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GLOBAL SHIN BUDDHISM AND RITUAL PRACTICE

HISTORIES, TRANSFORMATIONS AND LOCALISATIONS

Louella Matsunaga, Enrique Galvan-Alvarez
and Mitsuya Dake

Global Shin Buddhism and Ritual Practice

This book explores the globalisation of Shin Buddhism (also known as Jōdo Shinshū – the name by which it is referred to in this book) through an examination of ritual practice and its transformations in four main areas: Japan, the United States and Hawai'i, South America, and Europe.

Interrogating conservative and mono-ethnic images of Shin Buddhism, linked to the preservation of Japanese identity in diaspora communities, it offers a complex picture of this form of Buddhism, as multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and ever-changing. Drawing on historical sources, as well as fieldwork conducted in sites from three continents, the study shows the dynamic and transnational routes and local transformations of contemporary Shin Buddhism. The book further considers a range of ritual expressions of Shin Buddhism, including spatiality and architecture; music; embodiment and performance; and ritual adaptations to new virtual environments since the Covid-19 pandemic. All the authors are ordained Shin Buddhist priests, as well as academics, and bring a perspective which is informed both by academic research and by their first-hand experience of Shin Buddhism, including participation in ritual training.

An analysis of Shin Buddhism as a global religion, this book will be of interest to students and scholars of religious studies, Anthropology, and the sociology of religion. It will also be of interest to researchers in Buddhist Studies and Asian Religions, in particular those interested in Buddhism as a world religion and Buddhist modernism.

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1 Introduction

Introduction

In early May 2024, an event was held to celebrate Śākyamuni Buddha's birthday at a Jōdo Shinshū temple called Shōonji 照恩寺[1] in a rural area of Fukui prefecture, north of Kyoto. The event was planned by the temple priest, Asakura Gyōsen 朝倉行宣, to resemble a music festival. Lasting from early afternoon until the evening, it began and ended with a Buddhist service set to techno music and incorporating a dharma talk, while between the two services there were musical performances in different styles, including a brass band, jazz fusion, Kazakhstan folk, electro pop, and *gagaku* (a kind of instrumental music with a very long history in Japan, often translated as "court music", but also closely associated with Buddhism).[2] The temple was full, and Japanese curry was served free of charge in the breaks, so that people could stay all afternoon, listening to music in the main hall of the temple, and talking and eating in the adjoining room.

In an interview with Matsunaga, one of the authors of this volume, who attended the event, Asakura explained that he had held the first techno service in 2016, motivated by wanting to find a way of attracting young people to come to the temple. Śākyamuni Buddha's birthday is celebrated in Japan and elsewhere with a festival in the spring,[3] now known in Japan as *hana matsuri* 花祭り (literally, flower festival), and Asakura thought that a music festival would fit well with *hana matsuri* as he wanted to do something festive (*oiwai* お祝い) and lively (*nigiyaka* 賑やか). As Buddhism in Japan has a lot of services around death,[4] he wanted to let people know that "Buddhism is not just about death, it's about a way of thinking – that's important for the living, not just for the dead". He now holds techno services twice a year, for *hana matsuri* in the spring, and for *hōonkō* 報恩講, an event commemorating the death of the founder of Jōdo Shinshū, Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263), in October.[5] For *hōonkō* there are two services – the standard service in the daytime, and the techno service in the evening – he commented that more people come to the techno service. According to Asakura, younger people may start to learn chanting from their encounter with the techno services, and some have gone on to become interested in studying Buddhism. Asakura has also performed the techno services abroad – in 2018 he performed a techno service at a music festival in Lyon in France, using a projection of a Buddha statue and temple, and in 2024 he visited the United States, at the invitation of a group of American Jōdo Shinshū priests.

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For the techno service part of the *hana matsuri* at Shōonji in 2024, and for some of the other music performances, moving lights were projected onto the inner altar area of the temple. These showed a range of patterns and images – for the techno service, lotus flowers floating across the temple screens, Buddha statues turning, interspersed with more abstract images, and short messages in both English and Japanese composed by Asakura.[6] At the same time, Asakura, who was seated to the side of the main altar area, chanted the texts of the service through voice distorting software, with a techno accompaniment. The words of the text being chanted were projected vertically onto four screens suspended in front of the inner altar, as can be seen in Figure 1.1.

Asakura encourages people to join in with the chanting in the techno services, and several people did try to join in – the projection of the words helped with following the chanting – but most people seemed content to simply sit and listen, much as one can observe in other more conventional temple services in Japan.

The event also included dharma talks. In one of these, Asakura addressed the topic of why he has created these services, which are so different from the temple services that people are used to in Japan. He pointed out that the Buddhist altars familiar in Japanese temples now did not exist when Śākyamuni was alive – the first Buddha statue was made 500 years after Śākyamuni's death. And just as that was the application of a creative technique (*kufū* 工夫) to convey the teachings of

Figure 1.1 Techno service at Shōonji *hana matsuri*, May 2024.
Photograph by Louella Matsunaga.

Buddhism, the use of technology in the techno services is another sort of creative technique – but still with the same goal.

This echoed an earlier interview with Matsunaga, in which Asakura explained that times are changing, and rituals need to change and adapt too. For Asakura, the important thing is to think about the purpose of rituals, and their experience:

> in Buddhism the *kokoro* (心 – mind/heart/spirit) is important, not just the head. Rituals are showtime! So they should be beautiful – they show the beauty of Buddhism, they create a special time, and special experience. The people who built temples in former times made them beautiful to create a special time and space.

Performing a light show using modern technology projected over a golden statue of Amida Buddha in the inner altar of a temple that is hundreds of years old is simply using contemporary technology to achieve the same aims as those who built the temple. "There are people who think that I am destroying tradition, but that's not the case, I love tradition, I want to adapt it because I want to communicate it with people". In general, he said that his initiatives had been well received by the head temple: "there is a lot of variation in *honzan* 本山[the head temple] – people who are more conservative, people who are keen to try things out. I think discussion is good!"

Shōonji is located in an area associated with Rennyo 蓮如 (1415–1499), who played a pivotal role in establishing Jōdo Shinshū as a major form of Buddhism in Japan, as discussed below in Chapter 2. In the same interview, Asakura referred to Rennyo as he returned to his theme of the importance of adapting to the times:

> times change, it's important to adapt. Rennyo *shōnin* also adapted to his times – the feeling is the most important thing. 550 years ago Rennyo *shōnin* wrote letters to people who were far away. If he were alive now he would use the internet.

The innovations introduced at Shōonji are an example of ritual forms adapting to a changing environment, influenced in this case by broader global trends in music and visual technology. It also aimed to appeal to a broader, younger demographic than that usually associated with temples in Japan. Although the particular form of these innovations is specific to this temple, the broader pattern is not. Ritual adaptation and innovation, driven by the aspiration to adapt to the times, and influenced by a combination of local specificities and broader global trends, can be observed across Jōdo Shinshū, both in Japan and in Jōdo Shinshū's overseas communities.[7]

We can also dig a little deeper into the case presented above. The techno service/music festival was held to celebrate *hana matsuri*, commemorating Śākyamuni Buddha's birthday. This in turn can be viewed as a recent example of a broader process of transformation of the *hana matsuri* festival in Japan since the late nineteenth century. Once a ritual performed at local temples called *kanbutsue*, 灌仏会 in which sweet tea was poured over a Buddha statue, from the late 1890s it was reconfigured as part of a broader global movement to celebrate the Buddha's birth.

In colonial Ceylon, Wesak, a celebration commemorating the birth, enlightenment, and *parinirvana* of Śākyamuni was revived in the 1880s after a 60-year ban by the colonial authorities. Two important figures campaigning for its restoration were Anagarika Dharmapala and Colonel Olcott.[8] Colonel Olcott emphasised the aspect of commemorating the Buddha's birth, referring to Wesak as "the Buddhist Christmas" (Olcott 1904: 73, cited in Kim 2011: 52). Kim (2011: 54) writes that Dharmapala and Olcott "succeeded in making the Buddha's birthday festival part of the pan-Buddhist discourse and indispensable to the rise of Buddhism in the global competition of salvation". This enthusiasm for promoting the celebration of the Buddha's birthday also spread to Japan, where newly established Buddhist youth groups took a central role in organising new versions of celebrations for the Buddha's birthday from the 1890s, sometimes on university campuses, inviting Dharmapala to one of these festivals in 1902.

Meanwhile, in 1901, a celebration for the birthday of the Buddha was held in Berlin, organised by a group of local Japanese residents led by Anesaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 (1873–1949), a leading scholar of Japanese religion and Nichiren Buddhist, who had previously worked with Buddhist youth groups organising similar events in Japan, and Chikazumi Jōkan 近角常観 (1870–1941), a scholar priest from the Ōtani-ha school of Jōdo Shinshū. They called this celebration *blumenfest*, meaning flower festival, referring to the flowers used to decorate the image of the Buddha (Sasaki and Teramoto 2010: 10), a term that was later translated into Japanese as *hana matsuri*.[9] This term gradually became popular in Japan (Kim 2011: 57), and a trans-sectarian celebration of the Buddha's birthday called *hana matsuri* was held in 1916 in Hibiya Park in Tokyo, the first time that this term had been used to designate this festival in Japan (Shūkyō-kai 1916: 49).[10] Over the next few decades, trans-sectarian *hana matsuri* became increasingly popular, and events celebrating the Buddha's birthday became larger in scale, culminating in elaborate festivals held over a period of a week in Tokyo in the mid-1920s. Snodgrass (2009: 134–5) argues that these festivals were an arena for the performance of Buddhist modernity, Japanese identity, and colonial power.[11] In contemporary Japan, *hana matsuri* celebrations are smaller in scale than those of the 1920s, but it remains a popular festival, both in Japan and in Buddhist communities elsewhere. Asakura's *hana matsuri* music festival can thus be situated as among the most recent of a series of transformations, in which this particular ritual has been reimagined within a shifting global context.

Examples such as this show the interconnections between globalisation and ritual change, and the ways in which a close examination of ritual change can reveal much about the complexity of global flows of influence in a religious context. In this volume, we consider the intersections between globalisation and ritual change and innovation in the case of Jōdo Shinshū, both within Japan, and in the overseas communities of Europe, the United States and Hawai'i, and Latin America. Our reasons for focusing on this particular Buddhist tradition are explored in the next section of this chapter.

Why Jōdo Shinshū?

Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗, also known as Shinshū 真宗, or, in English, Shin Buddhism, presents a paradox. Little known outside Japan beyond the Japanese-American diaspora,[12] it is one of the largest Buddhist traditions within Japan. There are nearly 30,000 temples in Japan affiliated to the various Shinshū schools (*shūkyō nenkan* 宗教年鑑 [yearbook of religion] 2024: 72), and it also has a substantial presence in the Americas. A form of Pure Land Buddhism, Jōdo Shinshū can be more broadly situated within Mahayana Buddhism. Its central teaching is reliance on the primal vow of Amida Buddha, which assures birth in Amida's pure land.[13] The founder, Shinran, was a follower of Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212), and in the Jōdo Shinshū tradition he is placed in a line of Pure Land masters going back to Nagarjuna in India (c150–c250 CE).[14]

A key concept in Jōdo Shinshū is *shinjin* 信心, translated in a variety of ways including faith and entrusting heart. Entrusting here is understood as relying on the power of Amida's vow,[15] which assures birth in Amida's Pure Land, for those entrusting in the vow and saying the *nenbutsu*念仏. For this reason, there is an emphasis on "other power" (Japanese *tariki* 他力), often contrasted with other Buddhist paths which emphasise attaining enlightenment through one's own efforts (*jiriki*). The term *nenbutsu* literally means mindfulness of the Buddha, but in the context of Jōdo Shinshū is generally understood as "saying the name", referring to the phrase *namuamidabutsu*[16] 南無阿弥陀仏, which might be translated as "taking refuge in Amida Buddha". The recitation of the *nenbutsu* has a central role in the liturgy, and there are a range of contexts in which the *nenbutsu* may be said by followers, both individually and collectively. The understanding of the significance of the recitation of the *nenbutsu*, and its relationship with *shinjin*, has been a recurrent subject of doctrinal controversy within Jōdo Shinshū – a topic that will be returned to in greater detail below.

