Introduction

Japanese Buddhism in Europe

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A few decades ago, Buddhism in the West was a topic confined to an isolated enclave of dedicated scholars intrigued by the fascinating narratives of an exotic religion cross-fertilising a Western setting. Going beyond classical prescriptions of the nature of true religion and authentic Buddhism, the field has since evolved into a research tradition, focusing on Japanese Buddhism in the US as a specific sub-field.¹

Europe has received far fewer Japanese migrants than the US, and Japanese Buddhism has therefore generally been less widespread, with fewer temples, communities and types of practices. This does not mean, however, that the topic of Japanese Buddhism in Europe is less relevant, or that Japanese Buddhism has not had both historical and contemporary significance far surpassing the number of adherents. Since the opening of Meiji Japan 150 years ago, the number of encounters between what used to be known as simply ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ has grown immensely. While Buddhism itself may not have played a primary role, the associated cultural and religious domains have had intellectual, social, cultural, aesthetic and material importance in a broader perspective.

This special volume of *Journal of Religion in Japan* contains a collection of articles dedicated to exploring a field which has not yet been investigated comparatively. It is based on a conference at Aarhus University in 2018 featuring invited scholars involved in the study of specific European trajectories of Japanese Buddhism.

1 See, for instance, Pereira and Matsuoka (2007); Kashima (2008); Williams and Moriya (2010); Clarke (2010); Matsunaga (2018); Moriya (2018); and Porcu (2018). For more general research on Japanese religion in a global context, see Amstutz and Dessì (2014).

1 Transcultural Buddhism

Buddhism is a prototypical “travelling religion” which has transcultural traits and trajectories. Movements in time and space naturally produce change, resulting in innovation and evolutionary transformations of the religion as well as the people practising it. Conversion is one of the most important aspects of religious dissemination, but generational reproduction is often regarded as the most important factor involved in the ability of any religion to survive, particularly in the context of acculturation within diaspora cultures. Buddhism is also a ‘world religion,’ which typically appeals to and attracts people beyond ethnic boundaries. In the West, the pull factor has been an equally important driving force; and in Europe, Buddhist ideas and practices in particular have been imported and transformed beyond religious settings and institutional frames.

Such changes and transformations based on Western encounters with Asian religious traditions can be broadly analysed through three related parameters: context, agency and products (Borup 2017). Certain periods in history have been more suitable and fruitful than others for generating religious change. Diverse cultural or political contexts have been more or less ripe for religious encounters, whether these are *longue durée* perspectives such as post-colonial modernity, or concrete transformative events such as the World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago 1893. Times and places are important, but individuals and the networks around them are also key components of religious transformations. These include missionaries and migrants, but also intellectuals, artists or interested individuals who channel cross-cultural spiritual encounters. Theosophists, Swedenborgians and esotericists have had important roles in catalysing East-West relations and stimulating early interest in Buddhism in the West. Naturally, these relations and interests have also been triggered by the contents or products of the traditions involved (teachings, practices, institutional frames, material and aesthetic objects etc.) In the West, Buddhism has not attracted converts by its use of amulets, funeral services or memorial services for ancestors. Instead, converts have been drawn by selected ideas and practices that are somehow related to individualised spirituality, which have then been domesticated during Buddhism’s process of acculturation in the West. As Gaitanidis writes in his article in this issue, religion has also been a driving force in the process of globalisation.

Patterns of transformation, and the causal parameters that shape them, are contextually situated and variable. Does Japanese Buddhism follow comparable patterns, or are there different trajectories and outcomes of the transculturation processes? Are there differences and/or similarities internally, depending

on the Buddhist tradition and organisational background involved? Is the European context a special case, or does it generally follow the patterns of American religious acculturation? These are some of the questions that are investigated in this volume and introduced in the remaining part of this article.

2 Japanese Buddhism as a Travelling Religion

There were no waves of Japanese working migrants arriving in Europe, as was the case in the US (mainly California and Hawaii) and Brazil. After the Meiji opening of Japan, however, Buddhist missionaries were sent abroad to gain inspiration from the ‘new world’ as part of a general reformation and modernisation movement. Some went to South Asia to study and practice what came to be known as the original form of Buddhism, contributing to an early “globalization of Buddhist studies,” in which “Japan functioned as a locus for the dissemination of Buddhist scholarship and new texts in Asia” (Jaffe 2019: 222). Others went to Europe as scholars or as intellectual representatives of a larger nation-building process.²

Buddhist scholars and priests such as Nanjō Bun'yū 南条文雄 (1849–1927), Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 (1866–1945), Kasahara Kenju 笠原研寿 (1852–1883), and the so-called “father of religious studies in Japan” Anesaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 (1873–1949) thus studied under influential scholars such as Friedrich Max Müller (1876–1884) and T.W. Rhys Davids (1843–1922) to learn more about modern European Buddhology and the academic study of religion. Contemporary European Buddhist studies typically focused on and idealized textual Theravada sources, consigning Mahāyāna and Japanese Buddhism to the realm of degenerate religion. T.W. Rhys Davids, for instance, described Japanese Buddhism as consisting of “sickly imaginations” (Snodgrass 2003: 110); and as Matsunaga mentions in her article, Max Müller was rather dismissive of both Pure Land Buddhism and the Japanese Shin Buddhist students. The Irish monk Dhammaloka was perhaps influenced by such attitudes when he described Shingon as “not the Buddhist doctrine but a lump of superstitious cult” during a trip to Japan (see Laoidh and Cox in Part II of this special issue).

