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The Daoist Society of Brazil

and the Globalization of Orthodox Unity Daoism

DANIEL M. MURRAY & JAMES MILLER

Abstract

Taken out of Chinese cultural context, Daoism is often associated with physical cultivation practices such as *qigong* or *taiji quan* rather than the traditional lineages of Quanzhen or Zhengyi a hierarchically organized religion. The Daoist Society of Brazil, however, is an example of non-Chinese Daoist practice associated with the Zhengyi (Orthodox Unity) tradition. The society's ordained Brazilian priests perform rituals before a largely non-Chinese lay congregation. The result is a cultural hybrid form of Daoist practice that provides insight into how Daoism is transforming through globalization.

In Rio de Janeiro, outside the Templo da Transparência Sublime (Temple of Sublime Clarity) a small sign to the left of a locked metal gate reads *Sociedade Taoísta do Brasil* (Daoist Society of Brazil), with a Chinese translation above, *Baxi Daojiao Hui* 巴西道教會, and a yin-yang symbol. The Society, founded in 1991, maintains two temples, one in Rio de Janeiro and one in São Paulo, and is affiliated to the Orthodox Unity (*Zhengyi* 正一) lineage of Daoism.

We arrived that morning, Sunday, December 13, 2009, to attend the temple's monthly service and purification ritual, and were greeted by Hamilton Fonseca Filho, the high priest (*gaogong fashi* 高功法師) of the temple, formerly an artist's residence, wearing a dark blue robe and black slip-on shoes. He showed us around parts of the building that we had not seen during our first visit earlier that week and told us that he

had performed a *fa* 法 ritual in the temple earlier in the morning. "The people here do not like the *fa*," he told us, but he performs it so the people at the temple that day can participate without worrying or thinking too much. In Taiwan, he added, such a ritual would not be necessary. Soon someone called out to Fonseca Filho from the lower floor telling him to come down, as the service would soon begin.

Image 1. Hamilton Fonseca Filho stands at the altar of the Templo da Transparência Sublime in Rio de Janiero

We walked down the stairs and entered the temple that occupies one large room of the building. The walls were painted red, there were about fifty chairs set up in straight rows, five loudspeakers attached to the walls, and an altar at the far end. Behind it was an image of the Three Pure Ones (*San Qing* 三清) and statues from left to right of Zhang Hui 張回, General Zao 曾慥, Xuan Di 玄帝, Guan Di 關帝, Zhang Daoling 張道陵, Taishang Laojun 太上老君, Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓, and Doumu 斗母. When we took our seats there were a number of other people already sitting quietly waiting for the service to start, while others made offerings of incense to either the main shrine or a smaller shrine to Guandi at

the back of the room. A couple waited outside until they finished having a conversation, and anyone speaking inside was whispering.

Image 2: A general view inside the ritual space of the Templo da Transparência Sublime in Rio de Janiero

The service began when the priests entered the temple chanting in Chinese and ringing a bell. The high priest, four additional priests (*daoshi* 道士), and two lay helpers approached the front of the temple and made prostrations to the altar. The chants continued with the sounds of the bell, singing bowl, and wood block, and the high priest started to burn a talisman (*fu* 符) and perform mudras. When the chanting stopped, one of the priests explained in Portuguese that they were offering incense as a token of sincerity of the congregation's lives, and another priest added that their prayers were invoking blessings and prosperity from the spirits.

A faster paced chant then began, reciting the names of different deities, and a temple volunteer started to help people form a line down the aisle between the rows of chairs. When the chant ended, the head priest

held incense sticks and a sword, and began to carve *fu* in the smoke. As the people from the line approached him, he wrote a *fu* for each person using smoke from the incense sticks. The other priests continued to chant quietly, and a temple helper showed people which door to exit once the ritual is finished.

Image 3: Wagner Canalonga inside the temple in São Paulo.