Despite having a large overseas membership in the Americas (by no means all of whom are of Japanese descent), and centres in several European countries, as well as Taiwan, Australia, and Nepal, Jōdo Shinshū has frequently been characterised as an "ethnic religion". Perhaps because of this, it has often been marginalised in discussions of the spread of Buddhism outside Asia, and among people who are not of Asian descent. Although there is now a substantial body of scholarship on Jōdo Shinshū in the United States, including Hawai'i (e.g. Kashima 1977, Tanabe 1998, 2005, Tanaka 1999; Amstutz 2002, Ama 2011, Wilson 2012b, Mitchell 2014, 2016, Dessì 2017, Moriya 2019), as well as some work on Canada (e.g. Mullins 1988, McLellan 2006, Harding 2010), Latin America (e.g. Usarski 2008, Matsue 2014, Shoji et al. 2015), and Europe (e.g. Matsunaga 2019, 2022, Nottelmann-Feil 2022), there is as yet no single source which examines global transformations of Jōdo Shinshū across contrasting local contexts and within Japan itself.

This book seeks to fill this gap by examining the ways in which Jōdo Shinshū, and more particularly the Honganji-ha 本願寺派 school (full name Jōdo Shinshū

Honganji-ha 浄土真宗本願寺派, also known as Nishi Honganji 西本願寺),[17] has transformed, both within Japan itself, and in the contrasting contexts of the United States, Latin America, and Europe, focusing primarily on the period beginning in the late nineteenth century. We take this as our starting point because the late nineteenth century (i.e. the Meiji 明治 period) was when Japan opened to the rest of the world after a long period of isolation,[18] and also the time when Jōdo Shinshū began to spread globally, together with the initial waves of Japanese migration. We focus on the Americas and Europe because they provide case studies in very different contexts: in the Americas Jōdo Shinshū initially spread with Japanese migration, and was closely associated with the Japanese diaspora (although it has since spread beyond this base), whereas in Europe the majority of followers are not of Japanese descent. This has been an important factor determining the specific ways in which Jōdo Shinshū has adapted to these different settings.

The decision to focus on Honganji-ha requires some explanation. There is no single institutional formation that represents the Shinshū tradition as a whole. There are ten major recognised schools of Shinshū, and in addition, a number of smaller groupings, some of which are linked to one of the major schools. All trace their origins to Shinran and are based on an interpretation of his writings. The largest of the ten major schools is the Honganji-ha school, closely followed by the Ōtani-ha 大谷派 (also known as Shinshū Ōtani-ha 真宗大谷派) in Japan. However, Honganji-ha by far outnumbers any other Jōdo Shinshū denomination outside Japan, with a significant presence throughout the Americas and a more modest but, in some cases long-standing, foothold in Europe, Australia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Nepal. It therefore offers scope for comparison across widely differing local contexts. Ōtani-ha's presence is significant in Brazil, but in North America it is considerably smaller than Honganji-ha. In Europe, only a few individuals are affiliated with Ōtani-ha, whereas Honganji-ha has small groups of followers in several European countries, most notably Germany, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Belgium, and Spain. There are also other independent Jōdo Shinshū organisations both in Europe and the Americas, but they represent a small minority overall.[19] Although the case studies presented here are largely centred on Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha communities across the globe, some points of comparison are made with other schools of Jōdo Shinshū, when relevant.

The focus on a particular school or institutional formation is helpful in order to study transformation and adaptation, since all ritual practitioners from the school are trained at the symbolic and administrative centre of the school in Kyoto, and refer, whether through adherence or divergence, to the same set of rituals and practices. Also, the global presence of Honganji-ha allows for a richer study of diversity and local adaptation. And the degree of flexibility that Honganji-ha demonstrates, in practice, in its approach to ritual, allows for a variety of case studies, which are nonetheless underpinned by a common, institutional belonging to a single school of Buddhism (Jp. *ha* 派). This tension between uniformity and variation, belonging and non-belonging, adherence and divergence is explored throughout the chapters of this volume.

The authors of this volume are all ordained in Honganji-ha, and combine an academic interest in Jōdo Shinshū with long-standing personal involvement in the Honganji-ha school. This gives us a depth of knowledge of the Honganji-ha school which we could not claim for other schools. While this complicates notions of "objectivity", we contend that all research is in any case positioned – the important point is to be clear about what one's position is.[20] We share some characteristics – none of us are temple priests (*jūshoku* 住職), and all of us are university academics. However, we also differ in some respects. While Galvan-Alvarez and Matsunaga are based in Europe, and were ordained later in life, Dake is based at Ryūkoku University in Kyoto, which is affiliated to Honganji-ha, and has held various senior positions at both Ryūkoku University and at academic associations linked to Honganji-ha. Brought up in a temple family, he also received ordination at a younger age. Our positioning on the centre-periphery continuum therefore differs. But all of us are able to draw on both our personal experiences as participants and priests, as well as interviews and less formal discussions with other priests and followers. This enables us to combine insider and outsider perspectives. And for the study of ritual in particular this has some advantages, as we argue below, given the importance of the embodied, performative and participatory aspects of ritual.

Collectively, we have conducted long-term fieldwork over two decades in four continents. Galvan-Alvarez has conducted fieldwork in the United States, Argentina, and Brazil, while Matsunaga has conducted fieldwork mainly in Europe (in particular the United Kingdom) and Japan, with brief visits to California. Dake has long experience of Jōdo Shinshū in Japan both personally and as an academic working and conducting research into the history of Jōdo Shinshū, while frequently visiting Jōdo Shinshū centres in Europe and the United States. While the areas we have visited do not cover the full geographical extent of Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha, collectively we are able to combine a depth of analysis gained from the focus on one specific school of Buddhism with a geographical spread which gives this study an important comparative dimension.

Globalisation: movement and flow

We consider globalisation here not in terms of local acculturation, with a fixed centre from which the periphery diverges, but as a process where transformations in different localities are interconnected, and influenced by broader discourses of Buddhism as a world religion and Buddhist modernism. This in turn relates to broader debates on how globalisation is understood. Local specificity, and its interaction with the global, is key. It is important to emphasise at the outset that there is considerable variation of ritual practice within each of the regions where Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha has a presence, as well as among the regions. The particular case studies presented in this volume are therefore specific to their particular local contexts. We present them as examples of the process of local adaptations of the global, or "glocalisation", but they should not be seen as "typical". However, we also argue that, despite local variations, some broad patterns can be seen that unite certain regions while differentiating them from others. So, the main Honganji-ha

organisation in the United States, the Buddhist Churches of America, for example, shows certain distinctive ritual patterns in services which differentiate them from practice in Japan, Europe, or Latin America (but which are shared by Canada and Hawai'i) – although within the United States there is also variation.[21]

Early models of globalisation were often framed in terms of movements from the centre to the periphery. For example, in the field of anthropology, Hannerz (1987: 555) suggested taking the concept of creolisation from linguistics, in order to capture the ways in which cultural flows from the centre to the periphery are actively modified and transformed in local contexts, as they meet different "cultural streams". Looking more specifically at the anthropology of Japan, Befu, in his introduction to a collection of papers entitled "Globalizing Japan", contests the "ethnocentrism" of models which assume one centre of globalisation (often the "West"), but argues for the retention of a model based on centre-periphery relations, with the addition of Japan as one of a number of global centres (Befu 2001: 3–4). Taking this approach, could the case of Jōdo Shinshū be another example of globalisation with Japan as the centre in this case, and Jōdo Shinshū outside Japan as the periphery?

The problem with this approach is that it implies an essentialist view of Jōdo Shinshū in Japan as a fixed point, the source of authenticity and authority against which local variations are measured. This tends to obscure important changes and debates taking place within Japan. It also tends to assume what needs to be examined: that is, the ways in which ideas of authenticity and authority are constructed in differing local contexts with reference to processes of globalisation. We argue here that a fuller understanding of the globalisation of Jōdo Shinshū needs to consider its positioning within the broader frame of shifting discourses concerning Buddhism, both within Japan and globally from the Meiji era onwards. Within this broader frame, it does not seem helpful to regard Japan as a fixed central point. A more persuasive image might be that of Appadurai's "scapes" (Appadurai 1990), where global flows are imagined using the analogy of landscape, with no fixed centre. A globalising Jōdo Shinshū could then be situated within the emergent ideoscape of post-nineteenth-century Buddhism or, to use Tweed's term, sacroscape (Tweed 2006: 61).[22] This enables us to consider transformations within the various local Jōdo Shinshū contexts worldwide (including Japan) as responding to a range of factors: including both a common set of global concerns and also the influences of particular local and historical settings. It also opens up the possibility of considering flows of mutual influences moving in more than one direction.

Tweed has further developed the idea of flows in the context of religions, arguing that a theory of religion must address three themes: movement, relation, and position. With reference to "relation", Tweed considers relations between religions and factors such as politics, or economic context, as well as pathways between places and inter-generational factors. Tweed also argues that this relates to two spatial practices: dwelling and crossing, and that "religions involve finding one's place" (2006: 74). In the context of diasporic communities, this may involve the creation of a new "third space", to use Homi Bhabha's term, a process of hybridity in which new forms emerge (Rutherford 1990: 211, Bhabha 2012). The metaphor

of crossing refers to "moving across space" while "aquatic metaphors (*confluences* and *flows*) signal that religions are not reified substances but complex processes" (Tweed 2006: 59).

We also need to consider questions of power, agency, and the specificities of the local. Within Jōdo Shinshū in general, and in the Honganji-ha in particular, there are organisational hierarchies which remain clearly centred on the head temple (*honzan*) located in Kyoto, Japan. And in this sense, the notion of centre and periphery may be justified. But what we are arguing for here is a more dynamic view of the relationship between these, in which the idea of a centre is contingent and contextual, and in which rather than assuming the authority of the centre, we examine the processes by which this authority is constructed.

Globalisation and ritual

We look at the global transformations of Jōdo Shinshū here through the lens of ritual. Ritual is a notoriously difficult term to define with precision (see, e.g., Lewis 1980, Crossley 2004: 32, Bell and Kreinath 2021: 383), and there is now a vast literature on the topic of ritual from a range of disciplinary perspectives. We do not attempt to summarise all of this literature here, or to offer a precise definition. Rather, we concur with Crossley (2004: 32) that although ritual is a "fuzzy" term, "we must work with its fuzziness". As argued by Lewis (1980), although the boundaries of the term may be contested, there are nevertheless a range of events and actions which are readily recognised as "ritual" or "ritualised". These include, in the religious sphere, liturgy, religious ceremonies, and a wide range of formalised actions, or prescribed ways of using the body, as well as spatial and temporal formations that set certain spaces and times apart from the everyday secular realm. Some common characteristics of these events/actions are formalisation, the existence (or creation) of rules that structure them and prescribe how rituals should be performed, when, where, and by whom, as well as what Lewis (1980: 8) terms an "alerting quality" that distinguishes the ritual from the everyday.

Another characteristic that has often been attributed to ritual is fixity, or in Rappaport's words "invariance" (Rappaport 1999: 36–37).[23] As has been pointed out elsewhere (see, e.g., Bell and Kreinath 2021: 383), rituals are often represented as following long-established patterns, and this may be an important way of claiming authenticity, or authority. However, there is now a growing body of work documenting and analysing the ways in which rituals may transform in response to social change. Throughout this volume, we explore innovation in ritual, both within Japan and overseas. We argue that creativity and innovation is a pervasive feature of ritual practice, and is especially visible at times of rapid change, or when a religion seeks to establish itself in a new context. It is therefore a particularly useful perspective from which to examine the process of globalisation.

We align ourselves here with recent anthropological studies which have focused on the creative and innovative aspects of ritual. A special issue of the *Journal of Ritual Studies* was devoted to this topic in 2014 (Strathern and Stewart 2014), while 2024 saw the publication of an entire volume focusing on creativity in ritual

(Brissman et al. 2024). This has sometimes been framed as a consequence of studying ritual in a period of change. Magliocco, in her introduction to the special issue of the *Journal of Ritual Studies*, writes of "an explosion of ritual creativity" over the past 30 years in Western nations (Magliocco 2014: 1), a phenomenon that she links with secularisation and the commercialisation of ritual events. In a similar vein, Strathern and Stewart link creativity in ritual to individualisation as well as social change, with reference to "individually created rituals" (Strathern and Stewart 2014: 93). They also refer to examples from their fieldwork in Taiwan where ritual change and the development of hybrid forms of ritual can be observed in response to social dislocation and the transplantation of religions to new social contexts. In the Japanese context, there is now an extensive literature on ritual innovation relating to funerary rites (see, e.g., Suzuki 1998, 2013, Rowe 2000, 2011, Kawano 2010, Boret 2014) much of which also links such innovation with individualisation and social fragmentation.