2 Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919) was one of the influential thinkers who incorporated Western philosophy and Darwinism into his modern Buddhism. See also Klautau (2014) on Takakusu, including his experiences in Europe and his impact on the study of Buddhism in Japan. Klautau and Krämer (2021) on Buddhism and modernity in Japan has yet not been released at the time of writing the present article.

Some Buddhist priests of this era had ambitions of doing missionary work in Europe. Nishi Honganji 西本願寺 in particular actively promoted such endeavours. Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838–1911) was the first Japanese Buddhist missionary in the West, spending four months in Paris and two weeks in London in 1872–1873 (Krämer 2015). While he may not have succeeded in his missionary ambition to plant the seed of Shin Buddhist developments in Europe, he did return to Japan invigorated by his time abroad, using his encounters with liberal theologians as inspirational ammunition against Shinto and Christianity. Akamatsu Renjō 赤松連城 (1841–1919) stayed in England for two years, translating Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 texts into English and helping to establish the Buddhist Propagation Society (Kaigai Senkyōkai 海外宣教会). Some of the early European travellers to Japan also joined missionary projects as part of the tide of religious change. Charles Pfoundes (1840–1907), an Irish captain who travelled to Japan in 1863, started running the London branch of the Buddhist Propagation Society upon his return. Another Irishman, the poet Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904), chose another path by staying in Japan, taking the Japanese name Koizumi Yakumo, from 1890 until his death in 1904, collecting folklore mythology as a non-sectarian Buddhist (see Laoidh and Cox in Part II of this special issue).

Naturally, missionaries travelled in both directions. From Southern Europe, Catholic and Jesuit missionaries in the 16th century had already paved the way for later religious encounters.³ To the churches, mission work was part of God's plan. But it also contributed valuable pieces to the puzzle of 'civilisation' projects, in which the universalisation of Western culture and religion was a natural part of European global expansion. Northern European Protestant missionaries continued this work after the Meiji Restoration. Some were undoubtedly racist and sought to legitimise colonial imperialism with reference to classical stereotypes about soulless heathens. Others were genuinely interested in cultural and religious encounters.⁴ The German missionary Hans Haas (1868–1934) was one such important person and significant actor in this early reception of Japanese Buddhism (see Petersen, this volume). His years of experience and study in Japan not only made him appreciate the value of a

3 On European Christian missionaries to Japan, see, for example, Elisonas (2007), App (2010), Kleine (2019).

4 During his travels in China, the Norwegian missionary Karl Ludwig Reichelt (1877–1952) became so interested in Buddhism that he not only established the Nordic Christian Buddhist Mission (in 1952), but was also eventually kicked out of the Norwegian Lutheran Church. Later on (in 1956), the Danish missionary Harry Thomsen (1928–1988) initiated the Kyoto Christian Institute, later known as the NCC Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions.

different religion, but also convinced him of the benevolent cross-fertilization between Protestantism and Pure Land Buddhism, even speculating whether they indeed had a common origin.

This double discourse and the cross-fertilising webs of circulatory exchanges were also naturalised by European philosophers who were interested in 'Oriental' cultures. Several (mainly German) Romantics were influenced by Eastern thought but could also use the Orient to reorient the Occident. For instance, Hegel identified the dawn of humanity in Asia on the one hand, but also situated the peak of perfection in Europe on the other (Brandt and Prohl, in Part II of this special issue). The birth of Orientalism (App 2010) was as much a discovery of the Other as it was a self-reflecting culturalisation of 'the West,' just like the 'Mystical East' was used both to fuel indigenous revivals and to re-enchant the West (Goto-Jones 2016).

Japan was a latecomer in this cultural and scholarly mapping and analysis of religion. While European missionaries, philosophers, esotericists and carriers of modernist technologies had a great impact on Buddhism in Japan, the reverse effect—that of European religion, culture and scholarly context being affected by Japanese Buddhism—was, for a very long period, largely centred on a single individual.

3 Zen Trajectories

As a charismatic religious thinker, D.T. Suzuki 鈴木大拙 (1870–1966) had the greatest single-handed impact when it came to fertilising the ground for developing Zen in the West as a philosophy, practice, value system and literary trope. His personality and knowledge of Western culture as well as his proficiency in English enabled him to meet the right people at the right time in contexts that were ripe for his message. His influence before and after the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago 1893 is legendary, including his scholarly and personal relationships with important North Americans. The less well-known meeting of the World Congress of Faiths in London in 1936 had similar repercussions, analysed by Moriya in this volume, as had Suzuki's previous stay in London (1908) and later participation in the Eranos conferences in Ascona, Switzerland in 1953 and 1954.⁵ Although recent publications of his collected works in English have

5 While the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago 1893 has been thoroughly investigated, giving rise to several publications (e.g., Snodgrass 2003), the World Congress of Faiths in London in 1936 has not attracted the same attention (apart from Braybrooke 1996 and Moriya's recent work). On the Eranos conferences in Ascona, see Hakl (2013).

been the object of deconstructivist criticism, they also show a revitalised interest in Suzuki as a person and his thought (Jaffe 2015; Dobbins 2016; Wilson and Moriya 2016). Richard Jaffe even calls him “one of the most culturally influential Asians of the 20th Century” (Jaffe 2015: xi).

