PACIFIC WORLD

Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies

On- and Offline Representations of Japanese Buddhism: Reflections on a Multifaceted Religious Tradition[1]

Elisabetta Porcu
University of Leipzig, Germany

INTRODUCTION

The construction of Japanese Buddhism and Japan-related cultural forms made for and by the "West" has undoubtedly suffered from biased approaches influenced by Orientalist and Occidentalist stances. These have led to the creation of an *ad hoc* form of Japanese Buddhism, almost exclusively identified with Zen (Buddhism). In such presentations, Zen itself, which is only one among the many forms of Buddhism in Japan, has been removed from its historical and sociopolitical environment; claimed as something "uniquely Japanese"; and reduced to an "essentialized" religious tradition devoted almost exclusively to meditation and the practice of traditional arts, such as *ikebana*, calligraphy, and the tea ceremony. The word "Zen" has been misused and made a catchword for anything that is somehow related to Japan and meditation, spirituality, exoticism, mystical experiences, and aesthetics. Together, this creates a biased projection that is far removed from reality. Moreover, through this process, which is characterized by hegemonic representations of Japanese Buddhism as well as Japanese religion in general, other mainstream religious traditions have been marginalized. The resulting image of Japanese Buddhism to be exported outside of Japan has been one of a homogenized tradition deprived of its multifaceted aspects and historical developments.[2]

Against this backdrop, the aim of this paper is to analyze several representations of contemporary Japanese Buddhism. I will focus on the ways different Buddhist denominations are portraying themselves to the outside world and attempting to become more visible and acknowledged at a global level through the employment of new visual

media. Due to the limits of space, I will explore, in particular, both online and offline self-representations made by the Japan Buddhist Federation, Sōtō Zen, and Jōdoshū. These three cases have been chosen respectively because they offer different positions on the spectrum of Japanese Buddhism. In this regard, the Japan Buddhist Federation provides a "comprehensive" view of Japanese Buddhism, which allows us to see what problems are related to a general depiction of a complex and manifold religious system. Sōtō Zen is a denomination that has gained much popularity in the "West" even though through an image that corresponds only in part to the real state of affairs in Japan. Lastly, Jōdoshū represents a mainstream denomination that has been overlooked in representations of Buddhism for a non-Japanese audience.[3] I will then compare the image emerging from the presentations of the Japan Buddhist Federation with those provided by these two denominations. This will enable us to focus on common threads, denominational specificities, and differences, which will show the variety and complexity related to Buddhism in Japan.

DIFFICULTIES RELATED TO A "GENERAL" VIEW OF JAPANESE BUDDHISM: JAPANESE BUDDHISM AS PRESENTED BY THE JAPAN BUDDHIST FEDERATION

The Japan Buddhist Federation (Zen Nihon Bukkyōkai, 全日本仏教会) was founded in 1957 and comprises fifty-eight denominations belonging to the Tendai, Shingon, Jōdo, Jōdo Shin, Zen, and Nichiren traditions and the Nara schools. The Federation presents itself as the only organization that unites all traditional Buddhist denominations and organizations in Japan (*zenkoku no 58 no sho shūha* 全国の58の諸宗派).[4] When only looking at its affiliated institutions—which do not include all denominational branches—one can notice the great variety of Buddhist schools in Japan, which can hardly be reduced to a "general" representation of all Japanese Buddhist traditions. If it is true that these schools are all expressions of Mahāyāna Buddhism, they have developed differently over the course of their own history, creating a diverse constellation of Buddhism and also providing the basis for new religious movements, for example, Risshō Kōseikai, Reiyūkai Kyōdan, Sōka Gakkai, and so on.

In this context, how is Japanese Buddhism depicted on the website of the Japan Buddhist Federation as well as in its booklet titled *A Guide to Japanese Buddhism* that was published in 2004 for an English-speaking