However, as Danely argues, ritual, even when it displays creative or innovative aspects, is also characterised by repetition and the evocation of the past, and "in the minds of those who perform these practices, this temporal inter-contextuality informs their intuitive judgements regarding the personal authenticity and cultural identity that ritual generates" (Danely 2012: 23). A link can also be made here with Hobsbawm and Ranger's work on the "invention of tradition", and the ways in which ritual innovation may be situated (and legitimated) with reference to past practice (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 1). As we explore in the following sections, questions of authority and authenticity, and the ways in which these are constructed and contested, are important in the development of new forms of ritual in Jōdo Shinshū. And, in the globalised context, ritual forms also carry messages of identity – whether based on locality or broader religious affiliation. In this sense, we would argue that individual initiatives in ritual innovation notwithstanding, the aspect of ritual that connects the participant to a wider community remains key. And we would also underline, as noted earlier, that while there is a pervasive tendency in the literature to consider ritual change implicitly as a recent phenomenon linked to modernity, the evidence that we have suggests that ritual innovation is as old as Jōdo Shinshū – as is the tendency to present ritual as in some sense rooted in the past.

In this volume, we focus on the ways in which ritual has been adapted and transformed, both within Japan and in Jōdo Shinshū outside Japan from the late nineteenth century onwards. As we argue in the following sections, these transformations have been shaped by global currents of Buddhist modernism on the one hand, and locally specific factors on the other. The study of ritual has been marginalised to a great extent in discussions of Buddhist modernism, partly owing to the influence of a Protestant Christian perspective, which has tended to show what Bell and Kreinath (2021: 384) describe as an "aversion to ritual". We argue that this is a significant gap in existing scholarship: ritual practice in Jōdo Shinshū has undergone substantial change, in particular since the late nineteenth century, although, as explored in Chapter 2, ritual change and innovation can be traced back to the beginnings of Honganji. And a study of ritual has much to tell us about the ways in which the globalisation of Jōdo Shinshū has been articulated.

Approaching globalisation through ritual and the body

At the same time as emphasising the importance of movement, Tweed (2006: 98–99) draws our attention to religion as practice, with the body as starting point. In this book, we build on this insight by examining ritual in Jōdo Shinshū from the perspective of embodiment and performance. Bell argues for considering ritual as a type of action, in which the movement of bodies through space and time is key. She further suggests that we tend to mis-recognise the relationship between the body and the environment in ritual contexts – so that we perceive the ritual environment as requiring certain bodily responses while in fact "this environment is actually created and organized precisely by means of how people move around it" (Bell 1997: 82). We argue that looking at ritual through the twin perspectives of embodied practice and performance reveals the ways in which globalisation is enacted in specific local contexts, and that this enactment may in turn generate further debates and transformations. We also seek to restore the element of lived experience to these debates, building on our own experiences, for instance in the ordination training, as well as numerous interviews and informal discussions with others, both ordained and lay. For example, what does it feel like for a trainee priest to acquire a "ritual body"?[24] In what ways do the movements of bodies through space assert or challenge notions of ritual authority? Although these questions relate to broader issues of institutional organisation and doctrine, by approaching them through lived, embodied experience, we give a sense of the processes through which local ritual environments are created.

We also acknowledge our debt here to Buddhist imaginations of the body and ritual. In particular, the triad of body-speech-mind (*shinkui* 身口意 in Japanese) provides a crucial paradigm of embodiment that is pervasive in Mahayana forms of Buddhism and that can be said to articulate the ritual life of Jōdo Shinshū. Each ritual analysed in this study contains an embodied, kinesthetic dimension, a verbal component (even if it is a silent focus on the breath) and a certain sensibility or mental aspect. The particular ritual forms defined as orthopraxis by the Honganji-ha school contain detailed prescriptions for bodily performances, heavily emphasise the musical and verbal aspects of chanting, singing and reciting and are meant to be performed in an expressive spirit of gratitude. And, consequently, when other alternative forms of ritual practice emerge in dialogue or contestation to that orthopraxis, they engage with all three aspects, whether it is to mimic, subvert, or reimagine each or all of them.

By combining these two frameworks for understanding embodiment, from academia and from Buddhist theory, and, by stepping in and out of our roles as clergy and researchers, we aim to give a view of the complex texture of ritual life in global Jōdo Shinshū combining perspectives from the inside and the outside. Whereas an entirely etic perspective risks doing violence to the tradition's own modes of thought, a purely emic view risks remaining in a self-referential bubble lacking critical distance and analytical sharpness. Therefore, we have tried to balance these two perspectives in analysing the case studies brought into focus.

Methodology

This book combines an analysis of written primary and secondary sources and ethnographic material gathered over more than 20 years. For written primary sources, we have drawn on material produced by Honganji-ha, including websites, promotional material, commemorative books published by the Buddhist Churches of America and by the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i, and instructional material on how to conduct and participate in services, ranging from manuals designed primarily for priests, to both historical and contemporary service books and musical notations for services. For ethnographic material, we have used a combination of participant observation, interviews – both formal, and more casual conversations, autoethnography[25] and netnography.[26] This has included numerous visits to Jōdo Shinshū temples, including many where we have participated in our roles as priests, or assisted in other capacities, as discussed below. In terms of participant observation, it is worth noting that both Matsunaga and Galvan-Alvarez became ordained during their extended periods of fieldwork. Therefore, they both conducted participant observation as lay and ordained members, contributing different angles to the research, which are reflected upon in the relevant case studies. Hence, this participant observation has been written down in an autoethnographic key in some cases. Concerning the sections of the book that focus on virtual ritual during the Covid-19 pandemic, these echo the approaches of recent netnographic and autoethnographic work on Buddhist online communities, such as Gleig and Artinger (2021).

We have not attempted to examine all the rituals that exist within Jōdo Shinshū worldwide – there are far too many for this to be feasible – nor do we claim that all those we describe here are in some sense "representative" or "typical". Rather, we have looked at a selection of rituals, and ritualised action – including some that are unusual and/or controversial – that cast light on the themes of globalisation, innovation, and identity which run through this volume, as described in the chapter outline below.[27]

We have been mindful of the importance of consulting those we have spoken to in the course of gathering material for this book, and seeking their consent to include any material that concerns them. We have consulted all those named in this book, and shown them drafts of the sections of the book where they are referred to, to check for factual accuracy and also to get their feedback on the interpretations offered. We have only included names with the permission of those named, and where it would be difficult to effectively anonymise the material. As will become evident though, there are disagreements within Jōdo Shinshū in a number of areas concerning ritual, what is "correct" and "incorrect", and how much adaptation is acceptable. The interpretations offered, and any errors that remain, are our responsibility alone.

Outline of book chapters

We begin with an examination of the history of Jōdo Shinshū both within Japan and as it has expanded overseas. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the history of Jōdo Shinshū in Japan, focusing on ritual transformations, beginning with the establishment of Honganji by Shinran's great-grandson Kakunyo 覚如 (1271–1351),

and then moving on to an outline of the ritual innovations introduced by Rennyo 蓮如 (1415–1499), the eighth abbot or *shūshu* 宗主 (later known as *monshu* 門主) of Honganji, and a brief discussion of an important doctrinal debate, known as the *sangōwakuran* 三業惑乱, which took place in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, but has had implications for the understanding of practice in Jōdo Shinshū which continue to reverberate today. The chapter concludes with an overview of the transformations in Buddhism in Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Key developments here are the re-imagining of Buddhism as a world religion, in the context of the spread of Buddhism to Europe and North America, and the advent of Buddhist modernism (McMahan 2008). At the same time, the religious landscape within Japan experienced a period of upheaval with the opening of the country at the beginning of the Meiji period (1868–1912). During this period, Japan witnessed the establishment of State Shinto, accompanied by the persecution of Buddhism in the early part of Meiji. It is also at this time that we see the emergence of a "new Buddhism" (*shin bukkyō* 新仏教) in Japan, the repositioning of the various Buddhist traditions in relation to moves to transcend sectarian divides within Buddhism (*tsūbukkyō* 通仏教) (LoBreglio 2005) and, more broadly, the emerging discourse of Buddhism as a world religion (Masuzawa 2005). A particularly important milestone here was the Chicago World Parliament of Religions in 1893 (Ketelaar 1990, Snodgrass 2003).

We examine the impact of these changes on Jōdo Shinshū, and the two largest schools of Jōdo Shinshū (Honganji-ha and Ōtani-ha). Both schools dispatched scholar-priests to study abroad and participated in exchanges with other Asian Buddhists and with early Western popularisers of Buddhism such as Colonel Olcott (Prothero 1996, Yoshinaga 2009). We also consider ritual transformations, and the introduction of new ritual forms in the Honganji-ha school in Japan, in response to these broader developments. An important point here, as noted above, is that the globalisation of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism is a process of transformation in which Japan is not a fixed point from which other local forms diverge. Rather, Jōdo Shinshū in Japan also experienced significant change in this period in response to broader global transformations, and this in turn fed into the emergent Jōdo Shinshū Buddhist diaspora, as explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 outlines the expansion of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism outside Japan, focusing on the Americas (including Hawai'i) and Europe. We look at the ways in which Jōdo Shinshū ritual adapted in response to local factors in these settings and some of the important contrasts between them. In North America and Hawai'i, Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism was closely associated with the Japanese diaspora, and developed in a context of discrimination and marginalisation of the ethnic Japanese community that stretched from the first period of migration in the late nineteenth century up to the end of World War II (Ama 2011, Moriya 2019). In Latin America too, Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism has been closely linked to the ethnic Japanese community (Shoji et al. 2015). In Europe, on the other hand, Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism was introduced in the post-war period, through the Honganji-ha school, and its membership is almost entirely composed of converts who are not ethnically Japanese (Matsunaga 2019). We consider the implications of these differences for the

development of local practice, as well as the impact of globalised discourses of Buddhism.

Chapter 4 deals with issues of ritual, authority, and the body in Jōdo Shinshū. In this chapter, we develop our approach to the analysis of ritual in further detail: exploring Jōdo Shinshū Buddhist ritual from the perspective of embodiment, practice, and performance. We draw on both general theorists writing on ritual and on embodiment, for example, Bell (1992, 1997); Bourdieu (1977); Foucault (1977); Merleau-Ponty (2002 [1945]); Wacquant (1995, 2004); and on theorists writing specifically on embodiment in Japan, including Yuasa (1987); Ichikawa (1975, 1993); Cox (2003); Kondo (1990); and Kato (2004). We then consider the ways in which the disciplined ritual body is created in the context of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism. We also introduce the topic of how this is intertwined with the creation of ritual space (developed further in Chapter 5) and how all this relates to the construction of authority. This discussion is grounded in ethnography based on the authors' experiences as priests and participants in a range of Jōdo Shinshū rituals, and includes an analysis of the 11 day ordination training programme undertaken by all priests affiliated with Honganji-ha. Chapter 5 centres on ritual space, and considers the ways in which ritual space is structured through architecture, and the interior disposition of sacred spaces. Following Lefebvre (1991), we argue that space both reflects and constitutes social relationships of authority and power. In the context of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism, this is also intertwined with discourses of globalisation and localisation. In examining the importance of the ways in which bodies move through space during rituals, both constituting, and sometimes challenging divisions of ritual space, we also return to the theme of embodiment introduced in Chapter 2.

Chapter 6 addresses the complex and multi-layered role of mindfulness in Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism, in relation to contemporary imaginations and debates about meditation, both within and outside the tradition. By exploring Jōdo Shinshū notions of mindfulness and how they have been historically interpreted, we address the – to many outsiders – surprising lack of silent meditative practices in the tradition. In turn, this creates a conundrum for temples and clergy trying to share Jōdo Shinshū in contexts where Buddhism is popularly understood to be synonymous with silent meditation. Various responses to this situation are analysed through ethnographic data from a range of locations all over the world, showing a rich tapestry of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhist attitudes to silent meditation.

Although the central practice of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism is "mindfulness of the Buddha" or *nenbutsu*, understood as the saying or recitation of the Buddha's name, this recitation is one of the least ritualised aspects of the tradition, because an orthodox interpretation of the practice construes it as a spontaneous expression of gratitude. As such, it is sometimes discussed as a non-practice, which is cut off from its historical roots as a form of mindfulness or meditation. These arguments are explored in Chapter 7, which also presents some examples of contemporary attempts at engaging in *nenbutsu* recitation in a more meditative and practice-focused fashion. This emphasis on practice requires new modes of ritualisation and a different doctrinal interpretation. The controversies generated by this alternative

approach to Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism's central act and the appeal of the new ritual forms created are discussed through a variety of applied examples from across the world and in reference to a long history of doctrinal debates and controversies within the tradition.

