Japanese Buddhism, Relativization, and Glocalization

Ugo Dessì

Institute for the Study of Religion, University of Leipzig, Schillerstr. 6, 04109 Leipzig, Germany;
ugo.dessi@uni-leipzig.de; Tel.: +49-341-97-37160

Abstract: Within the field of study on Japanese religions, the issue of globalization tends to be associated with the missionary activities of some successful new religious movements, and there is a certain reluctance to approach analytically the dynamics of glocalization/hybridization and the power issues at stake. In this article, I address these and other related problems by taking my cue from the relativizing effects of globalization and a working definition of religion based on the concept of authority. To this aim, I focus on two case studies. The first concerns the ongoing greening of Japanese Buddhism. The second revolves around the adoption of meditational techniques by priests and lay practitioners in Hawaiian Shin Buddhism. My findings show that there are at least four factors underlying the glocalization of Japanese Buddhism, that is, global consciousness, resonance with the local tradition, decontextualization, and quest for power. Moreover, they indicate that it is possible to distinguish between two types of glocalization (glocalization and chauvinistic glocalization) and two configurations of glocalization (juxtaposition and integration).

Keywords: Japanese Buddhism; relativization; glocalization; globalization; ecology; meditation; religious authority; definition of religion

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1. Introduction

Despite the increasing amount of research on religion and globalization worldwide published in the last two decades, the study of Japanese religions under globalizing conditions is to date still in an early stage. There is some irony in this, given the emphasis on "Japanese religion" found in Roland Robertson's early theorizations on globalization, and his association of glocalization with the Japanese term *dochakuka* [1,2].

Indeed, Robertson's work remains the major source of inspiration for the few Japanese scholars who have attempted to explore the interplay of religion and global dynamics. One can think, for example, of Kashimura Aiko's analysis of New Age religious culture, which relies on Robertson's reflections on the interplay between the local and the global [3], or Inoue Nobutaka's early observations of "neo-syncretism" among Japanese new religious movements [4]. In Japan, there have also been attempts to elaborate on Robertson's claim that Japanese culture is inclined toward syncretism by contrasting "glocalized" (i.e., "harmony-oriented") Japanese Buddhism to the allegedly anthropocentric Western worldview [5]. Yet, Japanese scholarship on this subject has rarely been able to build on this strand of globalization theory and develop original approaches, and the research output is fragmented and limited to a small number of journal articles and book chapters.

Outside of Japan, slightly more attention has been paid to Japanese religions under globalization. Besides some research published in article (e.g., [6–9]) or dissertation format [10], three full length monographs have been published so far: Cristina Rocha's study of Zen Buddhism in Brazil through Appaduraian categories [11], and my two books [12,13] based on several case studies in Japan and overseas. Moreover, a Special Issue of the *Journal of Religion in Japan* has recently focused on the interplay of several Japanese religious traditions with global dynamics from different perspectives ([14];

for an exhaustive review of scholarly sources on Japanese religions and globalization by both Japanese and non-Japanese scholars, cf. ([13], pp. 16–24).

However, within the field of study on Japanese religions, the issue of globalization still tends to be seen as something self-explanatory, or is at best associated with the missionary activities of some successful new religious movements. Even when a larger array of phenomena is taken into account, there is a certain reluctance to approach analytically the dynamics of glocalization and hybridization and the power issues at stake.

In the following sections, I will address these and other related problems by taking my cue from the relativizing effects of globalization and a working definition of religion based on the concept of authority. In this way, I aim to provide a contribution to a more nuanced understanding of Japanese Buddhism under globalization.

2. Religion, Relativization and Authority

Although there is hardly any general agreement on the definition of globalization, many scholars in the field of studies on globalization and culture would agree that globalization is related to the increasing interconnectedness and the compression of time and space brought about by the new communication technologies. The metaphor of global flows has been widely used to describe the new global condition, in which people, goods and ideas circulating worldwide elicit the creation of new identities and networks at the local level (e.g., [15,16]). As aptly noted by some critical scholars, this does not necessarily mean that we are living in an age of global emancipation, since the circulation of these flows is generally regulated by powerful agents in search for power and legitimation (cf. [17–19]).

In this connection, it has also been suggested that the aquatic metaphor of flows should be replaced by others related to networks, which would allow for a better approach to the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion underlying globalization [20]. Indeed, the metaphor of a global cultural network would also seem to express more clearly the agency of local actors, which are not just "caught" in global flows, but rather provide at any given moment with their interactions meaning and practical content to the process of globalization.