audience?[5] In one of the pamphlets issued by the Federation it is stated that one of its aims is to "promote world peace through cooperating with other religions in the world."[6] However, from the booklet emerges quite a strong Occidentalist approach toward other religions, in particular Christianity and Islam, which are indicated, together with Buddhism, as the two other "universal religion[s]."[7] Buddhism seems to have acquired here a privileged status over these two monotheistic traditions, and the renowned dichotomy of "East"/spirituality versus "West"/materialism comes to the fore in the preface. In this fashion, Japan's obsession with materialism after World War II, its resurgence as a big economic power, the anxiety of modern society, and the awareness of the "limits of modernization and globalization" are also highlighted upon throughout the publication.[8] Japanese Buddhism is promoted as a solution for both internal and external crises, a remedy against conflicts and tensions, and a bringer of world peace. Due to its recognition of the buddha-nature in every sentient being, it is presented as a tradition that is open and "generous toward other religions."[9] In this respect, Buddhism is considered somehow *super partes* in the conflicts between "the Muslim world" and the "West"/Christianity.[10] Moreover, it is able to overcome polarization, a typical trait of "people in the West."[11] On another level, Japan is depicted here as the only East Asian country that, during the isolation of the Tokugawa period, was able to produce its own "unique culture," and in the Meiji period, despite its being greatly influenced by Western powers, had the capability to combine the good traits of both Eastern and Western cultures, while integrating them into its own culture. All this was achievable owing to the "Japanese flexible and inquisitive spirit and their diligence nurtured by the influence of Buddhism."[12] What we can see at work here is a contrasting pattern that has been proposed to a non-Japanese audience from the nineteenth century onwards, such as was the case in the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago held in 1893. As I have argued elsewhere, such representations have been useful to strengthen the prestige of Japanese culture and religion both inside and outside of Japan. Accordingly, these representations have served as tools in the struggle for power at the internal level, for example, to reinforce the prestige of Japanese Buddhist institutions in times of crisis, such as during the Meiji period, as well as in the Asian and international context, for example, to support Japanese wartime ideology.[13]

Buddhist cooperation with other religions inside and outside of Japan is briefly mentioned in the preface. However, the focus is on the potential of Buddhism to be a major religious tradition at the global level, which is emphasized through the participation of the Japan Buddhist Federation in the World Fellowships of Buddhists.[14] Japanese Buddhism is introduced in this book quite partially and as a positive instance of a religious tradition that "refutes . . . ego-centric vengeance, nationalism, patriotism, imperialism and unilateralism."[15] Furthermore, there is no reference, for example, to Japanese Buddhists' involvement in past wars, conflicts, imperialist enterprises, and so on. This lack of critical information is all the more striking since various Buddhist denominations—such as Shin Buddhism and others, which are also affiliated with the Japan Buddhist Federation—have officially acknowledged their war responsibilities and issued antiwar declarations.[16]

What emerges from this publication is an attempt by Japanese Buddhists to occupy a prestigious place within a religious market, which is characterized by a great variety of offers, at the expense, in part, of other religious traditions. This may entail assuming exclusivist tones, while at the same time trying to establish interreligious dialogues and collaboration with other religious groups.

With reference to the website of the Japan Buddhist Federation, it has both a Japanese and an English version. The latter, which is an abridged form of the original, opens up with news regarding the participation of the former president Matsunaga Yūkei 松長有慶 (Kōyasan Shingonshū) in the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2010.[17] In his contribution titled "Some Suggestions Offered from Japanese Buddhism" ("Nihon bukkyō kara no teigen," 日本仏教からの提言), Matsunaga proposes a Mahāyāna/Japanese Buddhist model as a way to escape the "diseases of modern society." His brief paper is worthy of analysis here in order to shed some light on the efforts made by the Japan Buddhist Federation to present a "general" Japanese Buddhism to an international audience.

Matsunaga's contribution was included in the forum's *Faith and the Global Agenda: Values for the Post-Crisis Economy*, an annual report published by the World Economic Forum and produced in collaboration with Georgetown University (a Jesuit university in the United States), on themes related to "the role of faith in global affairs."[18] Against the backdrop of environmental and economic problems, ethnic and

religious conflicts, the increasing disparity between rich and poor, and anxiety of the individual in the twenty-first century, Matsunaga highlights the potential of "Eastern," in particular Buddhist, culture to overcome these troubles. He articulates his proposal according to three main points: (1) A holistic (Japanese Buddhist) approach with an emphasis on the interdependence of all living beings; (2) a pluralistic sense of values, as can be seen in "Eastern cultures" like India, China, and Japan; and (3) social activities based on the idea that the life of individuals is owed to the society and the world.

With reference to the first point, emphasis is placed on Japanese Buddhism as a non-"homocentric," non-egocentric tradition—a characteristic of monotheistic religions and, between the lines, of "Western" cultures—which is based on the interconnectedness of all living beings possessing a buddha-nature. The overcoming of any form of dualism is also highlighted here as a counterpart of "modern"/Western thought, and the Japanese Buddhist worldview is claimed to see phenomena not in opposition to each other but in a "harmonious state of identity."[19] Japanese Buddhism, thus, can help individuals to shift their perspectives from the "modern one of the self" to a "universalist frame of reference that sees the world as an interrelated whole."[20] This approach, according to Matsunaga, can be effective in facing pressing problems, such as "human alienation and environmental destruction."[21]