After everyone in attendance had gone through this ritual, the high priest drew another *fu* using the sword and the other priests knelt in front of the altar, and begin to chant again. Once the chanting ended, the high priest put on a microphone and began to talk in Portuguese about how Daoism can remove obstacles and prevent energies that stop people from completing their personal and spiritual journeys. He added that it also helps to maintain good relationships with friends and family. Daoism, he told the congregation, helps to maintain a balance between the self and the world. When he finished talking, the priests and lay volunteers bowed to each other, and then exited followed by the high priest.

This is certainly not the typical image of Daoist practice in Western countries. Generally speaking, European and North American Daoist

practice is based on *qigong* 氣功 and *taiji quan* 太極拳 groups that offer fee-for-service classes and retreats, or on individual study of translations of the *Daode jing*. While there are some Western initiates in traditional lineages, such as The Way of Complete Perfection (*Quanzhen* 全眞), holding a lineage is not particularly common in Western Daoist practice (Clarke 2000; Siegler 2006: 257-280). At the same time, however, the ritual described is clearly different from what would typically be found in a Zhengyi Daoist temple in China or Taiwan. The Daoist Society of Brazil stands as an important case study of how Zhengyi Daoism can develop from its origins as ethnically Chinese religious tradition, negotiate different cultural and linguistic worlds and be transformed into a global religious movement.

Our research is based on fieldwork conducted in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo between December 8 and 20, 2010. The fieldwork consisted of focus groups with members of the congregation, personal interviews with Daoist leaders, and participant observation in the ceremonies. Research was conducted with three different groups that affiliated themselves with Daoism: the Daoist Society of Brazil in both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro; a group that practices *neigong, qigong* and other physical practices called the Grande Triade in Rio; and the Pai Lin Tai Chi Centre in São Paulo. Although the research we conducted at all three fieldwork sites helped to shape the direction of this research, this paper focuses on the Daoist Society of Brazil. We examine the development of the Daoist Society of Brazil and the members' understandings of Daoism. From this we develop a view of the features of Brazilian society that allowed for the formation of a Zhengyi Daoist community outside of ethnically Chinese people and discuss the implications of this for studies of the globalization of Daoism and religion in contemporary Brazil.

The Brazilian Religious Context

In Brazil the spread of Daoism mirrored the forms it took in North America and Europe in many ways, but with less influence from local scholars in the transmission of Daoist texts. As Steve Moore (1999: 57) writes "there is no Brazilian equivalent of the UK's Royal Asiatic Society or the USA's American Oriental Society, and this lack of academic inter-

est in the orient is apparently reflected across the entire South American continent."

On the other hand, Brazil's colonial connections to Europe facilitated the propagation of Chinese texts translated into European languages, and its broad cultural diversity enabled the reception of Chinese body cultivation traditions. Beginning in the 1950s, many Brazilians in artistic and intellectual social circles became fascinated with European Orientalist ideas of exotic wisdom from the East (Rocha 2006: 66-73). Based on our interviews with self-identified Daoist practitioners, the most important elements in the transmission of Daoism to Brazil have been the translation of the *Yijing* and *Daode jing* into Portuguese, and the spread of *taiji quan* practice under the influence of Chinese immigration to Brazil.

Image 4: A photograph of Wu Jyh Cherng on a temple wall

Many translations of the *Yijing* have appeared in Portuguese since the 1960s, while the first Portuguese version of the *Daode Jing* was not completed until Wu Jyh Cherng (Wu Zhicheng 武志成 1958-2004),[1] the founder of the Daoist Society of Brazil, published his in 1996 (Moore 1999: 49;

[1] Although Wu Jyh Cherng's family name is Wu 武, he went by Cherng 成 (written as Cheng in the standard pinyin Romanization) to differentiate himself from his father, and so this paper will refer to him as Cherng for consistency with media reports and information produced by the Daoist Society of Brazil.

Cherng 1996). As in the United States and elsewhere, the spread of Chinese somatic disciplines to Brazil began with immigration from China and Taiwan, when a number of migrants familiar with these practices began to teach *taiji quan* in the 1970s and 1980s. Liu Pai Lin (Liu Bailing 劉百齡 1907-2000)[2] was a *taiji quan* teacher who gained more attention than most, and his centers continue today under the leadership of Jerusha Chang (Zhang Yunyun 張芸芸).

