiences as much as rooted, native ones."

To this end, my own research addresses both experiences. Whereas I focus on the "local/global historical encounters" and the cosmopolitan experiences of my interviewees (as many of them were in fact cosmopolitans who traveled and were aware of developments of Zen in metropolitan centers), I also focused on how they engaged in their Zen practices in Brazil. Accordingly, I conceived this book
as a multi-sited research in order to track the flows of Zen from Japan, Europe, and the United States into Brazil and as they made their way back into these countries as well as to Latin America.

I therefore decided to deploy Appadurai’s global “scapes” to illuminate the creation of an imaginary of Zen in particular, and of Buddhism in general, in Brazil. Among these are flows of people (Japanese immigrants into Brazil, Sōtōshū kaikyōshi traveling among overseas outposts, and non-Japanese Brazilians traveling to the United States, Europe, and Japan to learn about and/or practice Zen), flows of technology (by looking at who and what is discussed on Brazilian Buddhist e-mail lists and how these compare with the international Buddha-L), flows of media (looking at how media stories produced overseas influenced media production in the country and how they in turn influence Brazilian followers), and flows of ideas (contained in movies, in foreign books translated into Portuguese, and in Brazilian books). Importantly, such flows were never univocal, and these historically shaped disjunctures have been significant in the creation of a conflicting reception of Zen among Japanese, Japanese Brazilians and non-Japanese Brazilians in the country. Moreover, I regard the dynamic of these flows as a coursing through “rhizomes,” that is, I view Brazil as one of the nodes, albeit less influential, in the web of the global flows of Zen.

Some last remarks on methodology. This is mainly an ethnographic account of Zen in Brazil. As such, I will be using a fieldwork writing style where “I,” as the observer, am visible and situated. Following theoretical discussions in the field of anthropology in the 1980s, most researchers have agreed that an “invisible” writer masks the presence of choice in reporting what is observed. Self-reflexivity on the researcher’s subjectivity assists the reader in understanding the selective perceptions and possible biases of the data analyzed. Indeed, the point of view of the researcher, his/her background, and personal characteristics should be made apparent to show the reader that this is but one of the possible interpretations of the facts analyzed.

Many readers will note the absence of Japanese references. Because my intent in this book was to investigate how “foreign” ideas, in this case Japanese Zen Buddhism, arrived and were indigenized in the country, I focused on what took place at the grass-roots level in Brazil. I felt that written documents would not clarify the deep ambiguity with which Sōtōshū dealt with the Brazilian case. Therefore, I decided that rather than analyzing Sōtōshū’s institutional records, it would be more fruitful to give ample voice to Sōtōshū monks/nuns working in the country. Moreover, the time I was researching in Japan in 2000 coincided with the peak of the conflicts and the dismissal of Coen sensei from Būshinji Temple in São
Paulo City. This reinforced my belief that interviews would give me a more updated picture of the current situation.

Contemporary scholarship usually refers to “Western Buddhism/Buddhism in the West” as undifferentiated categories, lumping together Buddhism in the United States and Europe. Moreover, Buddhism in Europe has itself internal distinctions that need to be addressed. The adoption of Buddhism in Catholic countries such as France and Italy should be differentiated from its adoption in Protestant nations. While here I use “Buddhism in the West” to refer to the new area of studies of indigenization of Buddhism in non-Asian countries, I would like to point out that I am aware of how problematic this category is.

Three practical aspects are important to mention here. First, whereas I have used pseudonyms for adherents and sympathizers, I have maintained names of missionaries, monks, and nuns who are key figures in developments of Zen in Brazil. I have done so with their consent. Second, I have used Japanese names for Japanese Brazilians and Japanese missionaries in Brazil in the Western style—first name followed by family name—as most of them have long adopted it and Japanese missionaries have followed them in this. Third, I decided to use “Japanese Brazilians” instead of nikkei, the more common term to describe Japanese descendants born in the Americas. I chose the former term to evince the dynamics of living in both worlds, which overlap but never completely fuse into one.

WHERE IS THE FIELD?
RESEARCHING TRANSNATIONAL PHENOMENA

I started my fieldwork in Brazil in 1997, while I was still associated with the Department of Anthropology of the University of São Paulo. I conducted extensive fieldwork in Brazil from 1997 to mid-1999, when I moved to Australia. Since then, I have returned to Brazil twice, each time for a three-month period of research, in 2000 and 2002. In Brazil, my spatially nonlocalized sites were an international e-mail list (Buddha-L) as well as the Brazilian e-mail lists Buddhismo-L and Zen Chung-Tao, which I monitored daily, books published on Zen by Brazilians and those translated into Portuguese, magazines and newsletters published by Brazilian Zen groups as well as by Sōtōshū, and media stories. Researching e-mail lists and the Internet, as well as using e-mail, was fundamental for me to be “in” the field, while I was spatially “out” of the field. Many times, when transcribing interviews in Australia, I realized I had doubts or follow-up questions. I solved this by e-mailing my “informants” in Brazil or Japan. In addition, the e-mail lists enabled me to be “in” the field on an everyday basis, whereas the Internet allowed me to
read stories published in Brazilian magazines and newspapers on Zen and other Buddhist traditions on their web sites. In this way, the boundaries between “the field,” as the place of collecting data, and “home,” as the place of analyzing this data and writing up, became blurred, reflecting the interconnected condition of my subject of study.