As illustrated by George Van Pelt Campbell, the new global condition brings about higher chances for local traditions to be relativized and produce a wide range of responses [21]. Campbell, who implicitly identifies tradition with "religious tradition", distinguishes four main aspects of it: the hermeneutic aspect (tradition as an interpretive scheme), the normative aspect (tradition as a set of norms), the legitimation aspect (tradition as a source of authority), and the identity aspect (tradition as a source of identity-formation) ([21], pp. 2–3). Campbell argues that relativization especially affects the hermeneutic and identity aspects of tradition, and much less the remaining two (normative and legitimation) ([21], pp. 3–4).

Campbell's model is meaningful and instructive in that it exposes the key role played by relativization within global dynamics. However, I think that its full application to *religious* traditions is rather problematic for the following reasons. First, Campbell's emphasis on the hermeneutic (as "making sense of the world") and identity aspects comes too close to the Western-centric idea that the focus on the ultimate meaning of life or social solidarity represent the core of religion. Second, as far as the relativization of religious traditions is concerned, it does not seem appropriate to downplay the role of the normative aspect, not least because this dimension of religion is still very relevant for a multitude of spiritual seekers around the globe.

Therefore, this approach centered on relativization requires some adjustments if it is to be applied to religion and Japanese Buddhism. In my view, a viable solution to this problem can be found by giving more emphasis to the issues of authority and legitimation, which are downplayed in Campbell's model. It is true that, as far as the legitimation aspect is concerned, Campbell makes reference to Max Weber's distinction between rational-legal, charismatic, and traditional authority, upon which three corresponding types of legitimation are based. However, Weber's analysis can also be used to support a rather different approach. Specifically, I am referring here to Weber's definition of a "hierocratic

organization" as something "which enforces its order through psychic coercion by distributing or denying religious benefits" ([22], p. 54). This idea has been further elaborated by Mark Chaves, who noted that psychic coercion is not a satisfactory basis for authority, and suggested that it should be substituted for a concept that indicates religion's means of legitimation, namely, a "supernatural" component ([23], p. 756).

Based on these premises, I consider religion as a social system that regulates the access to a variety of worldly/other-worldly goods through the authority of a superempirical agency. The term superempirical is given preference here over terms such as supernatural and superhuman, the problematical status of which has been illustrated by previous scholarship [24], and refers to what lies beyond the intersubjectively observable and testable phenomena (cf. [12], pp. 11–17; [13], pp. 29–36).

The contents of the global cultural network can impact different parts of the religious system: the superempirical source of authority (whether or not it is something "real" existing out there); the constellation of goods mediated by religion; the structure of legitimation (the way in which the nexus between the superempirical agency and these goods is envisioned, narrated and performed); the main guardians of this authority structure, the religious professionals; and the ordinary practitioners.

Against this framework, relativization can be characterized as the process through which the pressure exercised by the increasing presence of external ideas (or other social/religious systems) calls into question the autonomy of a given religious system and the stability of its different parts. This pressure may affect, for example, the constellation of goods mediated by religion and push for the inclusion of new items (or the exclusion of old ones), or weaken the authority of the superempirical source of authority. Religious systems do not necessarily remain unstable as a consequence of relativization. Rather, they are pressed to reframe themselves against the broader context by way of strategies of global repositioning. As I illustrated elsewhere, the creative adaptation of external ideas or glocalization is one of these processes of repositioning ([13], pp. 162–89), which constitutes the focus of this article.

To some extent, my argument parallels Victor Roudometof's general discussion on "waves of globalization" ([25], pp. 63–68). Roudometof has recently introduced the metaphor of refraction to suggest that "glocalization is globalization refracted through the local" ([25], p. 65). My research intends to shed light on the why and how of the repositioning of Japanese Buddhism within global society (Roudometof's refraction), with specific attention to its underlying factors. To this aim, I will focus on two case studies: (a) The first concerns the ongoing greening of several strands of Japanese Buddhism, that is, their progressive involvement with the issue of global environmentalism. It focuses on the institutional level, and relies on participant observation and primary sources such as books, pamphlets, and other documents published by Buddhist institutions. (b) The second case study revolves around the somewhat controversial adoption of meditational techniques by priests and lay practitioners of the Hawaii Kyodan, the largest branch of Hawaiian Shin Buddhism. It mainly focuses on the individual level and relies on in-depth interviews with around sixty of these Shin Buddhist meditators (which were conducted privately and mostly within temple facilities), and material published by the head temple and local temples of this Buddhist organization.