The practices of *taiji quan* fit well with a growing interest in health and well being in Brazil (Neto 2006: 87-105). A former student of Liu told us that in his eyes, Liu was more successful because he assumed little or no previous knowledge from his students, first teaching them to understand their bodies and the concept of *qi*. Liu later connected *taiji quan* and Daoism in his more advanced classes, where he taught about the *Daode jing* and *Yijing*. Over the past thirty or forty years taiji quan has become a much more common activity in Brazil, and often connected in varying degrees to Daoism, which has helped to shape the conception of Daoism in Brazil.

Chinese immigrant groups also established a popular religious temple in São Paulo, but unlike the taiji quan teachings or textual translations, the amalgamation of Buddhism, Daoism, and popular belief practiced there has remained within the ethnic Chinese community (Benavides 2002: 358-359). The spread of Daoism to Brazil, therefore, did not occur originally as a religious practice. Although Daoism has traditionally been construed at least theoretically as a universal religion, the spread of Zhengyi Daoism was aided by a more general diffusion of Chinese cultural texts and practices.

A second factor influencing the spread of Daoist religion was the transformation in Brazilian society that enabled the acceptance of a wide array of religious diversity. While religion in Brazil has a long history of Catholic dominance, it is now a pluralistic religious environment and, particularly in major cities, there is a wide variety of religious choice. Moreover even with Christian groups, the role and views of the laity

[2] Although the standard Romanization of his name is Liu Bailing, we use his personally chosen transliteration, Liu Pai Lin, for consistency with his own publications, promotional material, and previous scholarship dealing with his practices.

have changed from a traditional top-down hierarchy. Individual choices about how to be religious have emerged, and although the majority of people continue to claim membership in the traditional religious institutions, this does not necessarily mean they take part in the practice of only one tradition. Brazilian religious practice involves many hybridizations, overlapping, and fusions of belief (Rocha 2006: 92).

There are three recent developments in Brazilian religion and society that make Zhengyi Daoism a more acceptable and appealing practice than may be the case in other societies: a familiarity with belief systems where spirits or deities are immanent within the world; increased interest in religious practices related to the physical body; and increased conversion to religions not connected to one's ethnicity, history or geographic location. Although in our interviews individuals all had their own reasons for joining the Daoist Society of Brazil, based on their own experiences, nonetheless the background transformations Brazilian religious belief make their choice of Daoism more likely.

Religion in Brazil has been described as a "dispute of spirits" (José Jorge de Carvalho qtd. in Rocha 2006: 93) and South American countries more generally have been described as "inspirited" or "enchanted" compared to other developed nations (Martin 1998: 109). Pentecostalism, Candomblé, and other Afro-Brazilian religions have different conceptions of the relationship between humans, spirit mediums and deities, but share the practice of physically experiencing and connecting with spiritual power(s). In particular, the awareness of Afro-Brazilian religious practice bring a larger acceptance of the lived experience of an immanent polytheistic sacred than can be found in predominately Protestant communities.

According to our interviews, many people cited the Daoist focus on the present world and the body as major reasons for joining the Daoist Society of Brazil. Daoism here is a construed as a religious tradition that is focussed on the here and now, rather than the hereafter, and is focussed on the livelihood of the physical body. This emphasis, while certainly important for Daoism, is also shared by other new religious groups in Brazil. Spickard (2004: 56) found that the middle class in Brazil are attracted to the group Sekai Kyusei-kyo 世界救世教 for its physical healing practices, especially if scientific medicine may not be affordable. On a visit to a Kofuku-no-Kagaku 幸福の科学 temple in São Paulo, we

observed Brazilians taking part in physical healing practices. Additionally, Chestnut (1997:170-197) and Burdock (1993: 15, 137) have linked the growing number of converts to Pentecostalism in Brazil to interest in improving physical health where health care is not affordable, and in some areas the Catholic church has also began focus more on mysticism and healing (Rocha 2006: 105). These more bodily or health focused religious forms are practiced primarily by converts, and converting to different religions regardless of one's ethnic or geographic background. Studies of Buddhism in Brazil have made this point particularly in the case of urban centers (see Rocha 2005, 2006; Usarski 2002; Clarke 2005).