The Zen of Suzuki was a skilful re-envisioning of contemporary tendencies in the early study of Buddhism and religion. His Zen particularism, which reversed the evolutionist and Orientalist scheme, was combined with a universalist perennialism in which Zen became a quintessential representation (Borup 2004). This was possible because Suzuki was unique, but also because of the network and contexts which he influenced and which also influenced him. Zen was introduced by Suzuki, but also framed by his meeting with influential scholars and religionists in the World Congress of Faiths in London 1936 (including Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Anesaki Masaharu, Alan Watts, Caroline Rhys Davids) and Eranos in Ascona, Switzerland in 1953 and 1954 (C.G. Jung, Martin Heidegger, Ernst Benz, Giuseppe Tucci). Suzuki influenced how many Europeans perceived Zen and Eastern Buddhism, with strong repercussions in the fields of psychology (Erich Fromm, Karen Horney) and the phenomenology of religion (Mircea Eliade, Rudolf Otto), not least regarding religious experience and mysticism. Suzuki also seemed to align with the early trend of incorporating Buddhism into different strands of esoteric ideas and movements in Europe (not least Theosophy and Swedenborgianism).⁶

With Suzuki, Zen in Europe became a philosophy and, furthermore, a trope which had a continuous effect on popular culture. Like the Zen Beat Generation in the US, counter-cultural individuals (and subsequently hippies) often used his writings for personal self-exploration and mind-examining alternative lifestyles. But Zen and Suzuki also had right-wing repercussions in Europe. As Paride Stortini shows in his article, fascism and Buddhism intersected through Suzuki Zen.⁷ Criticising the counter-cultural Zen of the left wing, Italian philosopher Julius Evola (1898–1974) constructed a Zen aristocratic intellectualism for true Aryan samurai, even feeling the need to correct D.T. Suzuki's

6 Suzuki was engaged in different contexts directly related to esotericism. He translated the Swedish mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg's writings, and was invited by the Swedenborg Society to come and give lectures on the topic. He was president of the Tokyo International Lodge of the Theosophical Society, and married the American Beatrice E. Lane, who introduced him to Theosophy. He gave lectures at the Buddhist Society in London, where he met Edward Conze, Christmas Humphreys and Alan Watts, all of whom had an interest in Theosophy. On the relations between Suzuki and such esoteric influences, see Borup (2004) and Yoshinaga (2009).

7 The term “Suzuki Zen” is taken to represent D.T. Suzuki's understanding and use of Zen as well as the corresponding “Suzuki effect” (Faure 1993: 54).

understanding of Zen. In addition, as Prohl and Brandt describe, several German Nazis (including Eugen Herrigel and Karlfried Graf Dürckheim) were also inspired by Suzuki and the macho spirit of *bushidō*.

4 Religious Zen, and Zen Beyond Religion

The Zen practised subsequently in Europe has been directly or indirectly inspired by Suzuki Zen. Some people in the first wave of European Zen Buddhists had met Suzuki, such as Alan Watts, Christmas Humphreys and Peggy Teresa Nancy Kennett (later to become Sōtō Zen abbess Hōun Jiyu-Kennett) from the UK; while others were inspired by Suzuki Zen, including the man who brought Zen to Greece, Petros Kouropoulos (b. 1928) (see Gaitanidis, this volume).

Relations between Suzuki Zen and the European Deshimaru Zen, based on the Sōtō 曹洞 monk Taisen Deshimaru 泰仙弟子丸 (1914–1982), are less transparent. Suzuki and Deshimaru were from different historical periods and traditions and had different personalities; in addition, the anti-establishment Deshimaru had no enthusiastic feelings for the intellectual Suzuki. However, as Fujii also comments in this volume, they both shared reverse Orientalist ideas, and it would be a fair assumption that many or even most of Deshimaru's followers had read D.T. Suzuki. Whereas Zen in the US has been represented by several traditions and communities from both Rinzai 臨濟 and Sōtō lineages, the Sōtō school has been dominant in Europe, not least because of Deshimaru. Deshimaru was not an official missionary, and his critique of institutionalised religion equalled the Japanese Sōtō school's lukewarm appraisal of him. His Association Zen Internationale (AZI) was based in France, but had connections throughout Europe, including Greece, Germany and Ireland. After his death in 1982, there was no transmission of the dharma to any disciples, leading those disciples to fracture and many to form new groups. Indeed, throughout Europe, different kinds of conflicts and divisions have also characterised the development of Zen.