Chapter 8 examines innovation in terms of ritual music in Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism in four geographical settings from the beginning of the twentieth century: Japan, the continental United States and Hawai'i, and Europe. By doing so, this chapter considers what these transformations tell us about broader issues of globalisation and localisation, and notions of identity and authenticity. We include a consideration of new Western musical forms developed in Japanese Jōdo Shinshū from the late nineteenth century, in parallel with, but distinct from, the development of new forms of musical services in Jōdo Shinshū Buddhist temples in Hawai'i and the continental United States from the early twentieth century. We also explore the contrasting case of Europe, which has been relatively conservative in terms of musical forms used, preferring to use chanting forms derived from the head temple in Japan.

Bringing our study up to the recent past, Chapter 9 addresses the many ritual adaptations, innovations, and re-imaginations brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. As different temples and smaller Jōdo Shinshū communities started gathering online, many aspects of their ritual life had to be recast to a virtual medium. The new context has brought significant reflections about doing ritual through a screen, its validity and convenience and the importance of embodied aspects of Jōdo Shinshū ritual practices. By simultaneously using elements of autoethnography and netnography, the chapter analyses the dynamics of connection/disconnection and new transnational and transcontinental networks brought about by the new medium. As Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism moves further into the twenty-first century, virtual gatherings and rituals seem to be surviving the pandemic, creating new forms of community, performance, and interaction. Finally, the conclusion draws together the literature and ethnographic materials discussed throughout the volume to deconstruct the image of Jōdo Shinshū as a monolithic and monoethnic entity. Instead, we highlight the dynamic, hybrid, and diverse aspects of its recent, and deeply transnational, history, and re-engage with questions of authenticity and identity, and the ways in which these are negotiated through embodied ritual practice in a globalising context.

A note on terminology and romanisation

The study of Jōdo Shinshū ritual throws up a large number of technical terms used both in Japan and overseas, many of which cannot be readily translated by a single word in English without further explanation. While we have tried to minimise these, there are a number of cases where they are unavoidable. We have given explanations the first time that they occur. There are also some terms which are contested: for example, we generally use the term "priest" to refer to ordained members, in line with broader academic usage when discussing Japanese Buddhism (the terms "monk" and "nun" are not appropriate in the case of Jōdo Shinshū, which does not have a conventional monastic tradition). We recognise, however, that some

object to this term, and prefer the term "minister".[28] In the United States, the term "minister" is standard, and we have retained it in this context, as well as in some European contexts where individuals prefer this term. We have thus tried to reflect actual usage in Jōdo Shinshū and individual preferences – so in places both terms are used interchangeably – no difference in meaning is implied here. For different reasons, *shinjin* is another problematic term: once generally translated into English as "faith", it is now often rendered as "entrusting heart" in reaction to what is seen as the Christian connotations of the word "faith", or simply retained as *shinjin*.[29] The question of how to translate *shinjin* has been the subject of much debate among Jōdo Shinshū followers, but as this debate is not directly relevant to the themes of this book, we have not engaged with it here, and instead have opted to use the word *shinjin*. We have also retained the Japanese word *ha* to denote divisions within Jōdo Shinshu, as in e.g. Honganji-ha or Ōtani-ha. Terms for religious divisions can be contentious, and the term "sect", sometimes used to translate *ha*, is particularly problematic in our view. School is a better option, and we have used this in some places, but we have also used the terms Honganji-ha and Ōtani-ha for the sake of brevity. Names are another problem: for the names of past heads, or abbots, of Honganji (formerly *shūshu*, currently *monshu*) of Jōdo Shinshū we have opted for their dharma names rather than their lay names for the sake of clarity (they all share the same family name of Ōtani, and their dharma names are the names they are generally known by). However, in line with academic usage, we have not included the honorific *shōnin* (上人), except where this is used in cited material.[30] We have also referred to them as *shūshu/monshu* rather than abbot, because of the Christian connotations of the word abbot, and also because it has monastic connotations which are not appropriate for Jōdo Shinshū,. Finally, for the romanisation of Japanese words we have used the modified Hepburn system. The only exception is for the names of certain contemporary Honganji-ha temples – the official spelling used by Honganji-ha itself for its own temples (as distinct from Ōtani-ha) is Hongwanji, and this is reflected in the names of some temples such as Nishi Hongwanji in Kyoto, or Tsukiji Hongwanji in Tokyo. We have retained this spelling when referring to particular contemporary temples, where this is the spelling of their legal name in English. However, we have retained the standard Hepburn romanisation to refer to Honganji-ha as a school, and for Honganji historically, in line with general practice in English language academic writing.

Finally, a note on Japanese names. Here, we have followed local usage. For Japanese nationals the family name precedes the first or given name. But for e.g. Americans or Europeans of Japanese descent, names follow the standard English language format of given name followed by surname.

Notes

1 Or to use the romanisation preferred on the temple's website, Show-on G.
2 *Gagaku* has its origins in music brought to Japan from China around the eighth century, and later developed into the music of the Heian court, including the temples and shrines linked to the court, although the term *gagaku* was rarely used to describe it until the nineteenth century. For more on *gagaku*, see Nelson (2008).

3 The date on which Śākyamuni's birth is marked is the eighth day of the fourth lunar month in many Buddhist countries, but in Japan the date of April 8th was allocated to this festival when the Gregorian calendar was adopted in the mid-nineteenth century. However, as with other calendrical festivals, there is some flexibility within Jōdo Shinshū as to exactly when individual temples may choose to celebrate this.

4 Buddhism in Japan is closely associated with death, and the performance of funerary rites, and memorial rites for the ancestors. See Reader (1991: 84–96).

5 As noted in Chapter 2, although the date on which Shinran's death is officially marked changed to January 16th in Honganji-ha in the Meiji period with the adoption of the Gregorian calendar, many local temples hold *hōonkō* in the autumn, in order to allow people to travel to the head temple in Kyoto for January 16th.

6 Some examples were: "I am special, you are special, every person is unique and special"; "You don't have to think positively, hard times are hard, when you're sad you're sad, that's fine"; and "Still time continues to flow".

7 Similar trends can be observed in other Buddhist communities; however, in this volume, we focus on the Jōdo Shinshū case.

8 See Chapter 2.

9 Kim (2011: 57) cites a contemporary source as suggesting a further influence here from local German celebrations of Easter, which, in that year, happened to fall on a date close to that adopted for the Buddha's birthday following the introduction of the Gregorian calendar (April 8th).

10 The full name of the event in 1916 listed in the Shūkyōkai was *Shakuson gōtan'e hana matsuri* 釈尊降誕会花祭 – in the previous year, the same event was listed simply as *Shakuson gōtan'e* (Shinbukkyō 1915).

11 In the mid-1920s one of the largest events to celebrate the birth of the Buddha was renamed "the Lumbini festival" and incorporated lectures, a theatrical performance of the life of Śākyamuni, and a children's lantern parade, while hymns were composed in English for the occasion, with the idea that they should be sung by "the educated in colonial Asia" (and, it was hoped by the organisers, throughout the world) (Snodgrass 2009: 134–5). The colonial dimension of *hana matsuri* is explored in some detail in the context of colonial Korea by Kim (2011).

12 For a detailed discussion of the reasons that Jōdo Shinshū is little known outside Japan and the Japanese diaspora, see Amstutz 1997.

13 For more details on the teachings of Jōdo Shinshū, see Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha (2002: 63–93).

14 Known in Japanese as Ryūju 龍樹. These are the dates commonly used in the Honganji-ha tradition, however there is some debate about Nagarjuna's precise dates and authorship of texts in the larger academic community.

15 This refers to the eighteenth of 48 vows made by Dharmakara Bodhisattva, who upon fulfilling the vows would become Amida Buddha:

> If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten directions who sincerely and joyfully entrust themselves to me, desire to be born in my land, and call my Name even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment. Excluded, however, are those who commit the five gravest offences and abuse the right Dharma.
>
> (The Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, also known as the Larger Sutra (*Daikyō* 大経) in Inagaki 1994: 243).

16 Also often pronounced in the Honganji-ha school of Jōdo Shinshū as *Namo Amida Butsu*.

17 The official romanisation of this school is Hongwanji-ha, however, we have romanised it here as Honganji-ha, in line with general English language academic usage.

18 During the Edo 江戸 era (1603–1868), Japan was largely isolated from the outside world by a series of edicts enacted at the beginning of this period. Some limited contact

continued, in particular via the artificial island of Dejima 出島, off the coast of Nagasaki in southwest Japan, but the re-opening of the country in the late nineteenth century, enabling travel to and from Japan, had a profoundly transformative effect on all aspects of Japanese society, including religion.

19 This is explored in greater detail in Chapter 4.

20 There is now an extensive literature on reflexivity in anthropology that relates to this point. A particularly clear summary of the issues is given by Jenkins (1994: 452), who writes: "we are confronted with the complexity of the social and the partial nature of knowledge … Knowledge, rather than being totalized, is constructed in the construal of specific encounters".

21 See Wilson (2012b) for more on regional variation within Jōdo Shinshū in the United States.

22 Tweed criticises Appadurai's typology of five scapes: ethnoscape, mediascape, technoscape, financescape, and ideoscape, arguing that these are not sufficient to characterise religion, as religion is not reducible to any single one of these categories: he suggests the term "sacroscape" instead.

23 Rappaport (1999: 36) does emphasise that ritual is not completely fixed, and that "liturgical orders do change through time". Nevertheless, he sees relative invariance as being a key aspect of ritual. Our argument here is that in the study of globalisation, on the contrary, a focus on change and variation in ritual is essential.

24 The term "ritual body" was actually used by the teachers in the pre-ordination training course – see Chapter 4.

25 For a recent discussion of autoethnography as a research method, see Adams et al. (2015).

26 For more on netnography, and what constitutes a fieldsite, see Chambers (2020), Bonilla and Rosa (2015), and Dong (2017).

27 We do not include a consideration of funerary ritual here, although we do consider some memorial rituals. Funerary ritual in Japanese Buddhism is a huge topic in itself, which has already been extensively discussed in numerous recent publications – see, e.g., Rowe (2011), Suzuki (2013), and Tsuji (2018). Space precludes an adequate consideration of this topic in this volume.

28 The argument made is that the term "priest" implies an intermediary with the Divine, and that this is not the role of a Jōdo Shinshū cleric, hence the term "minister" is more appropriate. We recognise this argument, but have retained the word priest as it is the most widespread academic usage.

29 Tanaka (1997: 121) also highlights the important element of awareness within the term *shinjin*.

30 Used in Japanese for eminent priests.

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2 Jōdo Shinshū responses to modernity in Japan

Ritual and its transformations

Honganji: beginnings

The Honganji has its origins in the Ōtanibyōdō 大谷廟堂, or Ōtani Mausoleum, built by the family of Shinran's youngest daughter, Kakushinni 覚信尼 (1224–1283), with the help of Shinran's disciples in the Kantō region. Later, Kakushinni donated the land to the disciples who had built the Ōtani Mausoleum in exchange for a promise that her descendants would be *rusushiki* 留守職 (keepers), or administrators, of the Ōtani Mausoleum for generations to come. In 1321, nearly 50 years after Shinran's death, Kakunyo 覚如 (1271–1351), Shinran's great-grandson, received permission from the Tendai school to rename the Ōtani Mausoleum as a temple, called Honganji 本願寺.[1] However, disciples in the Kantō region continued to regard it primarily as a mausoleum.[2]

Kakunyo's decision to promote Ōtani mausoleum into a temple can be attributed to many factors. One of these was his intention to create a school centred on the new Honganji temple, which would carry on what he understood to be the authentic teachings of Shinran. At that time, there were other groups of followers of Shinran in various parts of Japan, and some of these groups taught what Kakunyo saw as heretical versions of Shinran's teachings. He criticised these understandings in some written works, such as the *Gaijashō* 改邪鈔, as well as visiting different areas of Japan to convey his understanding of Shinran's teachings.

An essential aspect of this was Kakunyo's claim of a direct connection with the teachings of Shinran (in addition to his connection to Shinran by descent), through a lineage of transmission traced from Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212), Shinran, and Shinran's grandson Nyoshin 如信 (1235–1300),[3] who had learned the teachings directly from Shinran. Nyoshin was Kakunyo's teacher and was retrospectively regarded by Kakunyo as the second head of Honganji, with Shinran as the first and Kakunyo himself as the third.[4] This lineage of transmission, referred to in Japanese as *sandaidenji no kechimyaku* 三代伝持の血脈, was set out in Kakunyo's *Kudenshō* 口伝鈔, written in 1331. This symbolically made a claim to his legitimacy as heir to Shinran's teachings and to the status of head priest of Honganj. When the Ōtani Mausoleum became the Honganji temple, Kakunyo's intentions became apparent, and some groups of Shinran's followers in the Kantō and Tōkai regions left

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Honganji and formed independent local denominations. Contrary to Kakunyo's intentions, Honganji's influence within Jōdo Shinshū as a whole declined, only to revive under Rennyo, the eighth head of Honganji, as discussed in the following sections.