The Daoist Society of Brazil

The Daoist Society of Brazil (*Sociedade Taoísta do Brasil*) was founded on January 15, 1991 as part of the Orthodox Unity (*Zhengyi* 正一) tradition. Its founder, Wu Jyh Cherng moved to Brazil from Taiwan with his parents in 1973, returning to Taiwan for a number of years to train as a Daoist priest. After Cherng's death in 2004, Hamilton Fonseca Filho became the head priest of the temple in Rio de Janeiro, and Wagner Canalonga continued as the head priest in the smaller São Paulo temple. The two had initially trained under Cherng, but following his death traveled to Taiwan to receive further training from the Daoist Association of Taiwan.

Our informants gave us an oral history of Cherng's life that is particularly relevant to his religious life. Soon after his family moved to Brazil, he developed arthritis and almost died. While he was ill, his father decided to treat him with acupuncture and began teaching him *taiji quan* and meditation, while his mother would tell him stories from Chinese folklore. In the early 1980s Cherng had recovered from his arthritis and due to his interest in his mother's stories and father's body cultivation practices, he asked his father for the names of Daoist masters in Taiwan and China. He visited numerous masters who taught alchemy in the Western School and learnt both *neidan* 內丹 and *waidan* 外丹 practices, before arriving at Zhengyi Daoists in Taiwan, and became initiated as a *daoshi*. After returning to Rio he began to teach courses on *taiji quan* and the *Yijing*. As his students became more interested in the philosophical or cosmological side of things, he decided to translate the *Daode Jing* into Portuguese under the title *Tao Te Ching—O Livro do Caminho e da Virtude*

in 1996. Cherng continued to travel to Taiwan for further training and to collect images and statues for a temple, and on one trip brought twelve Brazilians for ordination in the lineage. In 1994 he was given permission to initiate people in the lineage himself, which led him to start a training program for Daoist priests in Brazil.

The Daoist Society of Brazil formed in 1991with the foundation of the temple in Rio, the *Templo da Transparência Sublime*. Previously, courses had been taught in a gym, but the group had no permanent space of its own. The building now includes a school for Daoist arts on the lower floor and a temple on the second floor. Cherng also visited São Paulo to teach courses on the *Yijing* at a *taiji quan* school. As the São Paulo membership grew Cherng began to look for a more permanent space, and they moved into two different spaces for periods of six months before finding a more permanent location in 2002 and founded the *Templo do Tesouro do Espírito* (Temple of the Treasure of the Spirit). The temple later moved again to their current location in Liberdade, the Japanese district of São Paulo. Soon after founding the second temple, Cherng went on a one and a half year retreat in China. In 2004, after returning to Brazil, he died unexpectedly.

The death of Master Cherng appears to have had less impact in São Paulo than in Rio. Cherng had left for China a week after the temple opened, and the lay people had already accepted Canalonga as the head of the temple. However, the Rio temple already had a number of priests, who up until Cherng's death, had generally thought of each other as equals. According to the current head priest, Hamilton Fonseca Filho, Cherng chose him as his successor before his death. He says the choice was based on his knowledge of *fa* and level of meditation, but some other priests at the time found the change of leadership difficult to accept or were disillusioned after their master's death, and soon left the temple after their disagreements with the change. Nonetheless, under his leadership the temple has grown into what is now a thriving religious community.