My main localized site was Bushinji Temple, but I also conducted short-term fieldwork (usually a week) in the Zen centers managed by non-Japanese Brazilians in Rio de Janeiro City, Ouro Preto (in Minas Gerais State), Ibiracuí (in Espírito Santo State), and Porto Alegre (in Rio Grande do Sul State). Located in São Paulo City, Bushinji is the head temple of Sōtōshū for South America and a branch temple (betsuin) of the two Sōtōshū head temples—Eiheiji (Fukui Prefecture) and Sōjiji (Kanagawa Prefecture) in Japan. Bushinji is a unique and rich site in that it houses two disparate but entangled congregations composed of Japanese Brazilians and non-Japanese Brazilians. In all these sites my research comprised a combination of participant observation, in-depth interviews, a survey, and archival research. Throughout my entire fieldwork in Brazil, I conducted sixty in-depth interviews, each of about one to one and a half hours’ duration. Of these, thirty-nine were with more recent followers, eight with people who have been historically associated with Zen, and thirteen with monks, nuns, and missionaries. When I returned to Brazil in 2000 and 2002, I conducted follow-up interviews in order to evaluate changes occurring in Brazilian Zen. In addition, I conducted an anonymous survey in all the above-mentioned Brazilian sites, to which I had eighty responses. My participant observation involved weekly visits to Bushinji in order to participate in daily activities such as dharma talks, \(\text{zazen}\) (meditation), dharma study groups, retreats, funerals, memorials, calendrical Buddhist festivities, and elections. I tried as much as possible to be present in activities that catered to both Japanese Brazilians and non-Japanese Brazilians.

In 2000, I received a fellowship from the Japan Foundation to conduct a four-month period of fieldwork in Japan. I had previously lived in Japan for one year (1992–1993) while conducting fieldwork for my master's dissertation on tea ceremony and the identity of the Japanese in Japan and in Brazil. There, while I was affiliated with the National Museum of Ethnology of Osaka, I conducted in-depth interviews with two former Sōtōshū missionaries to Brazil, with the officer in charge of Brazil at the Sōtōshū Shūmuchō (the headquarters of Sōtōshū in Tokyo), and three non-Japanese Brazilians who had been training in the head temples of Sōtōshū in Japan (Eiheiji and Sōjiji). Furthermore, I conducted archival research at Sōtōshū Shūmuchō as well as undertook participant observation in a monastery (Bukkokuji) in Obama-shi and a temple (Kirigayaji) in Tokyo.
I decided to participate in a seven-day retreat at the monastery for two reasons. First, I wanted to understand the differences between retreats in Japan and Brazil and the adaptations that have occurred. Bukkokuji was a good site since its abbot, Harada Tangen rōshi, subscribes to what many scholars have come to call “modern Buddhism,” a strand of Buddhism present mainly among non-Japanese Brazilians in Brazil. Second, I wanted to acquire the embodied experience of a retreat in Japan. The complete silence, the lack of eye contact (neither ever quite achieved in Brazil), the choice of food, the intense sessions of sitting and walking meditation (from 4:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M.), the stretching breaks in the cemetery adjacent to the monastery—all assisted in creating a bodily experience that gave me a different perspective with which to explore Zen in Brazil. In saying this, I am not suggesting that there is an authentic Zen practice in Japan as opposed to a less authentic one in Brazil. Bukkokuji is itself an exception in that it accepts foreigners and allows men and women to sit side by side, the latter unheard of in Japan. My main intent was to participate in a “practice” so often referred to as the “right” one by some missionaries in Brazil who subscribe to modern Buddhism.

In addition, I spent two weeks at Kirigayaji, a temple in Tokyo. I chose this temple because its head monk, Junyū Kuroda rōshi, is the brother of Maezumi rōshi, the founder of the Zen Center of Los Angeles. The connection with Brazil comes through Coen sensei, a non-Japanese Brazilian nun who first trained in Los Angeles under Maezumi rōshi and then went on to Kirigayaji for a period of adaptation until she started training at Aichi Senmon Nisōdō, a nunnery in Nagoya. Since then, she and her disciples have used Kirigayaji as a base in Tokyo. Because of its links with the United States, this temple works as a strong point of contact between North American Zen teachers and practitioners and Brazilian ones.