A critical ritual expression of Kakunyo's claims to authority, through both descent and lineage of transmission, was establishing a memorial service to Shinran. On the 33rd anniversary of Shinran's death in 1294, Kakunyo wrote the *Hōonkōshiki* 報恩講私記 (Private Notes on *Hōonkō*) or *Shikimon* 式文 (Notes on Ritual) to be read as part of a new ritual to commemorate Shinran's death. Here, he explained how Shinran transmitted the Jōdo Shinshū doctrine from Hōnen and how Shinshū followers are therefore in his debt. The notes say that those who have heard Shinran's teachings should express their gratitude at his mausoleum and strive to understand his teachings profoundly. An essential aspect of this memorial service, which later became known as *hōonkō* 報恩講,[5] therefore, is that it both expresses gratitude to the founder and confirms the line of transmission of Shinshū teachings. This also had the effect of reinforcing the authority of Kakunyo's interpretation of the teachings. Kakunyo intended to position the *hōonkō* as the most important ritual of the tradition of Honganji, and in this, he succeeded.[6] The *hōonkō* continues to be the primary annual service celebrated in Honganji today although its content has been subject to change. The narrative written by Kakunyo of Shinran's life, the *Godenshō* 御伝鈔, is also still recited as part of the *hōonkō* services.

As for other rituals within Jōdo Shinshū in Kakunyo's time, historical evidence is limited. In one fourteenth-century version of the *Shinran Shōnin Goe-den* 親鸞聖人御絵伝, or the Illustrated Biography of Shinran Shōnin kept at Sainenji temple 西念寺 in Inada 稲田, Ibaraki prefecture, the priests and lay people are depicted side by side in the corridor around the hexagonal hall, participating in the rituals.[7] This form of ritual at Ōtani Mausoleum, in which not only monks but also lay people participate side by side, is a form rarely seen in traditional Buddhist temples of the time. In addition, when we look at scenes depicting gatherings, we can see that the principal image is enshrined in an ordinary dwelling, suggesting that early followers did not build special halls to hold gatherings or rituals. The space where the Buddha's image is enshrined and the rituals are performed and the space where the believers listen to the teachings is not separated. Later, this style was inherited by the *dōjō* 道場 type of meeting place for Jōdo Shinshū followers. It emerged in various regions and developed into the present-day main hall of Jōdo Shinshū temples, with an inner altar area or *naijin*内陣 where the principal objects of worship are enshrined and only ordained priests are allowed to enter, and an outer seating area, or *gejin*外陣, where lay followers can participate in rituals and listen to the teachings. Although there is now a separation between the two, the way in which this is marked differs from other schools of Buddhism, in particular in the relatively small differential in height between the two areas in Jōdo Shinshū temples in Japan. This creates original ritual spaces expressing Jōdo Shinshū perspectives on lay-cleric relationships, as analysed further in Chapter 5.

Another relevant source is the *Shūi Kotoku-den* 拾遺古徳伝, a biographical picture scroll of Hōnen composed by Kakunyo. It contains a paragraph in which

Shinran describes performing the monthly memorial service for Hōnen: "For four days and four nights each month, we perform the *Ōjōraisan* 往生礼讃 and *nenbutsu*" (*Shūi Kotoku-den* Vol.9 Sec.7 第9巻第7節, translation by author, cited in *Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha* 2016:221). According to this source, Shinran performed the rituals of the *Ōjōraisan*[8] and *fudan nenbutsu* 不断念仏, or the practice of uninterrupted *nenbutsu* recitation at Hōnen's monthly memorial service. The practice of *fudan nenbutsu* would have been familiar to Shinran, who practised as a Tendai monk at the Jōgyō-dō 常行堂, the circumambulation hall on Mount Hiei. It seems that the recitation of the *Ōjōraisan* and the *nenbutsu* was a widely practised ritual form among Hōnen's disciples during Shinran's lifetime. In addition, a later record, *Honganji Sahō no Shidai*本願寺作法之次第, written by Rennyo's tenth son Jitsugo 実悟 (1492–1583), states, "it can be assumed that the recitation of the *Ōjōraisan* and *fudan nenbutsu*, the practice of uninterrupted *nenbutsu* recitation had been practised in the Ōtani mausoleum from its construction until the time of Zonnyo Shonin [存如 (1396–1456)]". However, there is no further detailed information about *fudan nenbutsu* in the text.[9] These records suggest that there was not any special ritual style or format at Honganji until the time of Rennyo except for the *hōonkō* ritual. Rather, it adopted existing Pure Land Buddhist rituals, which in turn were largely based on Tendai ritual.

Kakunyo is also credited with the development of Jōdo Shinshū doctrine in relation to the recitation of the *nenbutsu* and *shinjin* (faith, or the entrusting heart), later crystallised in the formula "*shinjin shōin*, *shōmyō hōon*" 信心正因,称名報恩 (Kakehashi 1977: 1). This formula can be roughly translated as "*shinjin* is the true cause [for birth in the Pure Land], saying of the name is responding to the Buddha's benevolence [for saving the practitioner]", and sums up the doctrinal stance of the Honganji-ha today. This formulation does not actually appear in Kakunyo's writings. However, Dobbins notes that in Kakunyo's writings we can find the assertion that faith is the primary cause of birth in the Pure Land (*ōjō jōdonoshōin* 往生浄土の正因) whereas religious acts or practices are the expression of one's gratitude to the Buddha (*button hōsha* 仏恩報謝) (Dobbins 2002 [1989]: 95). It is fair to say that a distinct sense of separation, even opposition, between *shinjin* and *nenbutsu* emerges in some of Kakunyo's writings, but it would not be accurate to say that Kakunyo de-emphasises the recitation of the *nenbutsu*. Certain forms of intensive and extensive recitation were perceived as normative in Kakunyo's time and he seems to have encouraged them at given occasions, such as the seven days of the *hōonkō* memorial service, as discussed above.[10] However, he is concerned with the timing of intensive and extensive *nenbutsu* recitations, proscribing for instance the Spring and Autumn equinoxes as "auspicious" times for such a practice.

From Rennyo, the "second founder" of Honganji, to the end of the Warring States period (*Sengoku jidai* 戦国時代): Ritual innovations; political conflicts

The eighth head of Honganji. Rennyo, often referred to as "the second founder" of Jōdo Shinshū, is notable for his missionary activities and for establishing the

organisational, doctrinal, and ritual foundations of the school. His letters to groups of followers, containing easy-to-understand explanations of the doctrines of Jōdo Shinshū written in *kana* (the Japanese phonetic syllabary), are still read in Jōdo Shinshū today. The *Gobunshō* 御文章, as they are now known, are revered as a canonical text, and the ritualised reading of a selected *gobunshō* has become a standard part of the Jōdo Shinshū liturgy in Japan.

Rennyo also reorganised many of the significant Jōdo Shinshū rituals. The *hōonkō* memorial ceremony for Shinran, which had been held monthly, became an annual ritual cycle held over seven days before the anniversary of Shinran's death. In addition, as one of the events of the *hōonkō*, Rennyo himself started a new event called *Gaigehihan* (改悔批判) (self-criticism and reflection) to confirm the faith of the priests and lay followers who participated in the service (*Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha Sōgō Kenkyūjo* 2014: 159–60). This is a continuation of the tradition and spirit of Kakunyo's "Private Notes on *Hōonkō*", referred to above. The purpose of this *hōonkō* service was not "repentance of misdeeds or errors" but "praise of Amida's virtues" and "gratitude for Amida's benevolence", and the meaning of the ritual was to provide an opportunity for the participants to confirm their own faith (*Jōdo Shinshū seiten zensho* V 2016: 157–8). Rennyo also devised various ways to bring more people to the *hōonkō* and other ceremonies, for example, by arranging for food and sake for those participating in these events, as well as sweets and tea – although he also sometimes scolded people for coming simply for the food and sake. On occasion, he also organised Noh 能 performances at the same time as Dharma talks, as recorded in *Goichidai Kikigaki* 御一代聞書 (*Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha Sōgō Kenkyūjo* 2014 : 532 [20], 587 [212]). This combination of festivities including food, drink, and entertainment with a ritual event foreshadows a pattern commonly seen today in major Jōdo Shinshū events.[11] It also echoes a wider pattern in Japan of integrating entertainment, or play (遊び *asobi*), and other aspects of ritual.[12]

The daily liturgy was also transformed by Rennyo, with the aim of making both the ritual gestures and the teachings more accessible (Ducor 1994: 42–44). In 1473, he replaced the daily chanting of the *Ōjōraisan* with the *Shōshinnenbutsuge* 正信念仏偈, commonly abbreviated to the *Shōshinge* 正信偈, and *Wasan* 和讃 (a collection of short Japanese poems of praise composed by Shinran). The *Shōshinge* is taken from Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō* 教行信証, and contains Shinran's concise exposition of the essence of Jōdo Shinshū teachings. The ritual form of chanting the Shōshinge, followed by six verses of the Wasan, as prescribed by Rennyo, spread among Jōdo Shinshū followers and became firmly established. This is still one of the primary forms of daily ritual performed by ordinary Japanese followers.

Within a short period, Honganji grew to become a significant force. Rennyo returned to Kyoto and built the Honganji temple in Yamashina, near Kyoto in 1483, with a double hall layout, involving the Founder's and Amida halls aligned north and south. Under Rennyo, Honganji grew rapidly, and groups

called "*kō*" 講,[13] linked by the teaching of Jōdo Shinshū were formed, mostly in farming villages. The *kō* strengthened the solidarity among Honganji followers but also became a forum for political as well as religious discussion and action. Some *kō* also subsequently became the base for the frequent revolts by Honganji followers known as *ikkō ikki*一向一揆 (see Kinryu 2004, Tsang 2007).

In 1570, the feudal lord Oda Nobunaga 織田信長 (1534–1582), fearing the expansion of Honganji's power, announced to Honganji's 11th head priest, Kennyo 顕如 (1543–1592), that he would attack Ishiyama Honganji. This led to the outbreak of the Ishiyama War, between Honganji and Nobunaga. The war dragged on for 10 years, and the peace agreement that was concluded sparked further conflict within Honganji itself, which divided into two factions. By the early seventeenth century, Honganji had split into two organisations, with temples based in neighbouring locations in Kyoto. This was the basis for the current division between Honganji-ha (Nishi Honganji) and Ōtani-ha (Higashi Honganji).

Edo period

During the more than 260 years of rule by the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1867), there were no major wars, resulting in a period of social stability and peace until the late eighteenth century. Alongside the feudal status system of samurai, farmers, artisans, and merchants in an agricultural-based economy, commerce and industry developed in cities such as Edo and Osaka, and people's lives were relatively affluent, with popular culture such as entertainment and performing arts flourishing in many areas.

The Tokugawa shogunate strictly controlled Buddhist schools, but Buddhist organisations also benefited in some ways, for example, through the *danka* 檀家 system, where everyone had to be registered with a temple. Instituted as part of a larger scheme to suppress Christianity, this system created a stable membership base for temples, and a source of income. From this time, affiliation to a temple came to be on a family, rather than an individual basis, a pattern that persists to a great extent today. Temples also kept records of births, marriages, deaths, travel, and changes of residence, enabling the government to monitor the population, and giving temples an important administrative role. In 1772, a law prohibited *danka* from changing the temple to which they belonged, thus strengthening the *danka* system. All funeral rites and other rituals performed for *danka* were entrusted to specific temples, and in return for the temple performing these rites, the *danka* was obligated to support the temple. This led to many Buddhist temples and priests becoming affluent. Despite the benefits enjoyed by temples through this system, it did have long-term drawbacks in terms of the ways in which Buddhism was viewed, as the growing prosperity of temples and priests led to allegations of corruption, and that Buddhist priests were parasites, and Buddhist institutions were a burden on ordinary people.

In the early Edo period, criticisms came from national scholars such as Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583–1657) who criticised Buddhism from the standpoint of Confucian ethics, claiming that Buddhist monks were lazy, and that Buddhism was of no practical use in daily life. Buddhist schools, instead of directly rejecting these claims, responded by emphasising the significance of Confucian ethics and ancestral rituals within Buddhism. Further criticism against Buddhism arose in the nationalistic discourses that developed in the Mito school (*Mitogaku* 水戸学) in the eighteenth century onward, together with the "reverence for the emperor" doctrine (*sonnō shisō*尊皇思想). Buddhist schools responded by emphasising the importance of the Emperor in Buddhism and by attempting to show in concrete terms that Buddhism was beneficial to the state and society. These Buddhist responses to criticism from a secular perspective laid the groundwork for later responses during the modernisation of Japan after the Meiji Restoration of 1868.