Perspectives on Daoism

Although the foundation of the temples was the result of Cherng's family connections to Daoism and his ordination in Taiwan, they developed

in a way that attracted a wide variety of Brazilian ethnicities. Consequently, none of our informants grew up with the same kind of connections to Daoist practices; all were converts. Our informants gave main reasons for adopting Daoism: (1) they practiced of *taiji quan*; (2) they studied texts associated with Daoism; (3) they tried a variety of religions trying to find the one that they thought was right for them. None of these is different from what has been found in research on Daoist practice by North Americans or Europeans who identify as Daoist (Siegler 2006; Clarke 2000). The first two categories are also the major forms of earlier Daoist transmission to Brazil in the forms of texts and physical practices, so it is not surprising people would consider these their first encounters with Daoism or the cause for them going to the temple. According to Skerkat (1997: 68-72), choosing a religion is not only based on one's belief, but like other choices depends on one's previous knowledge and experience of religions. Daoist practice then became more accessible to Brazilians by participating in the practices and texts that had disseminated to Brazil prior to the founding of the Daoist Society.

Those who came initially to practice *taiji quan* later developed an interest in what else goes on in the temple and how it connected to their physical practices, and joined study groups on the *Daode jing* or attended the rituals or talks. Many people around the world practice *taiji quan* without any connection to religion, however, the interviewees were brought into direct contact with Daoism by practicing at the temple and thought that *taiji quan* helped to change their way of thinking to one that is compatible with Daoist practice. Those who initially were brought to Daoism through studying the *Daode jing* or *Yijing* joined the study groups available at the temple, which led them to become interested in Daoism as a religion. While both studying these texts and practicing *taiji quan* are widespread in Brazil, the members of the society also take part in cosmological views, worship of deities, and rituals practiced in the Zhengyi lineage. These as aspects are what were of more interest initially to the religious seekers who joined the temple after practicing Buddhism, Catholicism, Candomblé, and a variety of other religions. Two of the priests had previously practiced Tibetan Buddhism, while Hamilton Fonseca Filho said he always knew he would be a religious official, it just took time to figure out in which religion. In fact, Cherng had asked him to make sure to study other religions before making his choice to become

a priest. Many of the priests had a long term interest in religiosity, lineage, and ritual, but were not satisfied with what they previously experienced. It was not until they slowly become more involved with the Daoist Society that they began to think their religious needs were fulfilled.

The different ways that people began to practice Daoism at the Daoist Society of Brazil did not involve a direct conversion. Rather, they were part of a process that may have started with practices of *taiji quan*, individual or group study of different texts, or participation in other Asian or non-mainstream religious groups. This kind of process was seen in the group interview with lay people at the Rio temple. One woman said that "I believe that people, the culture here, does not accept Daoism as a religion.... For us, we have accepted Daoism as our religion, we don't have another one." She then said, "like her," and motioned to another woman in the group who had said that she was a Catholic, but also likes to come to the Daoist rituals and does not identify herself as a Daoist. As Daoism is small and new religion in Brazil, people appear to approach it with caution, and take time to adjust and identify as a Daoist. This slow process allows people to take courses they may be interested in without feeling forced to become "religious" or pressured to commit.

The topic of "strict" and "loose" religions has been the subject of scholarly debate over the past decade. Iannaccone (1992; 1994; 1997: 35-36) has argued that loose religious organization does not produce commitment in the laity and that strict religions are more successful, though Miller (2002: 445) argues "reducing the demands placed upon potential customers [religious adherents] eases them into a religious organization." Based on our observations at the Daoist Society of Brazil it appears that having a low required commitment level can still produce increasing commitment among members, particularly for religions that are not well understood by the public and are very different from the traditional mainstream beliefs.

In order to understand what members of the society thought was important about being a Daoist and how they would define their religion, we asked our focus groups how they would describe Daoism to a non-Daoist friend and how they would explain what they do in the temple. Many of the interviewees said they would describe Daoism as finding a balance in life or a natural way. These ideas were seen as connected to Daoism's focus on this world and how to live in this life. One layperson

described Daoism saying that it "concerns being human," while a priest, when asked about his thoughts on immortality, responded that "Daoism is about joy, about happiness. Life is happiness." For many followers, Daoism was important because they did not find it to be caught up in rewards in another world; rather it was seen as a practical way to help live in this life. Participants also contrasted this with Catholicism, which some members thought of as trying to control people or, as one woman said, Daoism does not "try to sell you fantasies." Candomblé was compared to Daoism in relation to spirits and possession. However, interviewees explained that Daoist practice gives oneself more self-control, as opposed to the experience of possession by Candomblé spirits. Daoism, therefore, was seen as giving people more control both in everyday life and within the spiritual realm.