Living in a monastery and a temple, albeit for a short period of time, showed me how different these two environments are. While the former is a place of intense training for monks and nuns, the latter caters to the spiritual needs of the surrounding community. In Brazil, the lack of monasteries/nunneries made temples double as training places as well. Such a situation created conflict between those who wanted to use Busshinji for zazen practice (mainly non-Japanese Brazilians oblivious to the differences between temples and monasteries in Japan) and those who wanted to use the temple for funerals, memorials, and festivities (mainly Japanese and Japanese Brazilians). When I was in Japan, the conflict became heated and culminated with Coen sensei’s dismissal as head of Busshinji in January 2001. This meant that it became very difficult to secure interviews with the representative of Sōtōshū Shūshōsha and also with a former missionary who had held a high post at Eiheiji at the time. I believe both of them saw me as a non-Japanese Bra-
Zilian in Japan interested only in inquiring about the conflict. In order to get an interview, I constantly had to stress that I did not want to talk about the conflict, but instead wanted to know more about the history of Sōtōshū in Brazil, the level of their influence over the branch temple in Brazil, and the plans it had for Brazil’s future. As it turned out, both men ended up talking about their view of the conflict, as if realizing that if things were going to be published, they might as well give their version of the story. I do address the conflicts in this book, but I do so in order to analyze the various understandings of Zen in the country.

Many Zen teachers who subscribe to modern Buddhism and cater to mainly non-Japanese Brazilians have added to the conflict by regarding “real” Buddhism, which for them was centered on meditation, as degenerated in Japan, since it had collapsed under the weight of cultural accretions (meaning devotional practices). My time in Japan showed me the opposite. For the entire fieldwork period I lived in a small six-tatami apartment in Kyoto whose window overlooked a cemetery. Arriving at o-bon season in August, a time when the dead come to visit their descendents, I saw an endless stream of families, including young children, washing their ancestors’ headstones while a Buddhist priest chanted beside them. Soon afterward came higan (in September), another occasion for ancestor worship, and there they were chanting and washing headstones again. My window at the Kyoto apartment gave me a vantage point to see Buddhist activity not based on meditation, but meaningful nonetheless. The time I spent at Kirigayaji also made me realize how meaningful funerals and memorials are, and how grateful the families are toward the monks. I tried to recall how many times I had been to a cemetery to see my grandparents, and sadly I can say that I have never done so. I believe I am not an exception in Brazilian urban centers. This realization had a profound impact on how I started to view devotional acts.

To be sure, the Buddhism I experienced in Japan revolved more often than not around death, something for which Japanese Buddhism is often criticized. Yet I felt it created meaning for people as much as zazen may be meaningful for Westerners. Aware of my non-Japanese background, I tried as much as possible to be impartial in the face of both kinds of practices.

THE MODERN IN ME

When I was growing up in the 1960s in Brazil there was no Internet, the TV and newspapers were black-and-white, and telephones always black. Information from overseas was sparse and took longer to arrive than today. Indeed, communication and transportation had yet to take the huge leap they took in the 1990s; mean-
While the country was closed for most imports in a bid to protect the national industry until 1990. Yet I had a deep sense of the “unknown out there,” as friends and family traveled and brought long-sought items such as French perfume and North American blue jeans with them. Brought up in an upper middle-class home in the sprawling megalopolis of São Paulo, at an early age I realized that there was a fervent rush and anxiety to follow the latest fashions from the United States and Europe. From books, music, movies, theater, dance, clothes, fashion, and behavior, the good, interesting, and modern things all came from overseas. From the early 1980s onward, I began traveling extensively—studying in the United States, working on a British cruise ship, backpacking in Europe, doing fieldwork for my master’s degree and Ph.D. in Japan, and traveling in Asia. Still, a sense of being truly modern always eluded me, as I was most often perceived as a woman from the “Third World.” Very much like the villager in Africa who told Jean and John Comaroff that “things modern seem always to be in the next village,” I realized that the quest for modernity was not one to be won, but to be given up.

However, every time I go back to Brazil I am reminded of the obsession with “the First World,” “the developed world,” the “modern other.” That such an obsession has always been there is evident from our colonial past, but in the 1990s it was exacerbated by neoliberalist economic policies that further deepened the gap between the rich and the poor. Indeed, according to a 1995 World Bank study, “Brazil has the most unequal distribution of wealth of any country in the world; the richest twenty percent of the population earn twenty-six times as much as the poorest twenty percent of the nation (the comparative figure for India is five to one, and eleven to one in the United States).” In addition, research in 1998 showed that while the top 10 percent of the Brazilian population accounted for nearly 50 percent of all individual income, the bottom 70 percent earned about 25 percent. Significantly, this enormous gap in turn created more anxiety as to whether modernity was a possibility for the country. Newly coined expressions for Brazil such as “Belindia”—an amalgam of Belgium and India—indicate the level of tension over when, how, and whether Brazil will become truly modern.