In terms of the organisation of Japan's Buddhist schools, the shogunate established the main temple-branch temple system (*honzan matsuji seido* 本山末寺制度). Under this system, a main, or head temple, the *honzan* 本山, was placed at the head of a hierarchy which included a number of branch temples, or *matsuji* 末寺, and the different schools of Buddhism were clearly differentiated. This hierarchical structure persists in contemporary Japanese Buddhism, where distinctions of rank also inform aspects of ritual, for example, ritual attire, as discussed further in Chapter 4. While discouraging legal arguments and disputes among the various Buddhist schools, the shogunate also encouraged the development of scholarship by priests within each school. As a result, each Buddhist school established institutions to promote scholarship.

Within the Honganji-ha, an educational institution for clergy, later named *Gakurin* 学林, was established in the precincts of Nishi Honganji in 1639. This became a place for studying and teaching the doctrines of the Honganji-ha throughout the Edo period.[14] During the Edo period (1603–1867), doctrinal studies flourished within Jōdo Shinshū, and especially in the early Edo period, the compilation of canonical scriptures was undertaken, and rituals were further developed. The Jōdo Shinshū sacred texts used for doctrinal study at that time were printed on woodblocks owned by bookstores in the towns, and were known as *machihan* 町版 or town editions. However, the accuracy and reliability of these town editions were questionable: some were fake copies, and many of the texts contained errors or omissions. About 100 years after the founding of the Gakurin, the *nōke* 能化, or principal of the Gakurin, and other Gakurin scholars, concerned by this situation, initiated a project to publish an approved version of the Honganji-ha sacred texts (*Shōgyō* 聖教) as a commemorative project for Shinran Shōnin's 500th Memorial Service in 1761. In 1765, they completed the *Shinshū hōyō*真宗法要 in 39 volumes. This was with the aim of creating a more accurate and consistent base for the doctrinal studies that followed and, at the same time, it contributed to establishing an authoritative version of doctrine and rituals which became the norm of the Honganji-ha. On the occasion of the 500th Memorial Service a ritual format was also created, using Tendai *shōmyō* 声明 (a form of chanting, discussed in greater

detail in Chapter 8) from the Gyozan school 魚山流 as a base. These revisions set the basis of today's Honganji-ha's official ritual books. Overall, during this period, there is an apparent concern with establishing prescribed, approved forms in both ritual and doctrine, orthodoxy, and orthopraxy. Both are also connected to the establishment of a centralised institutional structure which determined which forms would gain recognition and authority.

Sangowakuran dispute

While the Honganji-ha had thus established a foundation for studying doctrines within the school, disputes often arose in the academic circles over the interpretation of doctrine. Among these, the controversy known as the *sangōwakuran* 三業惑乱, literally "the confusion regarding the three karmas", was particularly significant. This conflict spanned almost ten years (1797–1806), but the reverberations have continued to the present. The *sangōwakuran* began as a dispute between two doctrinal factions. The controversy started with a challenge to Chidō 智洞 (1736–1805), the seventh head of the Gakurin. The main point at issue was that Chidō's critics claimed that his emphasis on the *sangō*三業, that is, the three religious acts of *shinkui* 身口意, or three karmas of body, speech, and mind was contrary to Shinran's teaching of reliance on other power, or *tariki* 他力. Chidō and his supporters on the other hand argued that the enacting of religious aspiration through these three forms of action was not self-power but rather showed entrusting to Amida's vow. Both the detail of the debate and the politics of this dispute are complex, and beyond the scope of this volume,[15] but in any case, the dispute escalated, resulting in widespread unrest among Honganji-ha followers.

In 1802, the secular authorities intervened, warning Honganji to settle the dispute. However, the conflict between the two factions did not subside. The shogunate then summoned representatives of both parties to Edo, and in 1806, the magistrate for temples and shrines issued a ruling. He was guided in this by written submissions from the opposing parties in the dispute, and a written statement from the then *monshu* of Honganji, Honnyo本如 (1778–1828). The shogunate ruled against Chidō, and thereafter the position of his opponents became the orthodox position within Honganji-ha (Hirata 2013: 379–81). Broadly speaking, this was based on the theory of *ichinen kimyō* 一念帰命. This doctrine emphasises the importance of relying on Amida Buddha and Amida's vow, and views the recitation of the *nenbutsu* as an expression of gratitude. The phrase *shinjinshōin- shōmyōhōon*, referred to above, gained prominence following the *sangōwakuran*, becoming the essential tenet of Jōdo Shinshū teaching in the Honganji-ha.

The position advocated by the losing side, *sangō kimyō* 三業帰命, that is, the importance of *shinjin* being expressed through the "three karmas" (i.e., body, speech, and mind), was officially suppressed within the school following this dispute, and as a consequence some clerics switched to the Chinzei school of the Jōdoshū 浄土宗鎮西.[16] In institutional terms, it also had a considerable impact. Honganji-ha abolished the previous system of the *Gakurin* with a single head

(*nōke*), and established instead the *kangaku* 勧学 system, under which a group of clerics conferred jointly to determine the orthodoxy of doctrines. This has continued to the present day. Following the *sangōwakuran*, doctrinal questions and answers were organised thematically into the Discourses, or *rondai* 論題, which became the text for understanding the orthodox doctrines of the Honganji-ha.[17] However, there continue to be different opinions within the school regarding the relationship between *shinjin* and saying the *nenbutsu*.[18] This has implications for ritual practice, as explored further in Chapter 7.

Meiji period

Buddhist schools in the Edo period enjoyed a close relation with the feudal Tokugawa state, and were protected by the Shogunate as part of the same policy that prohibited Christianity. But after the Tokugawa shogunate came to an end, the Meiji restoration of 1868 ushered in a period of rapid change in almost all areas of Japanese society. Japan's Buddhist schools, which had been firmly embedded in the feudal system in the Edo period, suddenly lost their primary backing. As a result, their social and economic foundations were severely shaken.

The Meiji restoration explicitly aimed at "restoring" imperial power, and abolishing "former evil practices" linked with the Tokugawa regime (Klautau and Krämer 2021: 4). As part of this, the new regime sought to reconfigure the religious institutional landscape. Critiques of Buddhism as corrupt, and a religion of foreign origin, and therefore "un-Japanese", intensified. As Shinto was reimagined as one of the ideological supports of the imperial restoration, a series of edicts, starting with the *shinbutsu hanzenrei* 神仏判然令 (Shinto and Buddhism Separation Order) were issued in 1868. These aimed to separate the worship of *kami* 神 (gods or spirits) and buddhas, which were previously often closely intertwined, and reposition Shinto as the state religion, above Buddhism.

In concrete terms, this decree was intended to eliminate symbols of the amalgamation of kami cults and Buddhism (*shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合)[19] found in Shinto shrines, such as *gongen* 権現 and *myōjin* 明神, or temporary manifestations of a Buddha in the form of a *kami,*[20] as well as Buddhist sutras, Buddhist ritual implements, and other Buddhist items found in Shinto shrines. Later, orders were also issued to ban Buddhist priests from living in shrines and to ban temples from being located within shrines. Although all these orders were intended to remove Buddhist elements from shrines, they triggered a wider anti-Buddhist movement, referred to as *haibutsukishaku* 廃仏毀釈 (abolish the Buddha, smash Śākyamuni). Attacks on Buddhism included the destruction of Buddhist statues, Buddhist ritual implements, and temples. The number of temples was also reduced, with temples being abolished or amalgamated. For example, on Sado Island, the number of Buddhist temples decreased from 500 to 80 (Kashiwahara 2000: 392).

The leaders of the various Buddhist denominations, feeling a sense of crisis in the face of these developments, united in December 1868 to form the *Shoshū*

Dōtoku Kaimei 諸宗同徳会盟 (the League of United Buddhist Sects), the first pan-denominational Buddhist association of modern Japan (Tamamuro 1967: 324–5). This association aimed to counter the attacks on Buddhism by demonstrating that it was willing to undertake reforms,[21] and that Buddhism supported the state, was compatible with both Shinto and Confucianism, and could play a role in continuing to ward off Christianity (LoBreglio 2005: 42). However, government measures affecting the position of Buddhist organisations continued. In 1871, the state confiscated the land that had been granted to both Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines by the feudal regime, and a new state-run family registration system was established, thus taking away the role of the Buddhist temples in the Edo era in recording births, marriages, and deaths (Klautau and Krämer 2021: 5). And in 1873, the proscription on Christianity was lifted. With these changes, both the financial base and the privileged social status that Buddhist schools had enjoyed in the Edo era were severely undermined. Jōdo Shinshū was less affected than some other schools by the land confiscation, as it derived most of its income from its followers rather than from landholdings, and indeed both Honganji-ha and Ōtani-ha were able to provide financial support for the new Meiji regime, which may have protected them to some extent.[22]

Concurrently with these developments in Japan, the emergence of Buddhism as an object of study in Western Europe and North America in the nineteenth century contributed to the creation of "Buddhism" as an abstract, essentialised discourse in Western scholarship. This Westernised version of Buddhism was characterised by a number of features which were not representative of the range of lived Buddhism in Asia.[23] The influence of the Christian background of Western scholars of Buddhism, for example, can be seen in the emphasis on Śākyamuni Buddha as the founder of the religion, indeed Snodgrass suggests that "the very term 'Buddhism' is a consequence of Christian scholars following the biblical analogy of Christianity's relation to Christ … [and] … is at odds with the Asian focus on the *arya dharma* – the eternal teaching" (Snodgrass 2003: 5). Another feature of Victorian scholarship on Buddhism was an emphasis on Pali texts as representative of the essence of Buddhism, leading to the "Victorian creation of an ideal textual Buddhism" against which actual forms of practice in contemporary Asia could be (generally unfavourably) compared (Almond 1988: 40). In this context, Theravada Buddhism (at least, the Theravada of Pali texts) tended to be privileged, and Japanese Mahayana Buddhism (in so far as it was known about at all) tended to be marginalised, and viewed by western scholars as a later, and therefore (by the logic of authority being equated with the antiquity of textual sources) a less authentic form of Buddhism (Snodgrass 2003: 7).

This construction of Buddhism is significant because in the context of the late nineteenth century, it exerted a strong influence on the ways in which Buddhism was imagined and represented not only within Europe and America, but also more broadly, including in Japan, as Asian Buddhists (or at least a scholarly elite among Asian Buddhists) sought to represent themselves in a global context. One important case which has already been extensively explored is that of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka since the nineteenth century, in particular the growth

of what Obeyesekere (1970) has called "Protestant Buddhism", and which Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988) trace to "the encounter between Sinhala society and the British colonial power" (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 202). Mitchell (2016: 13) has argued that what we are seeing here is an "intersection of European colonial and Asian nationalist discourses", and that it is here that we can also see "the beginnings of Buddhist modernism". Another important event in the history of the representation of Buddhism in this period was the World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1893, which is discussed further below.[24]

In Japan, the combination of the rapidly changing religious context in the wake of the Meiji restoration, and emergent discourses of globalised Buddhism, encouraged the continued growth of a range of Buddhist reform movements. The reimagining of Buddhism in this period is often referred to as *shin bukkyō* 新仏教, or New Buddhism.[25] "New Buddhism" was presented as rational, non-sectarian (or trans-sectarian),[26] and socially engaged.[27] An important concern here was to present New Buddhism as a modern religion which could compete with Christianity. At the same time, in the context of the persecution of the early Meiji period, it was crucial for both Japanese Buddhist reformers and for the established Buddhist schools to assert their connection with Japan's national identity, and to restore links with the state. From the 1880s, influential figures such as Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919),[28] a Buddhist reformer and nationalist, and Okakura Kakuzō 岡倉覚三 (1863–1913) the well-known author of *The Book of Tea*, were increasingly promoting Buddhism as a key element of the Japanese "national spirit", and something that could, and should, be exported to the West (Snodgrass 2003: 131).