This type of religiosity, one that is focused on this world and is based on a personal journey of what is right for the individual, is a common feature of the contemporary religious question across the world. Norris and Inglehart (2004: 74-75) see a shift from religiosity based on security in agrarian societies to one based on concerns about existential meaning in post-industrial societies. People who have become less interested in traditional (Christian) religious practice, have not given up on individual religiosity. Szerszynski (Szerszynski 2005: 10-23) discusses the transformation of religiosity to a more individual form, and sees these post-industrial societies as developing a "postmodern sacred." This kind of religiosity or sacrality is based on many different cosmologies and worldviews that develop from subjective experiences. In such a context it is up to the individual to work out their own religious meanings inside or outside of religious institutions. While the themes that appear in these contemporary religious forms are not so different from the notions expressed by our Brazilian Daoist focus groups, there is something of a difference that is due to the character of Zhengyi Daoism: it is rooted in lineage and tradition, and is not completely about individuality. Although informants described their decision to participate in these practices as an individual choice, what remains important about the practices is that they their authenticity in part relies on their historic connection to Chinese religious practice.

Robertson (1992: 166) writes that in the contemporary world the representation of 'authenticity' becomes an important source of empow-

erment for people. Although Taylor (1991) links the importance of authenticity to the desire for individual choice, he also acknowledges the importance that authenticity be recognized (45-61). In Zhengyi Daoism the sense of lineage and the history of ritual practice help to establish commitment and an identity as a Daoist (Kohn and Roth 2002: 7-11), and in Brazil the connection to lineage affiliation and ritual also helps to provide this sense of 'authenticity' in religious practice.

From our interviews, however, it was clear that the ritual aspect of Zhengyi Daoism was most clearly understood by the two head priests, Hamilton Fonseca Filho and Wagner Canalonga. We asked how they understand the importance of rituals and what they think the rituals actually do. For both of them the chief function of rituals is to change energy. The goal of this is to help improve one's prosperity, harmony, and health. Hamiton Fonseca Filho, the head priest in Rio, said the most important aspects of Zhengyi tradition are the rituals, adding that they will help participatns first gain material stability and then can improve belief. Wagner Canalonga explained that having an altar and a temple are important in order for the rituals to be successful, as these help to "create roots" that make the space more favorable for one's development in one's understanding of Daoism. Another priest said that most Western Daoists lose an important part of the tradition because they are not interested in ritual.

The importance of ritual practice has been noted by other scholars of Brazilian religions. In her study of Zen in Brazil, Rocha (2006: 23) discusses Coen de Souza, a non-Japanese Brazilian Zen nun, who was able to gain acceptance in the Japanese community by maintaining the traditional rituals from Japan. Here ritual practice provided a link of authenticity to the source of the lineage. Rocha argues that the history of devotion to saints in Catholicism has made performing Buddhist devotional rituals much easier for Brazilians, than for Protestant countries that tried to remove such practices (Rocha 2006: 187). The Daoist Society of Brazil certainly seems to make this theory plausible, but further study on Daoist or Zen groups in other historically Catholic and Protestant nations is still needed in order to see if this is a purely Catholic influence or if it has to do with other factors in Brazil. What ritual certainly does do for Zhengyi Daoist practice is connect it to the tradition and historic practices of

Daoism. The style of chanting, material culture of the altar, mudras, and construction of talisman link the Brazilian Daoists to Chinese tradition.

Although elements listed above connect the Daoist Society of Brazil to tradition and lineage, there was no consensus on whether or not one needed to understand Chinese culture to understand Daoism or what aspects of Chinese culture should be understood. A number of people did say that practicing Daoism made them more interested in Chinese culture; however, most people did not think that travelling to China to study Daoism played an important role in maintaining the authenticity or orthodoxy of the lineage. Generally the reason given for the lack of interest was that most people in China do not practice Daoism or that it is not necessary to go to China in order to be a Daoist. Although plans to visit China were not dominant, a number of people, particularly those who had been members of the society for a longer period of time, said that practicing Daoism had made them more interested in Chinese culture, even if they did not think of it as the culture of contemporary China. While they all see Daoism as a universal teaching, they found that it increased interest in other parts of Chinese culture, not just to understand the history of the development of Daoism or China more generally, but also in choices they make in life for food or medicine.