From this perspective, it is not surprising that I chose to analyze the appropriation of Zen in Brazil through the lens of modernity. Possibly, a researcher who is neither Brazilian nor from the same social stratum of society might not have chosen the same path. Indeed, this immense “struggle” toward modernity that Brazil and other colonized societies have historically undergone has shaped the way we imagine the world. Appadurai has argued that the intensification of the global flows of media and migration has had a deep influence on the “work of the imagination as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity.” For him, “the work of
the imagination is a space . . . in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern.” Significantly, the globalization of Buddhism in general and Zen in particular has taken place through Japanese migration into the country, as well as through mass-mediated images carried by the cultural industries.

MODERNITY AND TRADITION: A PAINFUL DEBATE

It became clear in the early stages of my research that the way Zen has been perceived and adopted at different times within Brazilian history is related to an aspiration for modernity. Since this is a theme that runs throughout this book, in this section I will briefly problematize the notions of modernity and tradition so that we may understand the complex ways in which both tropes are associated with Zen in Brazil. Hall argues that “the West” is neither a geographical territory nor a natural entity, but rather a historically produced category. From this perspective, a society is considered Western not when it is located in a discrete, geographically uniform region such as the “Western Hemisphere,” but when it is developed, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular, and modern. For Hall, the binary opposition between “The West” and “The Rest” is a discursive formation that emerges as a result of a set of historical forces that were central to the formation of Europe’s identity. These include the process of Reformation and Enlightenment as well as Europe’s encounter with the “New World.”

Both processes gave Europe a sense of itself, an identity against which other non-Western societies and cultures were measured. The idea of progress that emerged during the Enlightenment was defined in terms of a single linear model of development according to which societies and cultures were hierarchically ranked as more or less “civilized” or “developed” depending on either their temporal distance or proximity to modernity. Such a view rests on a set of historicist assumptions according to which modernity is understood as “something that became global over time” and that certain cultures and societies can only ever experience a belated modernity, having been consigned to “an imaginary waiting room of history.”

As Sakai argues, the West-and-the-Rest opposition posits a hierarchical structure according to which the historical distinctions between “modern” and “premodern” are mapped onto a set of geopolitical divides between “the West” and the “non-West.” For Sakai, the category of the non-West (or the Rest) is implicated in the West, as they need each other to establish their own identity. Yet at the same time, while the distinction between the West and the Rest is being under-
mined by the accelerating processes of globalization, the idea of being a part of the West is still a persistent and alluring fantasy for countries like Brazil whose identity and culture have been historically entangled with the Western (European) project of modernity.

The linear model of historical development and progress derived from the Enlightenment has not only influenced the shape and direction of the European colonial project, but has also influenced the struggles and aspirations of anticolonial and nationalist intellectuals. While many Latin American countries have inherited the universalizing ideas of Enlightenment humanism such as citizenship, democracy, human rights, and social justice, they also had to contend with the historicist assumptions—“first in Europe, then elsewhere”—that underlie these categories of political modernity. Indeed, Latin American countries have forever struggled with the belief that theirs was a “second-rate version of North Atlantic modernities which they ‘failed’ to follow.”

Throughout much of Latin American, and particularly Brazilian, history, the theme of modernity has been the central pole around which the idea of national identity was woven. Although there was never any doubt about Brazil being part of the West (or “the Occident,” as it is expressed in Portuguese), its colonial history, along with its sense of its geographical distance from Europe and North America, has given rise to a pervasive uncertainty regarding its status as a thoroughly modern nation. Modernity has always been viewed as something foreign, something that Brazil is perceived to have lacked and thus had had to import from “metropolitan” centers of power. At different historical times Brazilian elites oscillated between admiration and desire for European—and after World War II, North American—modernity on the one hand, and celebration of the specificity of Brazilian national culture on the other. Nevertheless, the anxiousness around where Brazil stands in relation to the “advanced world” has endured.

While this anxiety is centered on a clear-cut separation between what is national (regarded as “authentic” Brazil by some, or an obstacle to modernity by others) and what is foreign (“inauthentic” for some, or modern for others), this attempt to separate is flawed. As Hall argues, discourses that rely on the binary opposition between “tradition” and “modernity,” “West” and “East” simplify the issue by essentializing the categories of both the West and the Rest, a homogenizing maneuver that erases internal distinctions within each category.