In the second part of his speech, the positive attitude of Japanese Buddhism is highlighted according to its acceptance and inclusion of elements taken from different religious traditions. Buddhism, as it developed within Japan, is depicted here as a very "unique," inclusive, and harmonious tradition, which from its inception in the sixth century was able to coexist with the "indigenous spirituality of the Japanese"[22] (read: Shintō). Further we can read that "these two faiths [Buddhism and Shintō] in Japan have experienced a history of mutual influence and coexistence."[23] However, we should not forget that Buddhism was influenced by and contains elements from other traditions, such as Confucianism and Daoism, and on the other hand there is no reference here to historical events, such as the persecution of Buddhism (*haibutsu kishaku,* 廃仏稀釈) in the Meiji period—followed by the creation of State Shintō—which can hardly be considered an example of harmonious coexistence between these two religious traditions.

Moreover, this alleged harmony with Shintō is not necessarily a characteristic of all Buddhist denominations. This is the case, for example, of Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 (Shin Buddhism), a mainstream form of Buddhism in Japan, which has a traditional distrust towards Shintō.[24] Therefore, if what is stated in Matsunaga's contribution can be "generally" accepted as a common feature of Japanese Buddhism, then Jōdo Shinshū remains marginalized as a non-mainstream denomination, even though it is one of the largest denominations in Japan.

In such portrayals, which strive at depicting a "general," "traditional," and positive view of Japanese Buddhism for an international audience, there occurs the risk to reduce it to an essentialized tradition that does not take into account denominational features. Moreover, such generalizations are characterized by an "acritical" tendency that silences many other voices within Japanese Buddhism itself, some of which have critical and progressive stances. Japanese Buddhism—as with other religious traditions—can be considered multilayered, with not only different denominations, but also different views, interpretations, and practices within the denominations themselves and at the individual level.

The third and last part of Matsunaga's presentation is devoted to Buddhist engagement in society through public projects, welfare activities to assist the poor, and other social interest programs. This is explained not only as an expression of the Mahāyāna idea of a universal religious liberation from suffering, but also of the "Japanese understanding of wrongdoing."[25] Here reference is made to the concept of *sazen* 作善, which means to engage in meritorious activities to cultivate goodness. In this understanding, Matsunaga highlights that the individual should partake in social activities and contribute to the preservation of the environment because the individual owes his or her life to the society and the world.

What emerges from this presentation made for the World Economic Forum is an attempt to provide a non-Japanese audience with an overview of Japanese Buddhism and a way to understand the religious tradition simply and easily. However, this simplification may involve the risk of "neutralizing" and overlooking other aspects connected with a more critical approach; for example, war responsibilities, social discrimination (such as *hisabetsu buraku*), gender issues, and so on. Moreover, as mentioned before, some portrayed aspects cannot be applied to all mainstream denominations, like in the case of an alleged

harmonious coexistence between Buddhism and Shintō. It is a hard task to provide a "general" view of Japanese Buddhism given the many facets and different developments that occurred throughout its history. These changes have led to the creation of a complex and multi-layered reality that is difficult to summarize, as the Japan Buddhist Federation has attempted to do, as a single and homogeneous tradition.

<div align="center">

REPRESENTING JAPANESE BUDDHIST DENOMINATIONS:
ZEN BUDDHISM AND PURE LAND BUDDHISM

</div>

In this section I will take into account self-representations of two Buddhist denominations in Japan, Zen Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism, with the aim of exploring the dynamics connected with such "general" self-depictions. In turn, I will determine whether there is a common denominator among them, and between them and the representations made by the Japan Buddhist Federation. I will explore representational tools, such as books and pamphlets issued by the denominations, as well as the representations of the institutions on the Internet.

<div align="center">

Sōtō Zen Buddhism

</div>

As aforementioned, the "popular" image of Zen Buddhism outside of Japan has been a non-institutionalized, simplified, and decontextualized form of Zen. Emphasis has been placed in this process on the practice of sitting meditation, *zazen* 坐禅, on the notion of *mu* 無 (emptiness, nothingness), and on a tradition transmitted "outside the teachings, not based upon words or letters." However, this does not accurately reflect the Japanese situation and the characteristics of different Zen Buddhist schools.[26] For instance, Zen temples are involved in a series of everyday activities and religious services—such as funerals, which commonly provide one of their main sources of income—that are not related to meditation. In this regard, Ian Reader pointed out in the 1980s that although *zazen* is a fundamental part of Sōtō Zen teaching, this practice was not necessarily widely followed or publicized by the institution.[27] The publications addressed to the followers were focused, according to Reader, on institutional aspects, such as mortuary rites, rather than sitting meditation, which seemed difficult to popularize.[28] This applied not only to Sōtō Zen followers, but also to Sōtō priests, many of whom run their temples because of hereditary

obligations rather than by vocational choice.[29] In the Internet portrayals of Sōtō Zen Buddhism (Sōtōshū, 曹洞宗) *zazen* occupies quite a relevant position, particularly, but not exclusively, in its international website. Apart from the Japanese website, the institution has a version in six other languages: English, Italian, German, Portuguese, Spanish, and French. This is a clear attempt to present its public profile to a very wide audience around the world, specifically where the Sōtō denomination has centers and temples and carries out its activities.