Is Brazilian Daoism a Chinese Religion?

As Beyer (1994: 28) notes, in a globalized society individuals can form their identities trans-societally through religion and social movements, among other forms of communication. In the case of the Daoist Society of Brazil, Daoism functions as a transnational religious movement, and has caused at least some practitioners to deepen their knowledge of Chinese history, language and culture. Most notably, the religious ritual that we witnessed was conducted partly in Chinese, a language that the priests had had to learn in order to carry out their religious rituals.

Hamilton Fonseca Filho explained that from the beginning they tried to separate Daoism from Chinese culture in order to make the practices appeal more to Brazilian people, avoid making it appear overly exotic, and try to avoid confusion with religions like Candomblé. He went on to say "it's not necessary to be a Chinese-Portuguese-Brazilian to be Daoist, you have to distance these two things because the culture is very

different and Daoist knowledge must be settled in Brazil." Obviously, the Society could not change all aspects of Daoist religion, but they were encouraged by both Cherng and later by the Daoist Association in Taiwan to adapt their practices in Brazil. In Mainland China and Taiwan Zhengyi Daoism has close ties to popular local practices and this allows the priests to be able to connect their myths, rituals, and world-view to local communities through temples, ancestor worship, and festivals (Dean 2009: 179; Lee 2003: 125-128). It goes without saying, however, that the local customs of contemporary Brazil are very different from what Zhengyi Daoists would have encountered historically in their engagement with, say, Chinese diaspora communities in Malaysia or Indonesia, and thus it is unsurprising that significant changes were made.

Sherkat (1997: 68-72) argues that people choose religion based on constraints made based on a variety of factors: experience; knowledge; social expectations that can differ depending on age, gender, class, and ethnicity; choices of family and friends; and belief. While there are individual variations, there are also commonalities within a society or culture about these, not just in terms of what people want from a religious group, but how they expect one to function. Hamilton Fonseca Filho told us that Cherng tried to separate Chinese culture from Daoism, and thinks that this allowed people in Brazil to "use the services available from the priest without entering the culture of dragons or the supernatural culture of Chinese. … It respects [the] theology [of Daoism]."

Another large change was based on language: what parts of the practice were important to keep in Chinese and what could be translated to Portuguese. While in Taiwan Wagner Canalonga and Hamilton Fonseca Filho were told by their master that it was better to translate things into Portuguese so that people are able to participate in the religion and understand the texts. All of the chanting remains in Chinese, but translations and Hanyu pinyin transliterations are printed below the Chinese characters in a booklet handed out during services. Wagner Canalonga said that keeping the chanting in Chinese was necssary to have the same "vibrations" during all the rituals, and also that it sounds better in Chinese; Hamilton Fonseca Filho said that it was important to keep the mantras in Chinese because Daoists have chanted them for years, and that by using the same sounds, the mantras "acquire energy."

Other changes were made to services to accommodate what most Brazilians expect a religious service to be like, in other words, to be more like a Catholic Mass and less like a Chinese temple. During the purification ritual described at the start of this essay, a volunteer tells each row of people when to stand up from their seats to go to join the line for the ritual. The Brazilian temples' method accommodates the demand for space inside the temple and does not assume people know what to do or when to do it. Additionally, the similarities to communion at church give a feeling of familiarity to those who have practiced Christianity. The layout of the seating in the temple is also quite church-like: both temples use straight rows of chairs facing the main altar to watch the priests perform the ritual with an aisle down the middle. The Brazilian Daoists perform these services on Sunday mornings at the temple, and thereby conform to the expectation of religious rituals being open to the public on according to a fixed schedule in the Western calendar. Another priest clarified that, while they adapt to Brazilian culture and opened their rituals to the public, the performance of the ritual is between the priests and the deities, saying that "when we are doing the rituals, we are looking to the deities, not the public" and that "it's not opera, it's not a show."