Another sector in the field of lived Zen in Europe may be broadly typologised as Christian Zen. Priests, monks, ministers, missionaries and theologians from both Catholic and Protestant traditions have been deeply inspired by Suzuki Zen. Some have been to Japan to study under Japanese Zen masters, while functioning as Christian representatives in the country at the same time. The German Jesuit priest and minister Hugo Enomiya-Lasalle (1898–1990) practised Zen with both Harada Daiun Sogaku 原田大雲祖岳 (1871–1961) and his student Yamada Kōun (1907–1989), and later became a teacher in the latter's group

Sanbō Kyōdan 三宝教団, even acquiring a *rōshi* certificate. What Sharf (1995: 250) and Faure (2000) termed Protestant Zen corresponds to a text-oriented, rationalised, spiritualised and individualised understanding of Zen. As one of the ramifications of the Suzuki effect (Faure 1993: 54), such Protestantised versions of Zen have become accessible in both Zen *sesshin* in Catholic venues, as described by Pokorny in this volume, and some of the (less widespread) *zazen* meditations embedded in Protestant services in Northern Europe. The fact that Zen is also considered a representation of non-Christian traditions in some circles is also obvious. As Gaitanidis describes in his article, Zen in Greece has been filtered through the suspicion of an Orthodox Christian outlook fearing that such foreign religious elements will enter the country in the guise of meditation, *reiki*, healthy lifestyle workshops or even *anime*.

Religious Zen in Europe has also been perceived and practised in the inter-religious programme called Spiritual Exchange of the East-West (Tōzai Reisei Kōryū 東西靈性交流), under which Catholic and Rinzai Zen monks have been visiting each others' monasteries for mutual inspiration since 1979. Some groups have transcended traditional Japanese sectarian divisions by mixing Sōtō and Rinzai practices in an intersectarian form of Zen, inspired more or less by the Sanbō Kyōdan tradition. Other groups accommodate what could be described as creole Zen by mixing ideas and practices from a variety of traditions such as *zazen*, yoga, *vipassana*, mindfulness and *taiji*. This applies to the Austrian Daishin (blending Rinzai Zen and Dürckheim initiation therapy), the German Mumonkai (blending *taiji*, *ikebana*, the tea ceremony and calligraphy), and the Greek Kouropoulos' use of Zen as being conceived as "part of a wider constellation of cultural practices attributed to the Orient, from martial arts and popular culture (e.g. *anime*) to Chinese and Japanese philosophy" (see Gaitanidis, this volume).

Such ideas and practices are often regarded as existing in the grey zone between religion and non-religion. Several Zen practitioners regard themselves as spiritual, but not religious, and many people would probably say that they were generally inspired by Zen without identifying with it or even practising it. "Cultural Zen" as a broad category consisting of elements with some kind of origin in or relation to Zen Buddhism has been part of early European *Japonaiserie* for many years, from art and architecture to gardening, tea and martial arts. Martial arts have had a particularly close affinity to Zen in both practice environments and narratives. Although martial arts as a spiritual discipline are primarily a modern invention (Benesch 2016)—partly inspired by Western currents—karate, *judō*, *aikidō*, *kendō* and *shōrinji kenpō* 少林寺拳法 have been used in combination with (or even as the inspiration for) an involvement with Zen Buddhism. While Zen in Europe has a long history of intellectual baggage

and practice, Zen as a trope and topic for popular culture and commercials signifying health, wellness and universal authenticity with a grain of exotic Japaneseness has probably resulted in more trajectories than has Zen Buddhist practice (Borup 2015). It was quite illustrative to see how some Danish politicians and media suggested that the COVID-19 crisis related 'home quarantines' could be coped with by adopting a 'Zen mode.'

5 Soka Gakkai International

Another important line of transmission from Japan is Sōka Gakkai 創価学会. The teachings, practices, institutional formations and public image of this group in Japan, as well as its diverse reception history in the West, has led it to develop along different trajectories than those of Zen in many ways. Unlike Zen, Sōka Gakkai did not acquire its prestige and dissemination capital through Orientalist idealisation or intellectualist cross-fertilisers. If Zen was mainly for the elite, Sōka Gakkai has mainly been successful among the masses as a global religion, spreading from the grassroots upwards.

The movement was initiated in Japan by the educational reformer Makiguchi Tsunesaburō 牧口常三郎 (1871–1944) in 1930, and continued through Toda Jōsei 戸田城聖 (1900–1958) and Ikeda Daisaku 池田大作 (b. 1928), the latter also being the president of the organisation's international section Soka Gakkai International (SGI). Makiguchi was interested in education, and initially did not see his movement as religious. He had studied educational ideas in international settings, including with the Danish 19th-century educational reformers N.F.S. Grundtvig and Christen Cold, something that Ikeda has often mentioned in his writings as well as orally during his visits to Denmark. After Toda and Ikeda had consciously turned the group into an increasingly religious one, it had all of the characteristics of a prototypical new religious movement, which were also the elements that triggered the formation of the earliest groups abroad. Rather than spreading by *pull factors* in the West, the group's later success has mainly been due to two *push factors*: migration and mission.⁸

During the post-war period, Japanese diaspora communities also brought with them some of the emerging new religious movements. Soka Gakkai International (SGI) was among the most successful, and in the first phases of migration and acculturation, its members were usually Japanese individuals and

8 The missionary aspect has led Jan Nattier to characterise this kind of Buddhism in the West as "evangelical Buddhism" (Nattier 1998).

their descendants.⁹ Some were already active members in Japan, raising their children abroad as Sōka Gakkai adherents. Others met just as much for cultural reasons with a view to creating social cohesion in the diaspora. Though originally a typical Japanese new religious movement in many ways, SGI engaged in a high degree of international acculturation, later becoming the most successful global Japanese religion. After the first generation of immigrants, the group catered primarily to non-Japanese by “skilfully adapting their religious practices to each culture” by providing “a sense of uniformity and unity worldwide among SGI members ... applicable to everyone everywhere” (Métreaux 2013: 427, 428). Wherever they are based, SGI groups always need to strike a balance between preserving uniformity in a highly structured system and adjusting to local contexts. This also includes the translation of sacred texts (to which Ikeda’s writings belong) and the domestication of the three pillars of activities (peace, culture and education).