It was in this context of upheaval that Myōnyo 明如 (Ōtani Kōson大谷光尊 1850–1903), succeeded to the position of *monshu* of Honganji-ha in 1872, and set about a programme of modernisation and internationalisation. In the domestic domain, a major reform instituted by Myōnyo was the enacting of the Temple Law (*jihō* 寺法) in 1880. This provided for the establishment of assemblies composed of elected priests and stipulated that all temples would be directly subordinate to the head temple, replacing the *honzanmatsuji* system of the Edo period. In 1881, the Honganji-ha Assembly was established, consisting of elected representatives from the clergy, nearly ten years before the Meiji government established the Imperial Parliament in 1890. Myōnyo also established the *Shūsei* 宗制 (Principal Law of Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha), which summarised key points regarding the organisation, teachings, official history, and rules of living for the institution. Myōnyo also contributed to the development of Honganji-ha rituals. Notable examples are the use of *shōmyō*, discussed in Chapter 8, and the introduction of the Gregorian calendar, which impacted the ritual calendar of observances in Honganji-ha, resulting, for example, in moving *hōonkō* – the commemoration of Shinran's death.[29]

Myōnyo also encouraged overseas visits and exchange programmes by young Honganji-ha priests. In 1872, visits were organised to various European countries by representatives of both Honganji-ha and Ōtani-ha, in order to observe the

condition and structure of religion in Western countries. From Honganji-ha these included Shimaji Mokurai, and Akamatsu Renjō 赤松連城 (1841–1919). Students sent to Europe from Ōtani-ha included Nanjō Bunyū 南條文雄 (1849–1927) and Kasahara Kenju 笠原研寿 (1852–1883), who went to Oxford University in 1876, where they studied Sanskrit and comparative religion with Max Müller. Other Japanese students of Buddhism who were later to be influential within Japan also followed in their footsteps: for example, Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 (1866–1945)[30] of Honganji-ha, who subsequently became professor at Tokyo Imperial University, and a well-known educator, studied at Oxford from 1890. There were also visits by representatives of both the Honganji to the United States, Germany, and France. In addition, there was an emerging interest in developing links with other Buddhist countries, and in exploring the history of Buddhism throughout Asia. In the 1890s, Jōdo Shinshū priests travelled to Thailand, India, Burma, and Sri Lanka, as well as Tibet and China,[31] and between 1902 and 1914 Ōtani Kōzui 大谷光瑞 (1876–1948), also known as Kyōnyo 鏡如, the son of Myōnyo and 22nd *monshu* of Honganji-ha, sent three expeditions to central Asia to examine Buddhist sites and collect Buddhist manuscripts.[32]

Shimaji and Akamatsu introduced a number of innovations on their return to Japan, including some relating to ritual, which appear to show influences from common practice in Western countries (and Christianity). One of these was the introduction of a religious wedding ceremony. Before the Meiji period, weddings had generally been held in the home, and Hendry (1981: 71) has suggested that the idea of holding a religious service as part of the wedding ceremony was probably due to the indirect influence of western forms of weddings, where a religious element is the norm. Shimaji is said to have performed the first Buddhist wedding ceremony in Tokyo in 1892 (Snodgrass 2003: 127), predating the first Shinto wedding, which took place in 1898. Buddhist weddings never gained wide popularity in Japan, where Buddhism has continued to be associated primarily with death-related rites, although wedding ceremonies are sometimes performed today at the major Honganji-ha temples in Japan,[33] and are also performed more frequently in temples in the Americas. Another innovation linked to Shimaji and Akamatsu was the introduction of the *gōtan'e* 降誕会 service in 1874 to commemorate the birth of the founder, Shinran (Honganjishika kenkyūjo 2019: 493). Previously, as noted above, rituals concerning Shinran had been centred on commemorations of his death. Ama (2011: 26) points out that Shimaji and Akamatsu visited Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus during their overseas visits in the 1870s, and it seems possible that Christian practice of celebrating Jesus's birth may have been an influence here.

Alongside overseas visits by Japanese scholar-priests, there were also visits by prominent figures from international Buddhist networks to Japan. An example of this is the visit by Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1908) and the Sinhalese Buddhist reformer Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933)[34] to Japan in 1889. Olcott was an American who had co-founded the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875, together with Madame Blavatsky. Olcott and Blavatsky had received the precepts in Colombo in 1880 and subsequently identified themselves

as Buddhists. Olcott became internationally known both for his association with Dharmapala, who accompanied him to Japan, and for his promotion of a basic Buddhism that he believed could transcend Buddhist sectarian divides. Invited to visit Japan in 1889 by a committee of young Buddhists, and subsequently supported financially by both Nishi and Higashi Honganji (Snodgrass 2003: 155, 302), Olcott travelled around Japan giving lectures, in a visit that Snodgrass argues was of symbolic importance in demonstrating the support of a prominent individual from "the West" in the light of the attacks on Buddhism in Japan in the early part of the Meiji period.

Olcott's attempts to produce a doctrinal statement of "Fundamental Buddhistic Beliefs" in 1891 to which all Buddhist schools in Japan would agree was not successful – it was opposed by Honganji-ha among others. But in terms of Buddhist ritual and material culture, Olcott did have an impact. He participated in the creation of the six colour Buddhist flag which is used as a symbol of international Buddhism today, and which he introduced to Japan at the time of his 1889 visit (Mitchell 2016: 1). This flag is still flown at Buddhist centres throughout the world today, including Honganji-ha temples. And, as noted in the introduction, Olcott also played a role in the transformation of festivals celebrating Śākyamuni Buddha's birth, initially in Sri Lanka and later in Japan.

Another way in which international networks were created was through the formation of study groups, and the publication of journals, often linked with early missionary efforts, and to Buddhist reform. One example of this was The *Bijou of Asia, Ajia no Hōju*亜細亜之宝珠, first published in 1889, in which the Shin Buddhist scholars Matsuyama Matsutaro松山松太郎（?-1907）of the Futsū kyokō and Takakusu (Sawai) took a leading role. The Bijou of Asia aimed to promote a trans-sectarian Buddhism and appears to be the oldest English-language Buddhist journal in the world. In its brief existence, it was distributed free of charge to 270 locations worldwide, including the United States, England, France, Italy, Prussia, Scotland, Austria, South Africa, Canada, India, Thailand, Burma, and China (Nakanishi and Yoshinaga 2014: 359–60).

Finally, a key event in the process of repositioning Japanese Buddhism in the international arena was the World Parliament of Religions, held as part of the Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893. From Japan, initially the various Buddhist denominations considered sending a joint delegation, but in the end, no agreement was reached, and four Buddhist priests, one of whom, Yatsubuchi Banryū 八淵蟠龍 (1848–1926) was from Honganji-ha,[35] participated on a voluntary individual basis, accompanied by two lay Buddhists.[36] Although there were differences among the participants from Japan in terms of their aims and their vision of Buddhism, one of their main goals was to contest the criticism stemming from nineteenth-century Western scholarship that Mahayana Buddhism diverged from Śākyamuni Buddha's teachings, and was therefore an inauthentic form of Buddhism. They insisted that Mahayana Buddhism was the authentic teaching of Śākyamuni Buddha and its essential message flourished in "Eastern Buddhism" (*tōhō bukkyō*東方仏教), by which they meant Japanese Buddhism – portrayed as

the pinnacle of Mahayana. Many Buddhist groups and individuals within Japan, including lay people, raised funds for them by hosting gatherings – indicative of the interest within Japan in presenting Japanese Buddhism overseas. On their return, the delegates were welcomed enthusiastically, and toured Japan giving talks on their experiences. As Ketelaar (1990: 171) has argued, the World Parliament of Religions was an important turning point in the process of the re-imagining, and repositioning of Japanese Buddhism as both modern and aligned with the new nation state – no longer seen as a threat, but as an internationally recognised symbol of Japanese culture.

Conclusion

By the late nineteenth century, Jōdo Shinshū found itself in a profoundly transformed world. Within Japan, responses to government attacks on Buddhist organisations in early Meiji had contributed to the growth of Buddhist reform movements, and eventually a reimagining of Buddhism and its relationship with the Japanese nation state, as a key element of Japan's "distinctive national spirit" (Snodgrass 2003: 172). In this context, there was also a new interest in international recognition and in the promotion of Japanese Buddhism overseas. Jōdo Shinshū (including Honganji-ha and Ōtani-ha) played an important role in this project of internationalisation and modernisation, both on an organisational level and through prominent individuals associated with Jōdo Shinshū.

Many of the debates within Japanese Buddhism in the Meiji period were explicitly concerned with doctrine, rather than ritual. Indeed, insofar as the different Buddhist denominations within Japan had developed distinctive ritual practices, partly as a way to carve distinct identities, it was perhaps inevitable that these were sidelined in the attempts of many of the Buddhist modernists to identify a common, trans-sectarian ground. But as Sueki (2017, 2024) has argued, in the Japanese context, ritual practice was also an important concern in the project of modernisation. Examples of this in Jōdo Shinshū can be seen in innovations concerning the liturgy and liturgical music (discussed in Chapter 8) and changes to the ritual calendar.

Throughout the Meiji period, projects of internationalisation and modernisation were closely linked. For Buddhist schools, the process of repositioning themselves within Japan was closely intertwined with presenting themselves in the international arena, as we can see in the case of the Chicago Parliament of Religions. But this was also entangled with projects of nationalism, as Buddhism became coopted as a symbol of Japanese identity, and potential cultural export. And a further shift became evident after the Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese War in 1894. By the late 1890s, the publications of the Honganji-ha's overseas mission were increasingly coloured by nationalist sentiments and by their support for Japanese imperialism. These shifts also affected overseas propagation, which became primarily focused on Japanese communities overseas, both in Japan's new colonies and in the Americas, as discussed in the next chapter.

Notes

1 Kakunyō initially chose the name *Senjuji* 専修寺 (temple of exclusive practice) for the Ōtani mausoleum, but removed the name due to opposition from the Tendai school (Dobbins 2002 [1989]: 83–84).
2 The reason why many of today's Jōdo Shinshū head temples have two halls in parallel, one with a statue of Shinran (*Goeidō* 御影堂) and the other with Amida Buddha as the principal image, the so-called *ryōdō* 両堂 system, is that Honganji was originally established from the Ōtani Mausoleum, which was dedicated to Shinran. From the time that Kakunyo established Honganji, there were attempts to construct an Amida hall, with an image of Amida as a main object of reverence, but these attempts were slow to materialise. It was not until the time of Rennyo's father, the seventh head priest Zonnyo 存如 (1396–1457), that a separate Amida hall housing a statue of Amida Buddha was built within the Honganji compound, alongside the *Goeidō*, housing a statue of Shinran (Rogers and Rogers 1991: 47, footnote 7).
3 Nyoshin's father was Zenran善鸞 (1217–1286), the oldest son of Shinran, who was disowned by Shinran in 1256 following a dispute (for more details see Dobbins 2002 [1989]: 40–42).
4 Later, the head of Honganji came to be known as *shūshu*, and subsequently *monshu*, but in Kakunyo's time the precise title was the subject of some controversy, relating to Kakunyo's efforts to establish his authority within Jōdo Shinshū (see Dobbins 2002 [1989]: 84).
5 Kakunyo used the term *hōonkō* in his work, but according to the *Kudenshō*, the service was called *soshi shōnin hōonshatoku no nanoka nana yo gongyō* 祖師聖人報恩謝徳之七日七夜勤行, the seven days and seven nights practice [of *nenbutsu*] in gratitude to the founder (*Jōdo Shinshū seiten zensho* IV 2016: 282). In the diary written by Kakunyō's eldest son, Zonkaku, this memorial service was described as *gohōon betsuji* 御報恩別時 or *Ōtani kōrei gohōon nenbutsu* 大谷恒例御報恩念仏. It is said that the name *hōonkō* did not take root until after the time of Rennyo (Ando 2017: 531–3).
6 The *hōonkō* is held annually, while special memorial services for Shinran (*daionki*大遠忌), have been held every 50 years since the 300th Memorial Service held by Kennyo 顕如 (1543–1592) in 1561 (Ando 2017: 535).
7 Sainenji is an independent Jōdo Shinshū temple today built in the place where Shinran lived where he was in Kantō and where he is supposed to have completed the first draft of his major work *Kyōgyōshinshō* 教行信証. It has one of the oldest versions of this scroll.
8 The *Ōjōraisan*, also called *Rokujiiraisan* or simply *Raisan*, is a ritual composed by the Chinese Pure Land master Shandao 善導 (613–681), aspiring for birth in the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. For this ritual, the day is divided into six periods, in which to worship the statue of Amida Buddha in the hall, acknowledge various wrong acts committed in one's daily life, and express the aspiration for birth in the Pure Land.
9 The term *fudan nenbutsu* originally referred to the uninterrupted *nenbutsu* recitation as one of the four kinds of samadhi in the Tendai teaching, which was called *yama no nenbutsu* 山の念仏. However, it was used to refer to various *nenbutsu* practices after the eleventh century (Nara 1977: 38). As previously mentioned, Shinran was said to have practised it on Mt. Hiei. However, *fudan nenbutsu* in the *Honganji Sahō no Shidai* does not necessarily refer to *yama no nenbutsu*. Rather, it refers to *nenbutsu* recitation and the rituals of Honganji that Kakunyo wanted to clarify.
10 It is impossible to establish whether the continuous recitation of the *nenbutsu* that has re-emerged in contemporary Jōdo Shinshū, as discussed in Chapter 7, bears any resemblance with the *fudan nenbutsu* practised in the early days of Honganji (up to the time of Zonnyo), or whether the term *fudan nenbutsu* was already reinterpreted to mean ritual performances other than the constant recitation of Namo Amida Butsu.