Writing in relation to Latin America, García Canclini corroborates Hall’s argument. In one of his works García Canclini makes the case that the modernization of these societies did not end traditional forms of production, beliefs, and goods, but created hybrid cultures that encompass a complex, multitemporal
articulation of traditions and modernities.\(^4\) Given the disparities between “deficient” political and socioeconomic modernization on the one hand and “exuberant” cultural modernity on the other, he asserts that while dominant classes have embraced the project of modernity, they have preserved a niche of privilege for themselves.\(^4^2\) In this context, the forms of political and economic modernity such as democracy, citizenship, industrial modes of production, and high technology coexist with archaic power relations, paternalistic regimes, artisanal forms of production, and, I should add, de facto slavery.\(^4^3\)

Since modernization in Brazil was a top-down process carried out by authoritarian regimes in the 1930s and 1960s/1970s, it preserved and recreated the social, economic, and cultural divisions between the elite (or educated classes) and the rest of society. The Brazilian literary critic Roberto Schwarz has rightly observed that this disjunction does not mean that Brazil has experienced a belated modernity, but rather that this very contradiction is a dynamic element of national culture, one that encompasses a fascination with foreign models as well a desire to deploy them in their own culture.\(^4^4\) We should keep such contradictions in mind when we look at Zen in Brazil since—except in relation to Japanese immigrants—it has historically been a practice of the cultural elite. Given the avant-garde status that the Zen boom has enjoyed in the United States and Europe, it is not surprising that members of these elites adopted the practice of Zen as a symbol of cosmopolitanism and modernity. Indeed, Brazilian intellectuals have played a key role in the dissemination of metropolitan ideas and models, traveling to these centers, translating books produced overseas, and publishing magazine and newspaper stories locally.

In a more recent work, García Canclini examines the influence of globalization on the debate on modernity in Latin America.\(^4^5\) He points out that instead of effacing tradition, globalization intensifies the disjunction between the traditional and the “hyper-modern,” popular and elite cultures, and the local and the global that characterize these hybrid cultures. He concludes by saying,

> Historical and local differences persist not so much because globalizing powers are still insufficient, but because their way of reproducing and expanding themselves requires that the center not be everywhere, that there be differences between the global circulation of goods and the unequal distribution of the political capacity to use them.\(^4^6\)

Indeed, while the advent of the cultural industries and mass media has enhanced the popular appeal of cosmopolitanism, the distances between the margins and the centers and the haves and have-nots have not been eliminated.
As a final note on the term “modernity,” Habermas sees modernity as an unfinished project that has not been superseded. From this perspective, the use of the term “postmodernity” for the transformations taking place since the last quarter of the twentieth century is not appropriate. Indeed, many scholars have shunned the use of “postmodernity” to encompass this new mode of interconnection between cultures and have instead employed “globalization,” “advanced modernity,” “late modernity,” or “modernity at large.” Here I have opted for “modernity” to argue that the Enlightenment and civilizing project are still current in these globalized times.

JAPAN AS A MODEL OF MODERNITY

Given the centrality of modernity to the construction of Brazilian national identity, I argue that the aspiration to be modern mediated not just Brazil’s relationship with Europe and North America, but also its relationship with Japan and its cultural products. To this end, I identify a number of key moments in Brazilian history during which the debate between what was national/traditional and what was foreign/modern emerged clearly in relation to Japan, Japanese immigrants, Buddhism in general, and Zen Buddhism in particular.

I argue that the adoption of Zen in Brazil is part of the process of “cannibalizing” the modern other in order to become modern itself. Throughout this book I show that the Zen adopted by national elites since the late 1950s, and by the media and popular culture in the 1990s, is an aspect of what Lopez, Bauman, and Sharf have called “modern Buddhism”—characterized as empirical, rational and in accord with modern science. Moreover, I contend that the practice of Zen on the part of the Brazilian cultural and intellectual elites from the 1950s onward was driven by a desire to acquire and accumulate cultural capital as a marker of social distinction locally and overseas. That is to say, the consumption of Zen by members of the elite expressed their desire to distinguish themselves from the tastes of popular classes while at the same time associating themselves with overseas cultural elites. Finally, I contend that Brazil occupies both a peripheral and (albeit small) central position of influence in relation to the practice and dissemination of Zen. Despite the well-known asymmetry of global cultural flows—that is, the fact that global flows of culture chiefly radiate from metropolitan centers toward peripheries—I argue that Brazil has managed to become a center for some metropolitan centers (France and the United States) as well as for countries that, unlike Brazil, did not undergo a Buddhist boom (Portugal and other Latin American countries). Indeed, Zen in Brazil was never isolated from the trends occurring overseas. The rotation of Sōtōshū missionaries amongst the diverse temples out-
side Japan, the missionaries who defected from Sōtōshū but continue to teach in Brazil and Europe, the arrival of Japanese immigrants, intellectuals traveling and translating books on Zen, the media, and more recently the Internet, and Brazilian e-mail lists linking Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking sympathizers and adherents have meant that Brazil has received inflows, but has also produced counterflows of Zen.