The present global success of SGI can be ascribed not least to Ikeda’s missionary efforts. In each country there are almost hagiographic accounts about what happened when Ikeda came to visit on his many peace journeys (*heiwa tabi* 平和旅); and his 20-day tour in 1961 was seen by many as an “official kick-off to *kōsen rufu* in Europe”¹⁰ (Pokorny 2014). His charismatic personality, demonstrated in countless encounters with international leaders and promoted in a variety of media outlets, seems to underline SGI’s own perception that it is a culturally and socially relevant Buddhist group for all ethnicities and social classes. Ikeda is not an enlightened master or a priest; nor is he a scholar, although he has met many renowned scholars¹¹ and been awarded more than 300 honorary doctorates, several of which are from European universities. He is a professional lay person and a teacher (*sensei*), catering also to segments which do not necessarily have much knowledge about or interest in Buddhism and religion.¹²

9 While it seems that SGI in Europe was initially established by immigrants and later spread to non-Japanese members, the situation in Ireland was the opposite (see Laoidh and Cox in Part II of this special issue).

10 *Kōsen rufu* 広宣流布 is a term originally found in the *Lotus Sutra*, meaning dissemination and mission of the true Buddhist teaching.

11 Ikeda’s meetings with British historian Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975) in 1972 and 1973 have been presented by SGI as paradigmatic encounters between Eastern and Western civilisations involving two highly prestigious representatives.

12 According to Wilson and Dobbelaere (1994: 88), 50% of the SGI recruits in Britain were engaging with religion and spirituality for the first time. Pokorny describes the changes in social composition of SGI members in Austria as follows: “the majority of practitioners throughout the 1970s and early 1980s belonged to the lower middle-class, which was in line with the contemporary situation in other overseas branches and in Japan, some-

Although further surveys are still needed to conduct more comparative investigations,¹³ in Europe it seems that SGI has a relatively large number of members from artistic environments, and many non-Japanese members seem not to be interested in or have knowledge about Japanese sectarian history and its controversies. SGI is simply understood by its members to be quintessentially general Buddhism, rather than being a new religious movement with an aggressive tradition of missionary work and hostility to other religions. This image contrasts sharply with the image of other Buddhist groups, especially those with a Japanese origin. SGI is typically not part of other trans-sectarian Buddhist families, both because SGI claims to provide the entire package, and because other groups do not recognise its members as true Buddhists.¹⁴

Italy is the main European centre for SGI. With 90,000 members, it is not only “the largest non-Christian group among Italian citizens” (Introvigne 2019: 4), but also the largest Buddhist group in the country, with the Ikeda Milan Cultural Center for Peace being the largest Buddhist centre in Europe. As Stortini explains in his article, although SGI has been regarded as a religious cult in some circles, it has also developed a positive image. Furthermore, the group, through its involvement in interfaith dialogue and cultural exhibitions, has often been the representative of Buddhism at the expense of other Buddhist groups. Unlike other Japanese new religious movements, SGI has “been progressively ‘de-Japanized’” (Introvigne 2019: 11). While lacking the same brand value as Zen, SGI has gone through a process of becoming more mainstream in Italy in particular (Introvigne 2019: 12), contributing to the overall impact of Japanese Buddhism in Europe.

However, SGI has also been very much part of (and has been influenced by) politicisation. It has been used for political lobbying for the left wing, drawing on its seemingly democratic, anti-capitalist and LGBT-friendly ideas in media performances. On the other hand, it has also been closely associated with neo-capitalist politics, further underlined by close relations between former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and an SGI leader, suggesting the presence of a right-wing Buddho-Berlusconism. As Stortini discusses, the fre-

thing which would gradually change in Japan and the West in the 1990s and 2000s with the emergence of a more upper middle class basis” (Pokorny 2014: 22).

- 13 See, however, Pokorny (2014) on Austria, Mathe (2005) on France, Ionescu (2000) and Schweigkofler (2014) on Germany, Berzano and Martoglio (2009) and Introvigne (2019) on Italy, and Wilson and Dobbelaere (1994) on Britain.
- 14 Once, when gathering material for a textbook on Buddhism in Denmark, a representative of a Zen group refused to be interviewed if I insisted on including SGI in the book. To ensure a reasonable degree of representation, I thus had to find another Zen interviewee.

quent dichotomy between the generally right-wing Zen and the more often left-wing SGI is extremely complex, with political perspectives present in both groups.¹⁵

6 European Shin Buddhism

If Zen has a specific “brand” as the intellectualist and meditation-based form of Buddhism, and SGI is known as the member-based, global version of Japanese Buddhism, Shin Buddhism is barely known at all. The Shin Buddhist representatives in Europe mainly consist of practising converts and Japanese expats visiting temples on a temporary basis. While both Higashi and Nishi Honganji of the Jōdo Shinshū school¹⁶ have had priests and missionaries in Europe since Meiji times, by comparison with the US, few Japanese migrants have ever settled in Europe. Generally, Shin Buddhism is unknown to most Europeans,¹⁷ and relatively few Shin temples and centres can be found in Europe. As Matsunaga claims in her article, in Europe “Jōdo Shinshū has attracted relatively little interest.”