3. The Greening of Japanese Buddhism

In this article, Japanese Buddhism is used as a label for different forms of traditional Buddhism (e.g., Zen, Shin, Tendai) and new religious movements with a clear Buddhist background (Sōka Gakkai, Risshō Kōseikai) operating in contemporary Japan. Despite the different sectarian emphases found within this multifaceted world, from the perspective of the working definition of religion presented above, Japanese Buddhism can be considered as a relatively unified religious system. As far as religious authority is concerned, the various forms of Japanese Buddhism basically regulate the access by practitioners to a constellation of goods through reference to superempirical agencies such as the Buddhist Dharma and the buddhas/bodhisattvas. Moreover, combinations of buddhas and Shintō deities (*kami*), spirits and ancestors can also be used as sources of superempirical legitimation.

The goods mediated by Buddhism can be other-worldly, such as awakening (*satori*, *gedatsu*, etc.), but also worldly benefits of various kinds (*genze riyaku*). The nexus between these goods and the superempirical sources of authority is envisioned and performed through a structure of legitimation, which is mainly based on religious narratives (e.g., the Buddhist sutras) and practices (e.g., meditation, memorial rites). This structure is generally managed by religious professionals, but lay practitioners can achieve considerable autonomy from them.

Against this background, I will focus on the extent to which the ongoing global discourse on ecology has been able to relativize the religious system of Japanese Buddhism and elicit the development of new glocal forms.

Despite the common stereotype that Japanese spirituality is inherently close to nature, ecology became for the first time a popular topic in Japan around the 1970s. It soon caught the attention of the Japanese Buddhist world, and, since the late 1980s, some Buddhist priests belonging to various denominations have promoted environmentalist activism at the local level. In the 1990s, there were the first attempts to engage with this issue at the institutional level. Among these, Sōtō Zen Buddhism (Sōtōshū) initiated a Green Plan in 1995, and similar endeavors were undertaken within Tendai Buddhism (Tendaishū), Shin Buddhism (Jōdo Shinshū), Sōka Gakkai and Risshō Kōseikai [26,27].

The Sōtō Zen campaign was initiated with the aim of promoting surveys on acid rain and saving water and energy in temples and private households, and focuses on the ideas of interdependence (*engi*) and buddha-nature [28]. For example, within the Green Plan the principle of "harmonious coexistence with nature" is validated through founder Dōgen's (1200–1253) identification of mountains and streams with the Buddha and his frugal lifestyle ([12], p. 53).

In the late 1990s, also Tendai Buddhism started placing emphasis on environmental protection, and the ecologically-oriented practice of "living in harmony" figures nowadays as one of the main themes in the slogan of its revitalization movement, the Light Up Your Corner Movement (Ichigū o Terasu Undō). Tendai Buddhist institutions encourage their members not to waste natural resources, to save water and energy and promote recycling through the catchword *mottainai*, "What a waste!" Similar to Zen Buddhism, they justify their campaign through reference to the Buddhist chain of causes and conditions, and the idea that "mountains and rivers, plants and trees, all attain buddhahood" (*sansen sōmoku shikkai jōbutsu*) [29,30].

Among the denominations of traditional Buddhism, the Honganji branch of Shin Buddhism (Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha) has also been promoting energy-saving and renewable energy, as well as the construction of a national database of forests (Honganji no Mori) [31,32]. In this case, too, environmentalism is broadly related to the basic Buddhist teaching of interdependence, and, on the sectarian side, to the other-power of Amida Buddha, which is believed to embrace all forms of life [31,33].

The two largest Buddhism-based new religious movements, Sōka Gakkai and Risshō Kōseikai, have also promoted environmentalist action. The former has supported various activities since the early 1990s through Soka Gakkai International (SGI). In particular, SGI collaborates with the Earth Charter Initiative and the United Nations for the promotion of sustainable development [34]. In Sōka Gakkai, too, environmentalism is legitimized through reference to basic Buddhist teachings such as interdependence, the universality of the buddha-nature, and the control of desires [35,36].

Risshō Kōseikai certified its headquarters according to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) environmental management system in 2010 [37], soon after it issued its Environmental Policy. The guidelines of this official document are imbued with Buddhist ideas such as the equal dignity of all forms of life, their interdependence, and the exhortation to be "contented with few desires" (*shōyoku chisoku*) [38,39].

After the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami that caused the accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant in March 2011, several Buddhist organizations issued official statements against the civil nuclear power program. Among these, the Japan Buddhist Federation issued in December 2011 an "Appeal for a Lifestyle without Dependence on Nuclear Power" (*Genshiryoku hatsuden ni yoranai ikikata*

o motomete) [40,41], in which, for the first time, the Japanese Buddhist world as a whole took a critical position against this issue. In this appeal, it was argued that the way out of the nuclear problem toward sustainability is through a lifestyle centered on "knowing satisfaction" (*taru koto o shiri*), which aims to protect all forms of life [40,41].