Among the various events advertised in its Japanese website, early morning sessions of *zazen* (7–8 a.m.) are offered by the Sōtō Zen institution to people interested in "maintaining their hearts" (*kokoro o mentenansu suru hito toki,* 心をメンテナンスするひととき). These sessions take place at a central hotel in Tokyo (Tokyo Grand Hotel) and are advertised by the Sōtōshū Shūmuchō 曹洞宗宗務庁 (administration office of the denomination) as a chance for busy people to do something for their own spiritual well-being. This idea is expressed in the announcements related to this event, such as in the slogan *Mitai dake de naku, kokoro mo* kirei *ni naru* 身体だけでなく、心もキレイになる ("*Clean* not only the body but also the heart"). This can be seen as a "modern" attempt to attract busy people in an urban environment outside the temple, i.e., a hotel in the midst of the city, offering them a "set" that includes a brief session of *zazen*, a Buddhist service (*asa no hōyō,* 朝の法要), and drinking a cup of tea while having an informal talk with the priest (*gyōcha,* 行茶). The institution refers to these early morning sessions as a "quiet boom" (*ima, "asakatsu" ga shizukana būmu,* 今、「朝活」が静かなブーム) as well as claims that people who want to do something for their health and to "polish their selves" are increasing (*kenkō zukuri ya jibun migaki o suru hito ga fuete imasu,* 健康づくりや自分磨きをする人が増えています).[30] The focus, accordingly, has been shifted from *zazen* as a means for attaining enlightenment (*satori*) to a way to cope with a stressful society or one's everyday life and work, and to do something good and healthy for one's general well-being. In this way, sitting meditation has acquired a "New Age" flavor and, at the same time, has somehow had its religious link to salvation "neutralized." This seems, therefore, an attempt to render *zazen* more appealing to a Japanese audience by not focusing a lot on its "religious" aspect and linking it to a "modern," urban, and often hectic way of life.

In Europe and North America we find an almost opposite situation. In the course of its development in the "West," *zazen* has been the most

alluring side of Zen Buddhism, and a strong point for its propagation as well as the image creation of this form of Buddhism. On the other hand, other mainstream Buddhist denominations—like Shin Buddhism, where meditation as a form of self-effort practice (*jiriki,* 自力) is generally discarded—have faced the need to propose meditation sessions in order to be more appealing and to not lose followers.[31] In Japan, on the contrary, during the development of Sōtō Zen emphasis has been placed on its institutionalized function and a shift has occurred from the practice of *zazen,* which was considered "difficult and unappealing."[32] *Zazen,* or meditation more generally, does not seem an element that is perceived and publicized in the same way both inside and outside of Japan, and even within the same denomination it has assumed different uses according to divergent considerations.

Pure Land Buddhism (Jōdoshū)

With regard to self-representations of Pure Land Buddhism (Jōdoshū), let us consider the official website of the denomination, which was renewed in October 2009 on the occasion of Hōnen's eight hundredth anniversary.[33] As I noticed elsewhere, memorial services for founders often provide an occasion for reformulating some of a denomination's basic assumptions as well as creating a public image. Moreover, these memorials are commonly accompanied by a variety of interconnected activities, such as the release of cultural products, including animation movies (*anime*), promotional DVDs, theatre pieces, and so on. At the institutional level, these events involve a reorganization of the denomination's structure, while providing new methods to transmit its teachings.[34]

The website for Hōnen's memorial is represented by the image of the moon (*o-tsuki sama,* お月様)[35] and by an alternating moon calendar. A countdown to the memorial is indicated on the top right of the page. Hōnen's *tanka* poem "Tsuki kage" 月影 ("Moonlight") appears within the lunar calendar. The poem reads:

月かげの　　　　　　　*Tsuki kage no*
いたらぬなさとは　　　*itaranuna sato wa*
なけれども　　　　　　*nakere domo*
ながむる人の　　　　　*nagamuru hito no*
心にぞすむ　　　　　　*kokoro ni zo sumu*