The largest European Pure Land temple is EKŌ-Haus der Japanischen Kultur (EKŌ Centre of Japanese Culture) in Düsseldorf, Germany. As Nottelmann-Feil describes in his article, since its establishment by Ehan Numata 沼田恵範 in 1988, the EKŌ-Haus has been a Honganji temple and a Japanese house of culture aimed primarily at Japanese expats in Germany. Looking like a typical urban Japanese Buddhist temple, it has also been domesticated as a Little Tokyo by the Rhine River, with a Japanese garden, a library, a kindergarten and probably the largest temple main hall in Europe. The temple celebrates Buddhist festivals and arranges music and theatre performances, exhibitions, tea ceremonies, courses in traditional Japanese arts (from *ikebana* to dance and

15 At the level of the European Union, SGI has become a partner in dialogue with The Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA) as the Institut Européen Soka Gakkai International (IESGI) (Pastorelli 2009: 197). The IESGI, in English “The European Institute Soka Gakkai,” was set up in 1973 to help spread Nichiren Buddhism in Europe. SGI perceives the “European space as one for diffusion of the Soka’s principles,” and its EU partner status is used as “part of a larger process of legitimation in the different EU member states” (Pastorelli 2009: 199).

16 The official term in English for the schools are Shinshū Ōtani-ha 真宗大谷派 and Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha 浄土真宗本願寺派 (also known as Honpa Hongwanji) respectively.

17 A thorough discussion and background history of why this is so can be found in Porcu (2008).

cooking), lectures and film presentations. It maintains loose ties to Japanese expat *danka* 檀家 members,¹⁸ but not enough bonds have been built to maintain a stable community or member-based financing.

Characteristically, none of the 36 members of Jōdo Shinshū in Germany are Japanese. Although the cultural aspect is very important to the few European temples with Japanese priests, such as EKŌ-Haus and Three Wheels in London, most European Pure Land groups seem to cater almost entirely to converts with convert priests, seeing Jōdo Shinshū teachings as just one specific flavour of Buddhism.

In Britain there are very few members and little involvement of local expatriates, with the partial exception of the Three Wheels temple, located in an area of London with a high concentration of Japanese expatriates. In her article, Matsunaga discusses the challenges facing Pure Land Buddhism because the institution is caught between the absence of interest among potential users, and conflicts between them. The Japanese expats are not interested in practices which cater typically to Westerners (e.g. seated meditation), nor in keeping a formal *danka* relationship because their visits are too short to establish any proper commitment. On the other hand, the British (and Europeans in general) are not interested in the traditional religious practices such as funeral services, ancestor ceremonies or Christianised practices first developed in American contexts and used to strategically acculturate communities of Japanese descendants. Paradoxically, “the ritual forms adopted in Europe are much more likely to resemble the forms generally used in Japan (such as music and chanting) than the forms used in the USA” (Matsunaga 2018: 249), since an excessive resemblance to Christian rituals would not appeal to Europeans interested in Buddhism.

In Europe, the organisational strategy generally consists of aligning with the generally held perceptions of Buddhism. Both the German EKŌ-Haus and the British Three Wheels have offered Zen meditation courses. In the case of EKŌ-Haus, Sōtō and Rinzai masters have also been invited to conduct the spiritual practices mainly attended by Westerners. Some Pure Land priests even direct people interested in seated meditation to other Buddhist groups, or (as Pokorný explains in his article in this volume) promote *naikan* 内観 as an appropriate kind of meditation. Other Buddhist groups and networks have held a discriminatory attitude toward Pure Land Buddhism, regarding it as not being genuine Buddhism. Such attitudes are probably representative of Buddhism in Europe, despite the fact that European Pure Land Buddhism functions, to a large extent,

18 *Danka* is the Japanese term for families affiliated to a temple.

as ‘culture Buddhism,’ which is probably the most typically Japanese kind of Buddhism outside Japan.

7 Demographics

There are methodological challenges involved in accurately counting Buddhists, and no comprehensive surveys have been conducted to map Japanese Buddhists in Europe. Even if members of Buddhist groups and estimated users and visitors to groups and temples are all included, probably only a fraction among the estimated 1.8 million Buddhists in Europe¹⁹ can be regarded as belonging to schools of Japanese origin.

Among what Pokorny calls “The Big Three” (Zen, Nichirenism and Shin Buddhism), SGI is undoubtedly the biggest in terms of membership, and the fastest-growing Buddhist movement in Europe and throughout the world. According to SGI’s own figures, there are 160,000 members in Europe, with 90,000 members in Italy alone, followed by 22,000 in France and 15,000 in the UK. In the Nordic countries there are around 2,500 members, with 1,300 of these being in Denmark.²⁰ And with 550 official members (of whom 450 are regular practitioners), SGI is “by far the most widely practiced strain of Japanese Buddhism in Ireland” (Laoidh and Cox in Part II of this special issue).