In September of the same year, the Myōshinji branch of Rinzai Zen Buddhism (Rinzaishū Myōshinji-ha) had issued a declaration for the "Realization of a Society Not Dependent on Nuclear Power Generation" (*Genshiryoku hatsuden ni izon shinai shakai no genjitsu*), in which reference is made to the Buddhist ideal of "knowing satisfaction" (*chisoku*) and the creation of a "harmonious society" (*kyōsei shakai*) [42]. Two months later, Sōtō Zen also made public the statement "Sōtō Zen's Opinion on Nuclear Power Generation" (*Genshiryoku hatsuden ni tai suru Sōtōshū no kenkai ni tsuite*), which proposes a cautious transition to sustainable sources of energy [43]. Within Shin Buddhism, the Ōtani branch (Shinshū Ōtani-ha) has been very critical of nuclear power plants since the late 1990s, and after the Fukushima accident has issued several anti-nuclear statements. In these documents, considerable emphasis is placed on the idea of "life" (*inochi*), which refers to the immeasurable life of Amida Buddha and his salvific vow that is believed to embrace all living beings [44,45].

The two new religious movements mentioned above, Sōka Gakkai and Risshō Kōseikai, have also been quite active in this regard. Sōka Gakkai's charismatic leader Ikeda Daisaku has urged "a rapid transition to an energy policy that is not reliant on nuclear power" based on the dignity of all forms of life, present and future [46]. In its statements of protest, Risshō Kōseikai maintains that Japan should abandon nuclear power, cultivate the spirit of *shōyoku chisoku*, and strive to live in harmony with nature [47].

This generalized greening of Japanese Buddhism of recent years should not lead us to overestimate its impact. In most cases, Buddhist environmentalism remains an educational endeavor that hardly reaches out to the masses of lay practitioners, traditionally interested as they are in memorial rites and worldly benefits of various kinds. However, this religious environmentalism is quite relevant for the understanding of the interplay of the local and the global in contemporary Japanese Buddhism. In fact, there are strong indications that we are not simply dealing with local dynamics.

To start with, the greening of Japanese Buddhism follows both chronologically and thematically the development of environmentalism worldwide and the discussions about global warming, which led to the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988, and the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. More specifically, it can be considered as an outcome and integral part of the "religious environmentalist paradigm" postulated by Poul Pedersen [48]. This expression refers to the increasing worldwide tendency to frame ecological issues in religious terms that can be traced back to the work of the historian Lynn White in the late 1960s, and to various initiatives such as the Assisi Declarations (1986) and the conferences on religion and ecology held at Harvard University since the late 1990s, which involved Buddhism and other religious traditions [49].

The impact of the global ecological discourse on Buddhist environmentalism is also revealed by the language used by Buddhist institutions. Not only do they make reference to the ongoing worldwide debate on ecology, but in many cases, they also show their aspiration to be an active part of such debate. In Sōtō Zen, for example, practitioners are admonished to protect the environment because "the Earth is the home of life" [50]; one of the main priorities in Tendai Buddhism's ecological agenda is to persuade its adherents that we must "transmit our precious Earth to the next generation" [51]; Sōka Gakkai's collaboration with the Earth Charter Initiative is justified in terms of global interdependence and global responsibilities by local actors [52]; and Risshō Kōseikai claims that Japan needs to shut down all nuclear power plants as a step toward the "transformation of contemporary civilization" [47].

It is interesting to note that the emergence of such global consciousness does not necessarily amount to the superimposition of global ideas on local religion. Rather, the appropriation of these ideas seems to be dependent on the extent to which they can find their echo in aspects of Japanese Buddhism. From the discussion above, it is apparent that ideas such as interdependence, the control of worldly desires, and the presence of the buddha-nature in all beings are often used by Japanese Buddhist

institutions as the lenses through which they view the issues of sustainability and environmental protection. In this sense, it is possible to speak of a resonance factor that plays an important role behind the local adaptation of global ecological themes.

Another important factor in this process of repositioning is represented by decontextualization. That is, selected aspects of the religious tradition are not just reframed against the background of compelling external ideas, but also with reference to the tradition as a whole, as they come to be seen in isolation from their original context. In this way, the selective reading of the tradition can lead to the absolutization of Buddhist ideas that resonate with global environmentalism. This helps to explain why, within the greening of Japanese Buddhism, this religious tradition is often presented as inherently ecological, and its historical responsibilities in the exploitation of nature are obliterated.