(There is no village where the moonlight does not shine. However, it dwells in the hearts of those who gaze at the moon). This poem, which serves also as the anthem of Jōdoshū (*shūka,* 宗歌), is linked to the eighteenth of the founder's twenty-five sacred places (*reijō,* 霊場), the Tendai temple Tsukinowa-dera 月輪寺on Mt. Atago in Kyoto.[36] Its meaning is that just as the moon shines over every single hamlet, Amida Buddha shines his salvific light upon all sentient beings without exceptions. However, only those who can view the moon are able to appreciate it and understand its existence. In the same way, only those who rely upon Amida's vow and follow the *nenbutsu* path will be able to obtain salvation in the Pure Land.[37] This concept lies behind the new website dedicated to Hōnen's anniversary. The website has been conceived as a tool to make an impression on a great number of people—not only Jōdoshū believers—making them aware of this event through an easy to understand language and the avoidance of difficult technical terms, and in a friendly way with a plenty of pictures and videos.[38]

Similarly to other denominations, Jōdoshū is attempting to provide a "soft" and captivating image of its own religious tradition. At the same time, through their Internet portrayals, the religious institutions take on a dimension of "mass-ness,"[39] becoming not only public but also overcoming the boundaries of Japan to reach a global level. However, the linguistic barrier remains since the English website of Jōdoshū is only a partial translation of the Japanese one and is not as sophisticated and up-to-date as the original. This clearly indicates that the institution's main target is a Japanese-speaking audience and thus the organization is addressing the internal market, although using a medium, the Internet, which is probably the most striking symbol of globalization. This constitutes a difference between the Jōdoshū and Sōtō Zen websites, with the latter patently conceived for an international audience. Regarding the modalities of self-representations of religious denominations online, various scholars have observed that they do not differ much from their printed versions, such as in pamphlets, books, and journals.[40] However, the website of Jōdoshū, while presenting the aforementioned features, also offers some interactive activities, in particular in the section dedicated to families and kids. In the page titled "Jōdoshū Gēmu" 浄土宗ゲーム ("Jōdoshū Games"), for example, there are various activities: a monthly crossword; a virtual *jōya no kane* 除夜の鐘 (bell tolling out the old year) where by moving the mouse from right to left one can ring the temple's bell up to 108

times (and seemingly receive a gift); and a dice game for children, *sug-oroku* 双六 (snakes and ladders) where the die is rolled through a click of the mouse.[41] Another page dedicated to visual representations of Hōnen is *Bukkyō kagee banashi "Hōnen sama"* 仏教影絵ばなし「法然さま」 ("Hōnen": a Buddhist shadow play).[42] It consists of twenty-four episodes on Hōnen's life and his time in the form of an animated shadow play (*kagee*). As explicitly claimed by the organization, this is conceived as a tool for narrating the master's story in an amusing way, while addressing both adults and children.

In this regard, forms of popular culture, such as *anime* (animation movies) and *manga* (Japanese comics), have been used by religious denominations to offer a more captivating image of themselves and reach a wide audience that includes both younger and older generations. This has been carried out by proposing a kind of religious entertainment for the family, while staying up-to-date and connected to modern society through the use of new visual media.[43] Another relevant aspect in this context is religious institutions' use of popular characters and the creation of commercial goods, which are sold at temples and shrines throughout Japan.[44]

In the case of Jōdoshū, commodities related to Hōnen's eight hundredth memorial,[45] together with new, cute characters as representatives of the institution's public image, have been produced. One of these characters is Namu-chan なむちゃん. He is modeled after things *kawaii*, a very popular concept in contemporary Japanese culture meaning "cute," "childish," "pretty," and so on.[46] His "family" is composed of two other members: his dog, Ami-chan, and a bird, Dabu-chan. Their names, Namu-Ami-Dabu, form the *nenbutsu*. They appear in the four-cell (*yon-koma*) *manga* entitled *Hello! Namu-chan*, which was published in 2005. Here, Jōdoshū adherents are considered by its author, Shiki Shigeyuki 志岐滋行, as being themselves members of the "Namu-chan family."[47] This *manga* includes 150 *yon-koma* comic strips that have been previously published in the official journal of Jōdoshū, the *Jōdoshū shinbun* 浄土宗新聞. The series, which was started in April 1993, continues today, with back issues being available online on the website of Jōdoshū.[48] Similarly to other denominations, a series of merchandise—such as pens, posters, aprons and more—connected to this official character have been produced by the religious organization.[49] Through such characters and friendly images, which are used as

representations for the public, the religious institutions are offering a more approachable profile of themselves. However, in their effort to stay connected to present-day society, Japanese Buddhist denominations, along with other religious traditions in the country, are adopting formats and communication strategies that are only of second nature to the religious dimension. With this emerges a contradiction. While there are often representations from Japanese Buddhists of the "West" as a negative counterpart deeply rooted in materialism and lacking spirituality—two aspects that are propagated as needing to be overcome—on the other hand Buddhist denominations are employing tools and strategies of what they are condemning in order to promote themselves as a valid religious alternative.[50]