Although Brazil has a rich heritage of religious traditions, the influence from Catholicism on what a religion should look like remains today and has shaped how the Daoist Society of Brazil has developed. While Daoism remains at the theological heart of the liturgy, the organization and expectations of what a religious service should be seem more Catholic than Chinese in style. In a Chinese temple, for instance, there are typically no chairs where lay people sit in reverential silence; nor are services routinely held every Sunday. From the perspective of Zhengyi Daoism, the idea of cultural hybridization should not be abhorrent. In his study of early Zhengyi communities Terry Kleeman (2002) saw that practices by other ethnicities were accepted, and Kenneth Dean (1993, 2003, 2009) and Lee Fong-Mao (2003) have both shown that Zhengyi Daoists have maintained ties to a wide range of local communities across China and Taiwan and accepted a variety of local practices. This combination of orthodoxy and eclectic localism seems to be an important feature of how Daoism has developed over the past centuries. What is different with the Daoist Society of Brazil, however, is not only that the Zhengyi tradition

has moved to a different ethnic group or a different country with new local customs, but that it has taken on a life of its own in an area that lies outside the direct influence of China.

Moretz (2009: 167) writes, "The Dao is the new Zen. Just as with Zen, many people think the Dao is whatever they want it to be." In Brazil, Daoism also followed Zen, first in the Orientialist exoticism and commercial spirituality Moretz discusses, and later in the way that both Zen and Daoism formed religious institutions with traditional lineages of ordination and ritual practice.

Nonetheless it was clear from our research that this institutional, lineage based Daoism would not have taken root in Brazil without the earlier development of what Peter Beyer (2006) describes as "social movement religion." These are the kinds of Daoist groups that exist more widely in Western countries in the form of taiji quan and qigong groups. Social movement religion is largely uncontrolled by a central authority, and participation is generally only occasional and when it is regular it still tends to be a kind of individual religiosity (Beyer 2006: 108-110). This limited commitment makes taking a chance at something unknown less risky for people, so it can more easily develop in different cultures. While Zhengyi Daoism still had to adapt certain practices in Brazil, the earlier globalization of Daoism through social movements, rather than an organized religion, allowed other practices appeal to people and be accepted as part of their identity. Furthermore, by maintaining the overt importance of ritual and lineage, they have increased a sense of legitimacy in Daoist practice outside of China, to show that these traditions are not bound by geographic location or ethnicity.

Conclusions

Globalized Daoist practice is often associated with the detachment of Daoism from tradition and from Chinese culture (Siegler 2006). The Daoist Society of Brazil, however, tries to maintain certain traditional practices, while distancing itself from Chinese culture in order to try to create an authentic yet Brazilian-style of Daoism. In the globalized world, a local organization can quickly have a wide influence on a trans-societal level (Haugerud 2003: 66-67). The Daoist Society of Brazil therefore could

not only change how Daoism is practiced in Brazil, but can act to change how people elsewhere think about Daoism.

The Daoist Society of Brazil has created a form of Daoism that may best be described as a cultural hybrid. The Brazilian forms enable it to gain acceptance among the wider society and conform to local expectations about the function and appearance of religion. At the same time, the limited use of Chinese language, and the direct connections to Daoist lineages through ordination in Taiwan provide the Society with a legitimacy and authenticity that are clearly valued by the lay people. It is like that this hybridity is the direct result of the founder, Wu Jyh Cherng's, vision of creating a uniquely Brazilian Daoism, rather than servicing the local Chinese diaspora community first.

While the Daoist Society of Brazil presents a specifically Brazilian Daoism, it is not detached from Chinese culture and the historic tradition of Daoism, nor is it detached from contemporary changes in religiosity of developed and historically Christian areas and the global spread of Daoism. All of these have contributed to Daoist practice in Brazil and the view of it as universal, Chinese, and Brazilian.

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