SYNCRETISM, HYBRIDITY, AND CREOLIZATION

Though the concept of syncretism has been historically used to analyze religious encounters, here I have decided not use it for three reasons. First, although syncretism has staged a comeback as it is redefined,\(^5\) it has historically been associated with impurity as a pejorative term to denote a stage prior to Christian monotheism. In other words, the term was used to evaluate religious blending from the point of view of one of the religions involved. Second, syncretism conveys the image of two clear systems overlaid,\(^5\) whereas I would like to complicate this image by addressing other intersecting influences and negotiations, which in turn created multiple, disjunctive beliefs and practices of Zen in Brazil. Indeed, Brazilian anthropologist Rita Segato has argued that Brazil has produced a model of multiple interpenetrations usually described as syncretic. I do not think it is enough to use the term syncretism to encompass the meetings and fusions typical of this system. What is significant about it is that plurality continues to be present, although through a particular multicultural mechanism that makes each culture in contact involve, embrace, invoke or simply mark its presence in a much bigger sector of the population than in a specific social group.\(^5\)

Third, although this book is fundamentally an inquiry into how Zen has been indigenized in Brazil, its approach is a more inclusive one. It does not consider solely traditional religious fusions, but diverse intercultural mixtures. Following García Canclini,\(^4\) I use the term “hybridity” to encompass the diversity of registers to be analyzed here: the globalization and localization of Zen in Brazil, the country’s position as a meaning-producing center/exporter as well as a periphery that imports foreign forms of Zen, Zen in the media, popular culture, and high culture, and the relationship between Zen and modernity and tradition. In addition, I use the trope of creolization as a development of hybridity, as it gives us an insight on how the process of hybridity takes place. Here I shall first address the notions of
creolization and then hybridization in order to show where they overlap and why creolization appears to be a more fertile trope in this study of Zen in Brazil.

The term "creolization" originates from the Spanish criollo and Portuguese crioulo, both deriving from the Latin verb creare (to breed or to create). Historically the term has been used in different ways by different societies. Thus, “in Peru the word was used to refer to people of Spanish descent who were born in the New World. In Brazil, the term was applied to Negro slaves born locally. In Louisiana, the term was applied to the white francophone populations, while in New Orleans it applied to mulattoes.”

Until recently, the concept of a “creole culture” was deeply connected to the encounter of African and European culture in the Caribbean. As a result, the term was extended to encompass the language spoken by these so-called creole people, which in turn was regarded as a simplification of European languages. Lately, however, linguists have regarded it positively as they have come to realize that such languages were the result of the superimposition of the dominant language’s lexicon over the dominated language’s own syntax, grammar, and morphology. The resulting language revealed a twofold predicament: at the same time that it demonstrated that colonial peoples have yielded to and adopted the dominant language by using its lexicon, it showed also that they have clung to inner forms of their own language as a matrix for this lexicon, a sign of resistance.

Many scholars of culture have detached the trope of creolization from its Caribbean and linguistic rootedness and applied the term more broadly to processes of cultural mixing. In the field of anthropology, Hannerz was one of the first to make a strong statement for the concept of creole culture as “our most promising root metaphor” to make sense of the way “two or more historical sources, originally widely different” get in contact, intermingle, and mix. The itinerary that the terms “Creole” and “creolization” have followed is clearly marked by Stoddard and Cornwell.

In Trinidad today there is a slippage between the notion of “Creole” as the African side of the population, the notion of “Creole” culture being the national culture of Trinidad and Tobago, and the notion of “creolizing” as the continuous process of intercultural mixing and creativity. It is the latter, extended sense of creolization and créolité that cultural theorists appropriate as a synonym for hybridity.

It is this latter sense, inflected by its linguistic facet, that I wish to employ when analyzing Brazilian Zen. Nevertheless, I should mention a caveat before
using the term in this way. The word “Creole” derives, as mentioned, from the Portuguese crioulo, which even today is a derogatory term for Afro-Brazilians. Its use here may lead some readers to think the history of Brazilian society is deeply connected with that of the Caribbean. Nothing could be further from the truth. Thus the use of the trope of creolization does not mean that this study involves Afro-Brazilians, nor am I implying that the phenomenon I am analyzing has any relation whatsoever to Caribbean colonial and postcolonial history.

However, before making use of creolization as a trope to understand the process of cultural mixing in Brazil, it is necessary first to examine where creolization and hybridity overlap and where both terms have their distinct uses. The concept of hybridity has increasingly gained currency in the past decades in cultural theory, postcolonial studies, and anthropology. Papastergiadis has observed that hybridity acknowledges that “identity is constructed through negotiation of difference.” Such identity is not a synthesis of the combined elements, but an “energy field of different forces.” In other words, identity is not a tidy product, but an ongoing construction through negotiation. Likewise, Bhabha has argued that a hybrid is not simply a mixture of the two previous identities, but a “third space,” a place for “the negotiation of incommensurable differences, . . . where difference is neither One nor the Other but something else besides, in-between.”