With reference to the relationship between single Buddhist denominations and a general image of Japanese Buddhism, we can observe in the case of Jōdoshū that its website is exclusively focused on the denomination itself. There is no space for links to other Buddhist organizations or for an overview of Japanese Buddhism, apart from some brief historical references to other forms of Buddhism, or a section titled "Butsuji (Bukkyō) mame chishiki" 仏事(仏教)まめ知識 ("Bits of Knowledge on Buddhist Rites [Buddhism]") where some religious festivities are presented, such as New Year, *higan*, and *o-bon*, that are common to other denominations.

The venue for a general view of Japanese Buddhism online remains, in this case, the website of the Japan Buddhist Federation, although the page "Kiso chishiki" 基礎知識 ("Basics of Buddhism") is currently under construction.[51] This lack of attention toward other Buddhist schools also may be explained given the great variety of denominational features, as well as the institutions' attempts to sketch and redefine their own identities and roles against the backdrop of the challenges posed by a secularized and globalized world.

CONCLUSION

From the examples taken into account in this paper, the following reflections emerge: It is hard to present a single Japanese Buddhism without incurring a partial and biased view, as pointed out with regard to the representations by the Japan Buddhist Federation. Furthermore, there are several denominational differences, and each denomination is striving to maintain and possibly enhance its religious prestige in a society dominated by the laws of the market and by a great variety

of religious options. To this end, Buddhist denominations are making use of communication strategies that are not primarily related to the religious dimension, but are part and parcel of a capitalist society based on "materialism," which is often depicted as a characteristic of the "West" and a reason for its lack of spirituality. Additionally, they are using new visual media and popular cultural formats in an attempt to stay abreast of the times as well as provide an up-to-date and "modern" image of themselves. Therefore, while on the one hand Japanese Buddhist denominations propose Buddhism as an alternative to materialism and "Westernism," through the employment and production of commodities to promote themselves and their teachings, they remain entrapped within the same "materialistic" model they are trying to overcome. All this may be explained by also taking into account the dynamics of globalization and secularization, which have led to a weakening of religious authority and the endeavors of religious institutions to redefine and relocate themselves within this framework. As we have observed, online representations of Buddhist denominations do not differ much from their offline versions, and websites are almost exclusively focused on their own denominational traits. There is no effort by single denominations, at least those taken into account here, to present a general view of *a* Japanese Buddhism. This may be explained if we consider the great variety of schools, movements, and newly established religious groups that have developed within Japan. This multitude of religious traditions, both old and new, have been then exported outside of Japan by assuming different characteristics and adapting themselves to the needs of the hosting countries, which together constitute the multifaceted and complex religious reality called "Japanese Buddhism."

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Forrest Kilimnik for checking the English of this article.

2. On the issue of (mis)representations of Japanese Buddhism and the marginalization of the Pure Land tradition in representations of Japanese Buddhism for the West, see for example, Galen Amstutz, *Interpreting Amida: History and Orientalism in the Study of Pure Land Buddhism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997); and Elisabetta Porcu, *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2008).

3. In regards to self-representations of another mainstream denomination, Jōdo Shinshū (Shin Buddhism) in English, see for example Porcu, *Pure Land*

Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture; and Elisabetta Porcu, "Speaking through the Media: Shin Buddhism, Popular Culture and the Internet," in *The Social Dimension of Shin Buddhism*, ed. Ugo Dessì (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010), 209–239.

4. See their website in English: http://www.jbf.ne.jp/n03traditional_denominations_a. Cf. Matsunami Kōdō, ed., *A Guide to Japanese Buddhism*, 68 (Tokyo: Japan Buddhist Federation, 2004). See also the Japanese version of their pamphlet. However, in their website in Japanese this sentence is slightly different: *zenkoku no 58 no sho shūha* has been replaced by "58 main schools" (*juyōna 58 shūha,* 主要な58宗派). See http://www.jbf.ne.jp/d00/index.html (both websites accessed December 3, 2010).