As one may expect, decontextualization can be meaningfully related to power issues. In fact, the common self-representation of Japanese Buddhism as a timeless "green Dharma" (cf. [27]; [13], pp. 67–97) is generally coupled by the depiction of Western thought as anthropocentric and nature-dominating, which exposes a distinctive longing for global legitimation. This is apparent, for example, in Sōtō Zen's claim to be morally superior to other forms of environmentalism because its original spirit lies in the harmony with nature [53]; and in Shin Buddhism's understanding of its own environmentalism as a response to the exploitation of nature promoted by an increasingly westernized society (cf. [54]). Indeed, this eco-nationalism [55] is not just a contemporary issue. Rather, it is well rooted in modern Japanese culture, as may be seen in the work of Suzuki Daisetsu [56] and Nakamura Hajime [57], and, much earlier, in the wartime ideology of imperial Japan, in which the contraposition of the "nature-friendly" Japanese and the "nature-subjugating" Westerners served the scope of shaping a national consciousness [58].

However, it should be noted that the search for power in Buddhist environmentalism and the emergence of cultural chauvinism are not necessarily intertwined. As a matter of fact, the greening of Buddhism can also be seen by religious leaders as a way of contesting the claims of authority of other secular social systems, and reassert the indispensability of religion as a force for the solution of the global environmental crisis.

The discussion above indicates that the relativization induced by the global idea of sustainability affects the constellation of goods the access to which is regulated by Japanese Buddhism. The combined effect of the factors illustrated above leads to the inclusion of sustainability among those very goods, that is, to the glocalization of Japanese Buddhism through the issue of ecology. In this connection, it is possible to distinguish at least two types of glocalization (with a grey zone between them): the generic creative adoption of sustainability (glocalization), and a glocalization coupled with the revitalization of wartime ideological structures, which leads to the emergence of forms of eco-nationalism (chauvinistic glocalization).

4. Meditation in Hawaiian Shin Buddhism

Shin Buddhism (Jōdo Shinshū) is a mainstream form of Japanese Buddhism belonging to the Pure Land tradition. It was established in medieval Japan by the monk Shinran (1173–1262), although it gained institutional strength only a few centuries later especially under the leadership of Rennyo (1415–1499). Shin Buddhism is characterized by the centrality of the *nenbutsu* practice (the repetition of Amida Buddha's name) and the reliance on Amida's salvific "other-power" (*tariki*) which is believed to lead practitioners to the Pure Land, the last station before final awakening in this Buddhist tradition.

From a perspective based on the concept of authority, Shin Buddhism can be understood as a religious system that regulates the access to various goods through the authority of superempirical agencies such as the Buddhist Dharma and Amida. Among the goods mediated by Shin Buddhism, one finds not only the other-worldly goal of the Pure Land, but also worldly benefits. As in the general case of Japanese Buddhism, the structure of legitimation encompasses the various ways in which these superempirical agencies and the worldly/other-worldly goods are related to each other. This structure, which is generally (but not necessarily) managed by religious professionals, revolves around the Pure

Land texts, the writings of Shinran and a few other Shin Buddhist leaders, and a cluster of religious practices and rituals (notably the *nenbutsu*, chanting, and memorial rites). Whereas in other forms of Japanese Buddhism the precepts belong to this category, in Shin Buddhism, good behavior tends to be included among the constellation of worldly goods mediated by religion. In other words, it tends to be seen more as a consequence of religious liberation than a means to achieve it. This is because of the Shin Buddhist emphasis on Amida's other-power, which has also led to the abandonment of meditation and other practices characterized by self-effort or "self-power" (*jiriki*).

In Japan, the practice of meditation within a Shin Buddhist environment is very uncommon and generally not tolerated by the religious institutions (cf. [13], pp. 118–20). However, in other parts of the world where this tradition has spread through its missionary activities, there have been some attempts to reconcile Shin Buddhism with the practice of meditation. This strategy is related to the increasing worldwide popularity of meditation which is apparent in phenomena such as the mushrooming of publications on meditation, its commercialization and popularization through the media, and the creation of meditation centers related to *vipassanā*, Tibetan Buddhism, and other traditions. Following this general trend, and the emergence of what Jeff Wilson has termed a "Mindful America" [59], meditation has been adopted by various Shin Buddhist priests and lay practitioners in Canada and the United States who are attempting to reach out to the wide community of spiritual seekers interested in alternative practices. The presence of a similar phenomenon in South American Buddhism has also been documented (cf. [12,60]).

During my ethnographic fieldwork in Hawaii (January–June 2013), I researched the interplay of meditation and Shin Buddhism within the Hawaii Kyodan, the local branch of Honganji-ha Shin Buddhism, which was established there in 1889 following the arrival of Japanese workers for the sugar cane plantation industry. Shin Buddhism in Hawaii was rather successful until the closure of the plantations in the 1980s, which caused a considerable shrinking of the religious community. Various attempts to disentangle this tradition from the label of ethnic religion have been made ever since by members of the Hawaii Kyodan, including the adoption of meditation by various groups of Shin Buddhist practitioners.