Some cultural and postcolonial theorists have used creolization as a synonym for hybridity. I contend that creolization does not necessarily “tend to fusion,” but as Papastergiadis has argued for hybridity, it reveals “the presence of fissures, gaps and contradictions.” Similar to hybridity, I suggest that creolization underscores the notion that identity is not a seamless combination, a synthesis of two or more worlds, but a field of energy. An equally fitting metaphor is the one employed by Yuri Lotman, a Russian semiotician who defines culture as a dynamic rather than static entity—culture would be “more like a river with a number of currents moving in different rates and intensities.” Culture in this case would be in a “state of constant creolization.” As much as culture is not a synthetic whole, creolization is not a product but a process of interaction and change.

Ultimately all terms are problematic, as they are historically entangled in colonizing processes, but I believe the trope of creolization has several advantages over the term “hybridity” in this study. Hybridity, as a metaphor for cultural contact, carries with it the predicament of its origins in biological science where it was juxtaposed to notions of racial purity and fear of mixing. Hybridity also derives from horticulture and animal-breeding practices, which in turn juxtapose it with ideas of sterility and passivity, since hybrid plants and animals do not hybridize by themselves. Finally, “hybrids are, by definition, native to nowhere,” while “Creole”
means just the opposite, “to become indigenized, to create a home where one is not at home.” Notwithstanding the contemporary recuperation of hybridity as a subversive practice/agency within postcolonial and cultural theory, which has moved the concept away from biological and essentialist discourses of identity and authenticity, it still has to grapple with the dilemma of the discourse of race.

Creolization as an analytical trope, on the other hand, although having originated during colonial contact, carries notions of creativity, agency, and innovation on the part of the colonized. Furthermore, the concept of creolization, when inflected by its linguistic facet, highlights how the continuous contact and negotiation take place. In this respect, Noble and Tabar have rightly pointed out that the trope of hybridity has been for the most part theory driven, that is, there are very few empirical studies “exploring the dimensions by which hybrid elements are articulated.” By contrast, the notion of creolization has been shown to be a fertile analytical trope in many ethnographic studies in that it reveals the process of the construction of identity. Indeed, as Prothero notes, “by attention to two levels of interaction (grammar and lexicon), creolization theory allows for a richer and more sophisticated analysis.” In this light, I will be using creolization to unravel how this process takes place, while hybridity will be used more loosely, whenever I mention the meeting of two or more cultures, practices, and beliefs.

Likewise, many scholars have used the notion of creolization to analyze how postcolonial societies negotiate contact and change. In Buddhist studies, Prothero deploys the notion of creolization to analyze the ways a white American man, Col. Henry Steel Olcott, creolized the Protestantism of his upbringing with Buddhism in his adulthood. Prothero notes that “while the lexicon of his [Olcott’s] faith was almost entirely Buddhist, its grammar was largely Protestant.” From this perspective, I believe that in the context of an analysis of Zen Buddhism in Brazil, the trope of creolization is meaningful as it sheds light onto how Japanese immigrants and descendants have placed a Brazilian religious vocabulary over a Buddhist matrix, while non-Japanese Brazilians and Catholic Japanese Brazilians have been involved in the inverse process.

**BOOK STRUCTURE**

Keeping these three key arguments in mind—the aspiration for modernity, the desire for social distinction, and the peripheral/central position of Brazil—I will now give a brief overview of each chapter, pointing out how these key themes interlace with my findings. I structured this book as a historical itinerary, departing from the Japanese immigration and Orientalist ideas carried into Brazil in the
nineteenth century and arriving in present-day Brazil. I should, however, warn the reader that each chapter is a glimpse of a particular path, among the many others existing, through which I choose to track the story of Zen in Brazil. This book, therefore, does not intend to be a “holistic road to another society,”72 but a journey into the complex ways in which Brazil is entangled with the world at large.

In chapter 1, I address the theme of modernity in relation to Japan and Japanese immigrants into Brazil. I argue that in order to comprehend how Zen was accepted and creolized in Brazil, one has to appreciate how Japan and Japanese immigrants were regarded in the country. In the early twentieth century, when the nation was discussing the acceptance of Japanese immigrants, Brazilian elites constructed an admiring discourse of Japan’s fast economic, military, and social developments as an example that Brazil should follow. In what Lesser called a process of “double assimilation” and that could also be called “cannibalization,” Brazilian elites claimed that Brazil would become modern by taking up Japanese immigrants while the immigrants would assimilate into Brazilian culture.73

Following this discussion, I explore the lives of some Zen missionaries in Brazil. I argue that the discourse of modern Zen that emerged from the writings of D. T. Suzuki and the Kyoto school of philosophy not only influenced the West, but also flowed into Japan, informing some of the kaikyōshi who went to Brazil. I contend that the conflict between traditional and modern Zen was mirrored in the congregation, as Japanese Brazilians and non-Japanese Brazilians subscribed to each form of Zen respectively. In addition, through the lives of missionaries and their travels among the various foreign missions, I show that Zen in Brazil is deeply connected with developments in Japan and the United States.