5. It is available also online at http://www.buddhanet.net/nippon/nippon_toc.htm (accessed October 3, 2010).

6. Under the title "What Is the Japan Buddhist Federation?" ("Zaidan Hōjin Zen Nihon Bukkyōkai to wa," 財団法人全日本仏教会とは). Interestingly enough, this last sentence does not appear in the book *A Guide to Japanese Buddhism*, while the rest of the text is quite similar to that of the pamphlet. In the Japanese version it reads: *kakkoku no hoka no sho shūkyō to mo kyōryoku shi sekai heiwa no katsudō ni tsutomete imasu* 各国の他の諸宗教とも協力し世界平和の活動に努めています。

7. Kōdō, ed., *A Guide to Japanese Buddhism*, vii.

8. Ibid., viii.

9. Ibid., vii.

10. See ibid., 60–61, "unless both sides [the Muslim world and the West] deeply reflect upon and repent their ignorance, and stand on the same ground of the Oneness of all life [as preached by Buddhism], there will be no cessation of battle with each other" (p. 61). See also pp. 65–66. Conflicts are mentioned here exclusively with reference to monotheistic religions (see, for example, vii, 58).

11. Ibid., 58.

12. Ibid., viii. Cf. Porcu, *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture*, 24.

13. Porcu, *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture*, 24.

14. See Kōdō, ed., *A Guide to Japanese Buddhism*, ix.

15. Ibid., 65–66.

16. For example, in Shin Buddhism the Ōtani-ha acknowledged its war responsibilities in 1987 and the Honganji-ha in 1991.

17. http://www.jbf.ne.jp/n00the_world_economic_forum_20/ (accessed December 6, 2010).

18. See http://www.weforum.org/en/media/Latest%20Press%20Releases/

PR_Faithvalues and *Faith and the Global Agenda: Values for the Post-Crisis Economy* on http://www.weforum.org/pdf/faith/valuesreport.pdf (accessed December 6, 2010). Matsunaga's "Some Suggestions Offered from Japanese Buddhism" is on pp. 39–41. The text is also available online (together with its Japanese version) at http://www.jbf.ne.jp/2010/01/post_160.html (accessed December 6, 2010).

19. *Faith and the Global Agenda,* 39.

20. Ibid., 40.

21. Ibid, 40. Such a view is often found in presentations from different Buddhist denominations in Japan.

22. Ibid., 40.

23. Ibid, 40.

24. However, although *kamidana* (Shintō altars) are not allowed by Shin Buddhist institutions, at the individual level there are followers who have a Shintō altar at home and practice Shintō rituals, such as visiting the shrine at New Year (*hatsumōde,* 初詣). In this regard, see Ugo Dessì, "Social Behavior and Religious Consciousness among Shin Buddhist Practitioners," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 37, no. 2 (2010): 335–366.

25. *Faith and the Global Agenda,* 40-41.

26. There are three main schools of Zen Buddhism in Japan: Rinzaishū 臨済宗, Sōtōshū 曹洞宗, and Ōbakushū 黄檗宗.

27. Ian Reader. "Zazenless Zen? The Position of Zazen in Institutional Zen Buddhism," in *Japanese Religions* 14, no. 3 (1986): 8–9. On this issue see also Porcu, *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture*, 7–10.

28. Reader, "Zazenless Zen?," 9.

29. Reader, "Zazenless Zen?," 10–11, 14–15.

30. This is a project organized by the Soto Institute for Buddhist Studies (Sōtōshū Sōgō Kenkyū Sentā "Asa Katsu Zen" Purojekuto, 曹洞宗総合研究センター「朝活禅」プロジェクト). See http://www.sotozen-net.or.jp/category/gyoji (accessed December 7, 2010).

31. See, for example, Porcu, *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture*, 8, 12. In the Honganji-ha, for instance, this has created conflicts between North American temples and the head temple in Japan, where there is a resistance to accept such a proposal (personal communication with various Honganji-ha priests and scholars in Kyoto).

32. Reader, "Zazenless Zen?," 24. See also Porcu, *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture*, 8–9.

33. This event will take place in 2011.

34. Elisabetta Porcu, "Anniversaries, Founders, Slogans, and Visual Media in Shin Buddhism," *Japanese Religions* 34, no. 1 (2009): 53–54.

35. This is also mentioned in the fourth issue of *Tomoiki Dayori*, a journal of the denomination.

36. See also http://www.jodo.or.jp/25reijyo/index_18.html (accessed December 20, 2010).

37. See *Jōdoshū danshinto hōten* Henshū Iinkai 『浄土宗檀信徒宝典』編集委員会, eds., *Jōdoshū danshinto hōten* 浄土宗檀信徒宝典 (Tokyo: Jōdoshū Shuppan, 2009), 138. See also the website of Jōdoshū, http://www.jodo.or.jp/naruhodo/index11.html (accessed December 20, 2010).