As of 2013, there were at least five active groups of Shin Buddhist meditators in Hawaii, while another seven groups had been discontinued. In the two groups operating on the island of Oahu, the practice of meditation is very informal, although in one of them the facilitators have a background in Siddha Yoga, and participants are free to adopt their own personal style while sitting in chairs or pews. Two groups, one of which is still active on the Big Island, are related to the tradition of mindfulness meditation developed by Thich Nhat Hanh. In the past, there have been two instances of meditation sessions promoted by Shin Buddhist ministers who followed the Zen Buddhist style or a modified form of it. In another group on Oahu, Zen meditational techniques (*zazen*) are blended with *vipassanā* and yoga. In at least three cases, meditation sessions have been conducted based on the *seiza* (quiet sitting) style developed by Okada Torajirō (1872–1920), or Kawahata Ayoshi's (1905–2005) Universal Meditation method, both of which emphasize proper sitting and breathing and were developed in modern Japan at the intersection between local traditions and Western medical/bodily practices.

Such groups of Shin Buddhist meditators, which include lay people and priests, are thus characterized by the considerable variety of global sources on which their practices rely. For the participants in these sessions, meditation can indicate things as diverse as a simple moment of reflection during the day, the practice of mindfulness, Buddhist meditational techniques, *seiza*, and yoga. The global dimension of this practice also emerges from my in-depth interviews. Several practitioners, for example, understand meditation as something that makes one feel closer to other Buddhists in other parts of the world, and as the unifying practice of all Buddhists worldwide, while others insist on the benefits that Buddhism can offer to the entire world. Similar to the case of the greening of Japanese Buddhism, here, too, one can notice the emergence of a global consciousness, which allows for the understanding of the Shin Buddhist religious practice within a broader global framework.

Another important factor behind the adoption of meditation in Hawaiian Shin Buddhism and its glocalization is the resonance between global ideas about meditation and local practices. Most practitioners do not unreservedly incorporate meditational techniques of different sorts in their daily practice. On the contrary, this process of adoption is most often accompanied by the active search for correspondences between meditation and aspects of their religious background and preexisting practices. For some Shin Buddhist meditators, this means a return to the basic ideas of Buddhism and the Eightfold Path preached by Śākyamuni, which included meditation. For others, the abandonment of the self that characterizes meditation is nothing but the expression of the idea of other-power, which is prominent in Shin Buddhism. For Shin Buddhist meditators with a weak sectarian identity, meditation is often understood as a means to rediscover the buddha-nature within themselves. In not a few cases, the perceived affinity of meditation with the practice of observing some moments of silence during Shin Buddhist services can also provide the motivation for joining a meditation group. As a result of this process of creative adaptation, ideas about meditation originally foreign to Shin Buddhism that circulate in global culture are selected and made to resonate with aspects of the Shin Buddhist tradition. Otherwise, aspects of Shin Buddhism are made to resonate with various forms of meditation by practitioners coming from different religious traditions.

It is interesting to note that the creative adaptation of meditation in Shin Buddhism generally requires that practitioners place the orthodox opposition between self-power and other-power in the background. In this way, the meaning of practice in Shin Buddhism can be reconsidered within a more flexible framework. This parallels the decontextualization factor illustrated above in the case of Buddhist environmentalism.

Still, another important factor underlying this globally-oriented religious change in Hawaiian Shin Buddhism is the quest for power. From the perspective of the central Shin Buddhist institutions in Japan, the issue of meditation in Shin Buddhism is related to power mainly because of its implications in terms of doctrinal orthodoxy. According to the headquarters in Kyoto, although birth in the Pure Land and final awakening can only be achieved through the salvific power of Amida, ministers are allowed to use meditation as an auxiliary non-religious practice in order to attract new members. This official position of the Honganji branch was recently reiterated during a symposium held in 2011 at the headquarters in Kyoto [61], thus apparently bringing an end to a controversy with the US branch, the Buddhist Churches of America, which had introduced the practice of meditation in various temples as early as the 1980s. It should be specified that this policy applies in practice only to overseas ministers. In Japan, the adoption of meditational practices by Shin Buddhist priests of the Honganji branch is seen with suspicion and can lead to extreme disciplinary measures such as excommunication (cf. [13], pp. 117–22).

The attitude of the Hawaii Kyodan toward meditation is less strict but nonetheless rather cautious. The incumbent and former religious leaders of this religious organization broadly agree that meditation can be used as a preparation to Shin Buddhism. However, the practice of meditation in a Shin Buddhist context has occasionally provoked some controversy, and open discussions to explore the suitability of meditation to Shin Buddhism are not promoted.