Mapping Zen is more problematic. There is no one umbrella organisation, and many practitioners would probably not regard themselves as members of an organisation or even categorise themselves as Zen Buddhists. Previous estimates have counted 324 Zen centres in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (Brandt and Prohl in Part II of this special issue) and 452 Zen groups (Koné 2001); and Fujii counts 273 Zen centres, the vast majority (221) belonging to the Sōtō school. He also refers to Fujita Issho, who in 2013 estimated that there were 350 registered Sōtō Zen monks, 5,000 practitioners and 31 official missionaries in Europe. While Eastern Europe is catching up, most European Zen centres are in Western Europe, with France and Germany dominating not least because of the influence of Deshimaru and the centres inspired by him. AZI estimates that

19 Johnson and Grim (2013). The Pew Research Center estimated that there were 1.4 million European Buddhists in 2010, a figure which was expected to increase to 2.5 million (or 0.4 % of the total population) by 2050. <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/buddhists/> (accessed 11 May 2021).

20 In Sweden there are 600–700 SGI members, in Norway 200, in Finland 300–400, and in Iceland around 100. The numbers provided are from mail correspondence with a representative of the Danish SGI.

there are 15,000–20,000 practising Sōtō Zen Buddhists in Europe,²¹ a number rather different from the 300,000 envisioned previously by Deshimaru (Deshimaru 1982). In Spain, there are around 90 Zen groups with approximately 15 members in each (Díez de Velasco 2018), in Austria there are perhaps 2,500 practitioners, and in the Nordic countries there are less than 10 groups with fewer than 500 members.²² If we assume that there are 300 Zen groups in Europe (including *dōjō* and less formalised *zazen* groups), with 15–20 practitioners in each group, it does not seem too unrealistic to claim that there are roughly 5,000 Zen Buddhist members (and regular practitioners) in Europe. This figure would then need to be expanded to include non-members and irregular practitioners, who probably also number around 5,000.

Jōdo Shinshū has branches in seven European countries (Germany, Austria, Belgium, the UK, Switzerland, Poland and Romania) and a small number of members in other countries; most groups are run by European first-generation converts. Some of these groups are visited by Japanese expats with only a limited interest in belonging to the temples as committed members or practising *danka*; and since very few Europeans are interested in Shin Buddhism, the temples have generally very low numbers of members. Just as there will probably be more people practising Zen than members of Zen Buddhist groups, there will of course be many more visitors to the Pure Land temples, taking part in some of their cultural activities, who are not members (or who have *danka* relations with temples back in Japan).

Religious demography is a challenging art, especially when it comes to counting Buddhists in the West, where it might be more realistic to include a broader range of categories consisting of a “variety of Buddhist ideas, practices, aesthetics, materialities, semantics, narrations, and symbols” (Brandt and Prohl in Part II of this special issue). As shown above, the estimated numbers—based on SGI’s own figures and rough estimates of the other groups—of probably less than 200,000 members and practitioners of Japanese Buddhism in Europe, the vast majority connected to SGI, could be further refined in future investigations with a view to achieving a better statistical foundation.

21 <https://www.zen-azi.org/fr/50-ans-zen-presse> (accessed 11 May 2021).

22 According to a representative of Sōtō Zen in Norway, there are 5 monks, 2 nuns and 300 members in the Norwegian Zen groups. In Denmark, there are four groups with less than 100 members. The estimate from Austria is from Lukas Pokorny, personal communication.

8 Overview of the Articles

This special issue aims to explore in depth some of the tendencies and perspectives of Japanese Buddhism in Europe. With case studies that illuminate historical trajectories and acculturation perspectives, a broader understanding of Japanese Buddhism's negotiated footsteps in Europe will hopefully unveil aspects of what is still an under-researched phenomenon. Many more components and in-depth analyses, allowing for more comparisons and theoretical outcomes, will be highly welcomed in the future of this emerging field, which in itself may cross-fertilise interdisciplinary cooperation between fields extending beyond Japanese studies and the study of religion.

8.1 Part 1

Moriya Tomoe's 守屋友江 article "D.T. Suzuki at the World Congress of Faiths in 1936: An Analysis of His Presentation at the Interfaith Conference" examines Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki's speeches presented at the World Congress of Faiths in London in 1936 and analyzes his interactions with Buddhists, sympathizers, and critics in the West during the interwar period. While Suzuki's early years and post-1949 lectures in the United States have been thoroughly researched, Moriya's investigation of his half-year journey through Europe in 1936 is a welcome contribution to an important and understudied topic. Analyzing both Japanese and English sources, several of which are newly discovered primary sources, Moriya uncovers how various reactions and the historical context helped construct Suzuki's discourses, preparing Suzuki to popularize Zen later on in postwar Western countries.

European missionaries have been influential in several aspects of the European encounter with Japanese Buddhism. Esben Petersen, in his article "Hans Haas, The Songs of Buddha, and Their Sounds of Truth: A German Missionary's Interpretation of Pure Land Buddhism," investigates the writings of the German missionary Hans Haas (1868–1934). While stationed in Japan from 1898–1909, Haas worked as an editor for the journal *Zeitschrift für Missionskunde und Religionswissenschaft* and translated texts such as *Sukhavati-Buddhism* into German, making cross-religious comparisons of Buddhist songs and legends. Petersen analyzes Haas's role in interpreting Japanese Buddhism in Europe through a particular "Protestant" interpretative scheme, which generally dominated much of the early reception of Japanese Buddhism in Europe.