38. See "'Dai onki hōmu pēji' ga rinyūaru" 「大遠忌ホームページ」がリニューアル, in *Tomoiki Dayori* ともいきだより 4 (25 September 2009): 1.

39. Cf. Stewart H. Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 45–46.

40. See, for example, Inoue Nobutaka, "From Religious Conformity to Innovation: New Ideas of Religious Journey and Holy Places," *Social Compass* 47 (2000): 21–32; and Petra Kienle and Birgit Staemmler, "Self-Representation of Two New Religions on the Japanese Internet: Jehovah's Witnesses and Seichō no Ie," in *Japanese Cybercultures*, ed. Nanette Gottlieb and Mark McLelland (London: Routledge, 2003), 222–234. In the case of Shin Buddhism on the Internet, see Porcu, "Speaking through the Media: Shin Buddhism, Popular Culture and the Internet" (in particular, 230–235).

41. http://www.jodo.or.jp/game/index.html (accessed December 20, 2010).

42. http://www.jodo.or.jp/onki800/kagee/index.html (accessed December 20, 2010).

43. See Porcu, "Speaking through the Media: Shin Buddhism, Popular Culture and the Internet"; and Porcu, "Anniversaries, Founders, Slogans, and Visual Media in Shin Buddhism."

44. In the case of Shin Buddhism, for example, a big-budget *anime* production (*Shinran sama: negai, soshite hikari* 親鸞さま―ねがい、そしてひかり, Shinran Sama: His Wish and Light) was released on DVD by commission of the Honganji-ha in 2008, as one of the several projects related to the 750th memorial for Shinran's death. This memorial is a paramount event. Preparations started in 2005 and will last until 2011–2012. Closely related to this *anime* is a series of souvenir items and goods depicting the characters of the movie, which are sold at the head temple (*honzan,* 本山) in Kyoto and are available through the Honganji-ha's online shop (see http://hongwanji-shuppan.com/bs02.html, accessed December 21, 2010). These items include stationery, stickers, and mini towels. Moreover, straps for mobile phones featuring the popular commercial icon Hello Kitty are also to be found there. These straps have

been recently produced by the Honganji-ha in a limited edition to celebrate the completion of repair works in the Goeidō, the Founder's Hall (see Porcu, "Speaking through the Media: Shin Buddhism, Popular Culture and the Internet," 220–221). We may notice that through such commercial enterprises religious institutions are attempting to compete and consolidate themselves in the marketplace of capitalist society and relocate themselves in a globalized and secularized society where their authority seems to be at stake (ibid., 221). In this regard, see also Ugo Dessì, "Shin Buddhism and Globalization: Attitudes toward the Political Subsystem and Pluralism at the Organizational and Individual Levels," in *The Social Dimension of Shin Buddhism*, ed. Ugo Dessì (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010), 242–266.

45. See their online shop where several items, such as religious items (e.g., *kesa,* 袈裟) or non-religious items—like umbrellas, loupes, stationery—with the logo of Hōnen's memorial, and a special production of mineral water (Yoshimizu 吉水 water) are on sale: http://www.tomoikishop.jp (accessed November 2010).

46. See also the characters of the *anime Shinran sama* or of various *manga* in Shin Buddhism and other religious denominations.

47. See Sʜɪᴋɪ Shigeyuki 志岐滋行, *Hello! Namu chan* Ｈｅｌｌｏ！なむちゃん, 94 (Tokyo: Ikeda Shōten, 2005).

48. http://www.jodo.or.jp/namu/namu_back.html (accessed January 6, 2011).

49. http://www.jodo.or.jp/namu/shopping/index.html (accessed January 6, 2011).

50. There are several examples in this regard. To cite only a few closely related to this paper's topic, see, for example, the *Guide to Japanese Buddhism* mentioned above (p. 58); or the website in Japanese of Jōdoshū where there is a stress on a society lacking in spirituality and governed by materialism ("*…seishintekini wa kanarazushimo sō to wa ienai jidai de mo arimasu. Busshitsutekini megumarenagara, nani ka kokoro ni mitasarenai mono ga aru no dewanai ka. Sore wa kokoro no mondai to mo shūkyō no mondai to mo ieru deshō*" 精神的には必ずしもそうとは言えない時代でもあります。物質的に恵まれながら、何か心にみたされないものがあるのではないか。それは心の問題とも宗教の問題ともいえるでしょう。http://www.jodo.or.jp/naruhodo/index12.html).

51. http://www.jbf.ne.jp/b25/ (accessed December 20, 2010). A general presentation of Japanese Buddhism is the *Guide to Japanese Buddhism* taken into account above. There is, however, a page in the website of the Japan Buddhist Federation with a very brief illustrated introduction to Śākyamuni titled "Who is Sakya?" しゃかさまって？, http://www.jbf.ne.jp/b00/index.html (accessed December 20, 2010).

p. 108 (blank)