From another perspective, the adoption of meditation is related to power issues because it is seen by many religious professionals and lay practitioners as a strategy to counter the current decline in membership and attract new members. Moreover, it is related to the issue of ethnicity, since meditational activities seem to be less successful when they are promoted by non-Japanese-American members. Last but not least, the practice of meditation is a matter of personal empowerment especially for lay practitioners, who can thus bypass to some extent the mediation of religious professionals and their perceived overemphasis on the ritualistic sphere.

The discussion above indicates that the global appeal of meditation is capable of directly relativizing the structure of legitimation within Shin Buddhism. That is, the religious narrative concerning birth in the Pure Land and final awakening is subject to adjustments, through which

meditation becomes eligible as a practice along the Shin Buddhist path and is thus adopted within the structure of legitimation of the religious system of Shin Buddhism.

Moreover, my interviews with Shin Buddhist meditators indicate that glocalization as such is not an undifferentiated block. Rather, this case study allows for the distinction between at least two main configurations of glocalization, based on the place occupied by meditation within the structure of legitimation.

For some of the interviewees, either priests or lay practitioners, meditation remains peripheral to the core of their religious commitment. These meditators clearly state that meditation is a non-religious practice and relate it to the psychological well-being that it brings about. In this case, the practice of meditation appears to be simply juxtaposed to other doctrinal and practical elements in the structure of legitimation. Nonetheless, it still makes sense to define this as a glocal form because of the role played by the four factors illustrated above, and because meditation is still seen by those meditators as compatible with a fully Shin Buddhist lifestyle and the practice of the *nenbutsu*.

At the other end of the spectrum, one finds the experiences of those interviewees who have successfully integrated the practice of meditation into the structure of legitimation. This is especially apparent for those who have come to Shin Buddhism from other religious traditions and do not value strict sectarianism. These meditators, who can be broadly classified as belonging to the category of middle-class spiritual seekers and rarely include priests, typically establish a meaningful connection between meditation, the buddha-nature, the practice of the *nenbutsu*, and gratitude (to Amida). As a consequence, they view meditation as a full-fledged religious practice.

However, in the practices of most of the interviewees, meditation is less tightly integrated into the structure of legitimation. Members of this category, which also includes many priests, generally understand meditation as a preparatory practice without necessarily denying its religious value. For many of them, meditation is a useful tool for overcoming the hindrances of the ego and approaching the core of Shin Buddhism. Within this configuration of glocalization, meditation can implicitly occupy a meaningful, though peripheral, place in the structure of religious liberation.

5. Conclusions: Japanese Buddhism and Glocalization

The two case studies illustrated in the previous sections expose the complexity of the processes of glocalization taking place within the context of Japanese Buddhism. While at a superficial glance, Buddhist environmentalism and the adoption of meditation in Hawaiian Shin Buddhism might appear unrelated to each other, they actually provide evidence of the structure of Japanese Buddhism's (in Japan and overseas) repositioning within a global society characterized by the unprecedented availability and pervasiveness of worldwide-circulating ideas. Even more importantly, these two case studies reveal the presence of similar patterns that underlie the entire process of glocalization.

The increasing availability of the ideas of ecology and meditation within the global cultural network carries the potential to relativize different parts of the religious system. In the case of ecology, relativization affects primarily the constellation of goods mediated by Japanese Buddhism. In the case of meditation, what is mainly relativized is the structure of legitimation that relates the superempirical source of authority to the constellation of worldly/other-worldly goods. The relativization induced by discrete religious/non-religious elements (ecology and meditation) puts in motion a process of repositioning through which Japanese Buddhism attempts to attune itself to global society. There are at least four major factors underlying this process (cf. [13], pp. 170–77).

First, the material analyzed shows the emergence of a global consciousness. By global consciousness, I mean here the perception of the unity of the world and a certain desire to be part of global communication. This idea was first clarified by Robertson in terms of "globality," that is, the "consciousness of the (problem of) the world as a single place" ([62], p. 132), and plays an important role in Arjun Appadurai's theory of -scapes and the work of other globalization scholars [16,63]. Global consciousness is not necessarily a noble sentiment, since it can be embedded

in public relations strategies. It more generically indicates the extent to which Japanese Buddhism is pressed by globalization to familiarize with the idea of the world as a single place.

Second, the adoption of discrete elements circulating in the global cultural network is dependent on their resonance with aspects of the local tradition. This affinity allows Japanese Buddhism and Shin Buddhism to look at the issues of environmentalism and meditation, respectively, through the lenses of their own tradition. Throughout this process, traditional ideas and practices such as interdependence, the control of desires, the *nenbutsu*, and gratitude can become the catalysts in the production of glocal forms.