Japanese Zen Buddhism has had a special status in Europe, and Fujii Shūhei 藤井修平 investigates this in "The History and Current State of Japanese Zen Buddhism in Europe." Fujii identifies two main lines of transmission, namely the group founded by Taisen Deshimaru, and "Christian Zen." Deshimaru's

teaching represented Zen as a wholistic, scientific, and peaceful Eastern religion, splitting up into several subgroups after his death. The group Sanbō Kyōdan, on the other hand, promoted an ecumenical interaction between Christianity and Zen, the longstanding interest in Zen among Christians being represented through the contemporary “spiritual exchange of the East-West.” Apart from historical analyses, Fujii investigates Zen demographics in Europe, concluding that there are more than 270 Zen centers located in 24 countries.

As the first of the articles on individual European countries, Lukas Pokorný investigates “Japanese Buddhism in Austria.” Drawing on archival research and interview data, he discusses the historical development as well as the present configuration of the Japanese Buddhist panorama, primarily divided into Zen, Shin, and Nichiren Buddhism. It traces the early beginnings, highlights the key stages in the expansion process, and sheds light on the denominational complexity. As Austria was the first European country to formally recognize Buddhism as a religion, Pokorný also explores the larger organisational context of the ÖBR (Österreichische Buddhistische Religionsgesellschaft, or Austrian Buddhist Society) with a focus on its Japanese Buddhist actors.

Buddhist ideas have inspired both conservative and progressive views of society. In “Between Tradition and Revolution: Political Appropriations of Japanese Buddhism in Italy,” Paride Stortini explores how similar ambiguities and multiplicities are found in the appropriation of Japanese Buddhism in Italy. In particular, he focuses on two cases: the influential traditionalist philosopher Julius Evola (1898–1974) and his interest in the Zen of D.T. Suzuki and Nukariya Kaiten’s tools to resist modernity, and debates in Italian media related to Sōka Gakkai, especially in left-wing and progressive contexts. Stortini’s article contributes to our understanding of politicised and mediated appropriations of Japanese Buddhism in a country in which it has had a continuous impact.

Ioannis Gaitanidis’ article “A ‘Nihilist Philosophy?': Christian Orthodox Heretical Discourse and Japanese Buddhism in Greece” shows that, contrary to what we find in other European countries, there are no direct channels of transmission of Japanese Buddhism between Japan and Greece. This is mainly because Buddhism has been viewed with suspicion by the larger population, which remains influenced by a Christian Orthodox outlook. The article explores how, under Greece’s conservative Orthodox climate, Japanese Buddhism, through its urban Zen meditation centers, has become simultaneously “Japanese culture” and a philosophy open to all religions.

8.2 *Part II*

Louella Matsunaga, in her article “Jōdo Shinshū in the UK: Impermanence, Precarity, and Change,” investigates Shin Buddhism in Britain, outlining its history

and discussing why this kind of Buddhism is still rather unknown in Europe, as it challenges popular conceptions of Buddhism. She discusses this by explaining the illustrative paradox of Japanese expats not being interested in practices typically catering to Westerners (e.g. meditation), while the British are not interested in traditional religious practices such as funeral services, ancestor ceremonies or Christianised practices taken from American contexts.

Laurence Cox and John Ó Laoith explore “Japanese Buddhism and Ireland” through ethnographic information, cultural influence and religious practice. This long history of importation and acculturation was initiated by the reception of Jesuit and traveller’s accounts, then made concrete by early intermediaries like Lafcadio Hearn and Charles Pfoundes. W.B. Yeats gave Japanese Buddhism a significant place in Irish culture, and from the 1960s and 1970s, Japanese Buddhists started to settle in Ireland, contributing to a practiced religiosity. The article presents its history as well as an overview of the present situation of Japanese Buddhism in Ireland.

Laura Brandt and Inken Prohl’s article on “Japanese Buddhism in Germany” provides an overview of historical trajectories and contemporary impacts of mainly (convert) Zen Buddhism in Germany. Eugen Herrigel’s bestseller *Zen in der Kunst des Bogenschießens* contributed not only to the German reception of Japanese Buddhism through National Socialism, but also in the longer run to a general interest in Buddhist practices. Deshimaru Taisen, on the other hand, contributed to the institutionalization of Japanese Zen in Germany. However, both lines of influence, the authors show, were generally influential in Japanese Buddhism’s impact on both philosophy, psychology, and popular culture.

In the last article, Jan-Marc Nottelmann-Feil gives an account of Japanese Buddhism as a lived religion in his article “EKŌJI: Numata Ehan’s Ideas and Their Realization in a Japanese Buddhist Temple in Germany.” The EKŌ-Haus was established by Numata Ehan in 1988, serving as both a Nishi Honganji temple and a Japanese house of culture aimed primarily at Japanese expats in Germany containing a Japanese garden, a library and a kindergarten, conducting Buddhist festivals and a variety of cultural activities also. The article discusses how the loose relationships with expat *danka* members are sustained, while also acknowledging the hardships of not being able to develop stronger bonds in order to maintain a stable Buddhist community.

Acknowledgments

The project was generously financed by Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai (Numata Foundation). A warm thanks to Elisabetta Porcu for her efforts at editing this volume.

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