In chapter 2 I track the flow of ideas into the country by addressing the role of intellectuals in importing modern Zen. I show that Orientalist European ideas of the “exotic east,” rather than the local Japanese community, mediated the Brazilian elite’s concepts of Japan, Buddhism in general, and Zen. Accordingly, Zen was disseminated in elite culture and not confined to the Sōtōshū temples in the country. In this context, I argue that Brazilian cosmopolitan intellectuals traveled to specific locales overseas to acquire the cultural capital that would distinguish them from other sectors of society. In their desire to cannibalize the latest “modern” vogue, to become modern themselves, they chose to travel to metropolitan centers. While in the late nineteenth century that meant going to France, after World War II the United States took its place. As the Brazilian anthropologist Ruben Oliven has observed, “modernity is also frequently confused with the idea of contemporaneity, in the sense that adopting everything that is in vogue in advanced countries is seen as being modern.”74
In chapter 3 I discuss the current coexistence of modernity and tradition in religious terms by analyzing the Brazilian religious field and profiling Zen sympathizers and adherents. I ask how it was that Zen could have been adopted, and even become a common adjective in Portuguese, given the mainly Catholic, Afro-Brazilian, and Spiritist Brazilian arena. I argue that modern Buddhism constructed by Asian elites as compatible with science, and thus superior to Christianity, was adopted in Brazil as a strong shield against what was perceived as a hierarchical, authoritarian, dogmatic, superstitious, and hence “backward” Catholic Church. Since religious modernity is characterized by privatization of choice, pluralization of traditions, and a turning to the self as a source of meaning, it is hardly surprising that Buddhism packaged as a rational, logical, and individual practice and ultimately as a philosophy (not a religion) would be embraced as a path to modernity. Indeed, in their aspiration to modernity, Brazilian intellectuals traveled East so that they could go West. Most adherents I interviewed had a history of shunning Catholicism and some of being Marxist militants in the 1960s and 1970s. However, as discussed earlier, modernity does not efface tradition, and thus here I address the creole religious practices that emerged since Zen arrived in Brazil.

In chapter 4 I explore the role of the cultural industries, in the form of newspapers, magazines, the Internet, movies, and TV, in disseminating Buddhism in Brazil. In this context, I apply Appadurai’s five “scapes” to examine how the flows of Zen into and out of Brazil occur in and through their disjunctures. I argue that the North American “Tibetan chic” trend created a media frenzy in Brazil, which helped to create and popularize a Buddhist boom in the late 1990s. However, since globalization does not efface local differences, I contend that social distinction is still preserved since only certain sectors of society appropriate Buddhism, and they do it in different ways. Therefore, I discuss the roles of fashion, taste, and lifestyle in creating a habitus that maintains social distinction.

In the final chapter I approach the theme of modernity and tradition through actual Zen practices and beliefs in Brazil. I argue that tradition and modernity are not opposed but, in fact, enmeshed. Whereas one might suppose that the Japanese and Japanese-Brazilian Zen practices and beliefs are “traditional” and that non-Japanese-Brazilian ones are “modern,” this is not the picture that emerges from my fieldwork. Both groups have creolized practices. Not only do Japanese Brazilians employ Catholicism to create a creolized Zen, but some are also interested in zazen and see Zen not as a religion, but as a philosophy. On the other hand, non-Japanese Brazilians have devotional as well as merit-making practices, deemed “traditional.” In what I call “creolized Zen,” each group superimposes a new vocabulary onto its own religious grammar. Therefore, in this chapter I discuss and
challenge the binary oppositions between “ethnic” and “convert” Buddhism that North American and European scholars frequently use as a typology to profile adherents. To this end, I demonstrate that their location in the field as Westerners, and (many of them) as Buddhists, has greatly influenced the construction of this binary opposition.

Finally, in the conclusion I try to think beyond Zen in Brazil, pointing to the broader issues this book addresses. My fieldwork, multi-sited and decentered, reveals the complex ways in which modernity is articulated with tradition and how the discourse of modernity has shaped and still shapes the way Brazilians construct their world. Similarly, by tracking global flows into the country, I bring to light how the global is profoundly enmeshed in the local. Brazil is both a periphery and a center for global flows of Zen. It demonstrates that these flows do not only radiate from core Western nations to the periphery, but also in the opposite direction and between peripheries. Moreover, globalization does not homogenize the world. The analysis of hybridization and creolization of Zen in Brazil points to the way that the global is adopted in distinct ways by the local. As a last point, the Brazilian case contributes to a more nuanced picture of the often-described gap between “convert” and “ethnic” practices. My fieldwork shows an overlap between these two kinds of practices.