Third, the extent to which selected aspects of the tradition are placed into the foreground can lead to their decontextualization from the overall tradition. The case of the greening of Japanese Buddhism indicates that this can be accompanied by the idealization of tradition and the systematic obliteration of problematic aspects of it.

Fourth, the creative adoption of external elements and the glocalization of Japanese Buddhism is related to the issue of power. Glocalization can be viewed by local actors not only as a means to self-empowerment, but also as a way of countering the current decline and marginalization of Japanese Buddhism. By presenting itself as a force for the solution of pressing global problems, Japanese Buddhism shows an aspiration to global legitimation. This aspiration can also be combined with the revitalization of past ideologies, which are then used as external sources of legitimation in the quest for global (and local) power.

All this indicates that it is possible to approach glocalization analytically and shed light on the factors that constrain the overall process. Moreover, as the case of Hawaiian Shin Buddhism strongly suggests, the focus on the authority structure of the religious system allows a more nuanced understanding of the resulting glocal forms. Discrete elements adopted by Japanese Buddhism from global culture can undergo a thorough process of integration but also be simply juxtaposed to the preexisting religious system.

As the case study on Japanese Buddhism's environmentalism and the emergence of eco-nationalism shows, there is also the need to distinguish between two types of glocalization: a) generic glocalization and b) chauvinistic glocalization characterized by the presence of elements of cultural chauvinism. It is tempting to see an analogy between chauvinistic glocalization and the idea of "glocalism," which has been illustrated by Roudometof in terms of "an overall perspective or worldview that transforms glocalization and glocality into future visions of a utopia or dystopia" ([25], pp. 75–78). Indeed, both terms have important implications for the understanding of glocalization as an ideology and for the analysis of the power relations underlying this process. However, I should also clarify that by chauvinistic glocalization, I refer to a very specific kind of power issue. In my interpretive model, the quest for power in concrete social practice characterizes glocalization as such, and can basically assume four different shapes, which can have a global or local relevance: the pure concern for institutional strength; the preservation/consolidation of religious legitimation; the pursuit of external legitimation to strengthen the authority structure of the religious system; and the search for individual empowerment. It is only when external legitimation is pursued by relying on Japanese cultural nationalism that I use the term chauvinistic glocalization to describe these dynamics ([13], pp. 170–77).

The idea of chauvinistic glocalization can provide a useful corrective to a certain tendency within academia to polarize the relationship between "native" Japanese culture and cross-cultural hybridity in mutually-exclusive terms. That is, Japanese culture is often seen either as naturally inclined to hybridization (cf. [5,64]) or as almost immune to hybridization because of the important role still played in Japan by theories of uniqueness (*nihonjinron*) and cultural homogeneity (cf. [65]). As the analysis above and previous research [66] indicate, hybridization and glocalization can actually go hand in hand with the emergence of cultural chauvinism.

It is worth mentioning here that glocalization and chauvinistic glocalization are not the only products of such processes of global repositioning. The relativization induced by discrete elements circulating in the global cultural network can also be seen by Japanese Buddhism as a threat and thus

be rejected (cf. [12], pp. 122–28). And yet, this defensive attitude is still partially dependent on the global context, that is, on the availability of new alternative global options and modalities of interaction. Moreover, homogenization or the passive adoption of external elements should be taken into account as a potential option, although it is rarely seen as such in the context of Japanese Buddhism (for a more extensive discussion on this topic and two more forms of global repositioning occurring at the inter-religious and inter-systemic level, respectively, cf. [13]).

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the glocalization of Japanese Buddhism does not refer to the interplay of two distinct locations, and namely, the world at large and Japan. Rather, the global and the local are understood here as processes. This point was already made by Robertson when he explained that there is no antinomy whatsoever between the local and the global [2], and has been further clarified by other theorists. Among them, J.K. Gibson-Graham and Arif Dirlik have convincingly argued that the global and the local should not be reified, but rather be understood as analytical tools, as "interpretive frames" and terms that "derive their meaning from each other" [67,68]. This is why, as suggested by Roudometof, it is possible and perhaps even necessary to distinguish between local and "locale", the latter being "the entity that is responsible for sending (or resisting) waves of cultural influence, authority, or power" ([25], p. 74).

In this connection, a focus on the rhizomatic nature of globalization seems to provide a particularly suggestive framework for understanding the interplay of the global and the local. If one takes the global as the totality of cultural networks available worldwide, and the local as a specific configuration of nodes within it (cf. [69,70]), the flesh and bone of globalization cannot but consist at any given moment of interactions and connectivity at the level of particular configurations of nodes. Seen from this perspective, the glocalization of Japanese Buddhism turns out to be nothing but an aspect of the very busy daily routine of globalization.

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