11 There are three Noh theatres in the precincts of Nishi Hongwanji today, and Noh performances, as well as tea gatherings, are a feature of some important ritual celebrations, for example, the *gōtan'e* celebrations for Shinran's birthday.
12 See, e.g., Plutschow (1996) on *matsuri* 祭り(festivals).
13 The word *kō* originally meant a gathering to listen to lectures on the significance of Buddhist sutras. During the Heian period (794–1185), *kō* referred to the gathering of followers on a fixed day every month to listen to Buddhist teachings. In Jōdo Shinshū, Rennyo recommended that local followers gather together to discuss religious faith and doctrines. This gathering was also called *kō*.
14 After the Meiji Restoration, when the Honganji-ha began its path of modernisation, the *Gakurin* continued to serve as an authority on the doctrines of the Honganji-ha. However, it underwent successive name changes to Daikyōkō 大教校 (1879, 1887), Shinshūgakushō 真宗学庠 (1880), Futsukyōkō 普通教校 (1885), Daigakurin 大学林 (1891), Bungakuryō文学寮 (1891), Bukkyō Daigaku 仏教大学 (1900, 1904), and Bukkyōsenmongakkō 仏教専門学校 (1902). This was the origin of Ryūkoku University 龍谷大学 (1922).
15 For a detailed summary, see Hirata (2013).
16 The *Chinzei* school 鎮西派 of the Jōdoshū encourages multiple recitations of the *nenbutsu*. Some clerics in Kyūshū converted to this school because of this reason.
17 The topics are divided into two main categories, the "*Anjin rondai*" 安心論題 and the "*Kyōgi rondai*" 教義論題. Their format is similar to that of the Christian catechism.
18 For more on these debates, see the *Shinshūsōsho Shinshū Hyakurondai Vol. 1 and 2* (1930); Naito (2004).
19 For more on *shinbutsu shūgō*, see Inoue et al. (2003: 67–78).
20 In the early stage of the introduction of Buddhism into Japan, we can observe the amalgamation of native Japanese *kami* or gods and buddhas. This symbiotic relationship developed further in the Heian period and evolved into the idea that Japanese *kami* are emanations of buddhas, bodhisattvas, or deva who manifest themselves as native Japanese *kami*, a theory referred to as *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 – literally, "fundamental ground" (referring to a buddha's or bodhisattva's source of manifestation) – "dropped footprint (or trace)" – a term that comes from the Lotus Sutra (Bowring 2005: 185). In referring to *kami* as manifestations of buddhas, the term *gongen* was used by the Tendai school and *myōjin* in the Shingon school. The amalgamation of *kami* and buddhas deeply permeated Japanese people's life and religious culture.
21 Fukuda Gyōkai 福田行誡 (1806–1888) of the Jōdoshū and Shaku Unshō 釈雲照 (1827–1909) of the Shingonshū, who also participated in this confederation, criticised the corruption of Buddhist monks, and started a movement to revive the precepts. As part of this they opposed government decrees passed in 1872 allowing clergy to eat meat and to marry and allowing monks not to shave their heads (previously forbidden in most schools other than Jōdo Shinshū).
22 For more on the complex relations between the Meiji restoration government and the two Honganjis, see Ketelaar (1990).
23 See, e.g., Almond (1988) and Snodgrass (2003).
24 For detailed discussions of the Chicago Parliament of Religions, see Ketelaar (1990) and Snodgrass (2003).
25 This term does not refer to a single group, but rather a range of groups and activities that shared certain common characteristics.
26 An interest in trans sectarian Buddhism, or *tsūbukkyō* 通仏教, was an important theme in Meiji Japan. The influential scholar of Japanese modern Buddhism Kashiwahara writes that the "*tsūbukkyō* spirit" (通仏教精神) is the most characteristic feature of Buddhist reform movements in the Meiji era. Kashiwahara describes this spirit as wanting to return to the teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha, and "the original spirit of Buddhism" (*bukkyō no konpon seishin* 仏教の根本精神) (Kashiwahara 1969: 443–5,

cited in LoBreglio 2005: 39). LoBreglio points out that in practice the term *tsūbukkyō* was used to refer to a range of groups and approaches ranging from those which promoted cooperation among the different denominations, which nevertheless remained distinct, to those which advocated the creation of a unified, or non-denominational, Buddhism with a single set of teachings.

27 Shin Bukkyō can also be situated in the context of broader trends in Buddhist modernism. Western language writing beginning with the work of Bechert (1966, 1984), and most recently McMahan (2008), describes Buddhist modernism as a transnational movement which stresses Buddhism as rational and compatible with modern science, focused on meditation, and grounded in canonical texts.

28 Inoue Enryō was the son of a Jōdo Shinshū priest from Ōtani-ha and founding member of both the nationalist organisation *Seikyōsha* 政教社 founded in 1888) and *Sonnō hōbutsu daidōdan* 尊王奉仏大同団 (movement for revering the Buddha and revering the emperor, founded in 1889).

29 The anniversary of Shinran's death had previously been commemorated on the 28th day of the 11th month in the lunar calendar, but in 1874, Honganji-ha moved it to the equivalent day on the Gregorian calendar, and January 16th was made Shinran's memorial day, with eight days and seven nights of services at Nishi Honganji in Kyoto, from January 9th to 16th. The Ōtani-ha, on the other hand, hold *hōonkō* at Higashi Honganji in the 11th month of the Western calendar, November (from the 21st to the 28th). There is further variability in local Honganji-ha temples, where *hōonkō* is celebrated at a range of different dates in the autumn in a practice known as *otorikoshi hōonkō* お取り越し報恩講- *otorikoshi* meaning to be held in advance of the actual event. This is to allow members of local temples both to mark the memorial at their local temple and to travel to the head temple to join in the services there in January, if they so wish.

30 He was known by several names in his lifetime: his birth name was Sawai Jun 沢井洵, and then he was adapted by Takakusu family in 1888 and changed his name to Takakusu Junjiro.

31 Jaffe (2004) gives a detailed account of the visits of three Japanese Buddhists to South and South East Asia in the Meiji period, one of whom was the Jōdo Shinshū priest Kitabatake Dōryū 北畠道隆 (1820–1907).

32 Nishi and Higashi Honganji were not the only Japanese Buddhist schools to be active in encouraging their priests to travel overseas and to make overseas contacts: the Shingon sect sent Shaku Kōnen 釈興然 (1849–1924) to Ceylon in 1886, and the Rinzai sect sent Shaku Sōen 釈宗演 (1860–1919) to Ceylon in 1887. They studied the Pali language there and interacted with people of the local Theosophical Society and Mahabodhi Society (Mahabodhi Society). Shaku Sōen also attended the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893, discussed in the following sections, and later sent D.T. Suzuki 鈴木大拙 (1870–1966) to the United States to study with Paul Carus (1852–1919) in 1897.

33 However, the idea of having a religious element in wedding ceremonies did take hold, with weddings in Shinto shrines gaining popularity. In recent years, Christian-themed weddings have also become popular, while rarely entailing a profession of Christian faith on the part of the wedded couple or their families.

34 Unfortunately, Dharmapala became ill and spent almost the entire visit in a hospital in Kyoto. He was, however, befriended by some local Buddhist activists while he was there, including Takakusu (mentioned above), resulting in the formation of a local Japanese branch of Dharmapala's Mahābodhi Society.

35 The others were Doki Hōryū土岐法龍 (1854–1923) from Shingonshū, Ashizu Jitsuzen 芦津実全 (1851–1920) from Jōdoshū and Shaku Sōen 釈宗演 (1860–1919) from the Rinzai school of Zen Buddhism.

36 Hirai Kinzō 平井金三 (1859–1917) and Noguchi Zenshirō 野口善四郎 (1861–?).

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3 Routes of change

The expansion of Jōdo Shinshū outside Japan

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, the late nineteenth century was a period of far-reaching change both for the re-imagining of Buddhism as a world religion and for the various Buddhist schools within Japan. Also during this period, Japan began to expand its territory. In the north, Hokkaido, formerly Ezo, the land of the Ainu, was incorporated into the Japanese nation state in 1869; while the Ryūkyū islands to the south were incorporated as the prefecture of Okinawa in 1879. Missions from Buddhist schools on the Japanese mainland, including Honganji-ha, followed. Honganji-ha also sent missions to Kagoshima in southwest Japan, a region of Japan in which Jōdo Shinshū had been banned until 1876.[1]

Looking beyond the (newly expanded) borders of Japan itself, overseas missions were promoted in the context of claims to status and competition among Japanese Buddhist schools. Enthusiasm within the Honganji-ha for overseas missionary efforts (and the Honganji-ha's claims for its own status) is evidenced by an editorial in the Honganji-ha journal *Kyōkai Ichiran* in 1897 which asserted

> As everybody says, the focal point of world Buddhism lies in Japan and the centre of Japanese Buddhism is the Honganji. The Honganji is where the power of Buddhism is concentrated and where the energy of Buddhism is derived. How our sect initiates foreign missions will determine the success and failure of world Buddhism.
>
> (*Kyōkai Ichiran* 1897, cited in Kim 2012: 145)

Rhetoric aside, in more practical terms, the initiation of overseas missions was driven to a great extent by the establishment of Japanese emigrant communities overseas. Labour migration to Hawai'i and North America (initially mainly California) took place from early Meiji, followed some decades later by Latin America. In the pre-war period, this migration was initially largely on the *dekasegi* 出稼ぎmodel, long familiar in rural Japan, of seasonal movements of labour on a temporary basis – that is, to go abroad temporarily to make money, and to return home to Japan once that was accomplished. However, harsh conditions and low wages made this very difficult, resulting in many remaining long-term, later

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forming the base for the establishment of diasporic *Nikkei* 日系 (literally, of Japanese descent) communities in the Americas.

Alongside migration to the Americas, large-scale migration also took place to mainland Asia and Micronesia in the context of Japanese colonialism in the prewar period. Befu (2002: 6) notes that more Japanese left for mainland Asia and Micronesia between 1868 and 1945 than for both North and South America combined.[2] Poverty was undoubtedly a factor driving Japanese emigration as a whole during this period (Stanlaw 2006: 46), but, as Befu points out, state policy (including the provision of subsidies and loans to emigrants) also played an important part, as the Japanese government sought to relieve population problems by facilitating migration both to the Americas and to mainland Asia, as well as establishing ethnic Japanese populations in colonised and occupied territories.

The establishment of Japanese Buddhist missions overseas was closely intertwined with Japanese emigration. Many of the emigrants were from areas of Japan where Jōdo Shinshū followers were numerous, and both Ōtani-ha and Honganji-ha actively engaged in overseas missions. In China and Korea, the first Japanese Buddhist missions were sent by Ōtani-ha,[3] with Honganji-ha missions following later (Kim 2012: 145, Ong 2012: 7–8). Over the course of subsequent decades, as Japan annexed Taiwan in 1895, and Korea in 1910, Japanese missions shifted from an initial engagement with the local population, and local Buddhist organisations, to focus increasingly on the growing Japanese expatriate communities, in the process becoming identified with the colonial regime.[4] However, with Japan's defeat in 1945, the Japanese – both military and civilian – in Asia and Micronesia were repatriated, and the temples and missions in Japan's former overseas colonies closed, although a few local priests and members remained active (Ong 2012). There has been some revival of missionary activity by Jōdo Shinshū in neighbouring Asian countries in recent decades, but overall contemporary Jōdo Shinshū has a very limited presence in Korea, China, and Taiwan.

For Honganji-ha, the main focus of overseas missionary efforts from the late nineteenth century onwards was the Japanese migrant population of Hawai'i and North America, in particular California, where the earliest Jōdo Shinshū temples on the mainland were located. Following successive restrictions to migration from Japan to the United States starting between 1907 and 1924, the flow of migrants was diverted to Latin America, where further diasporic ethnic Japanese communities formed. These were not supported by official missions from either Honganji-ha or Ōtani-ha until the 1950s, as explored further in the following sections. But in the post-war period they provided a base for the establishment of Jōdo Shinshū temples in Latin America. The greatest concentration of Jōdo Shinshū temples in Latin America is in Brazil, now home to the largest of the Japanese diasporic communities worldwide. Today, Jōdo Shinshū communities in the Americas have expanded beyond the ethnic Japanese community, but the Japanese diaspora still constitutes an important base.

Post-World War II, Jōdo Shinshū also established small groups in Europe, Australia, and Nepal. The oldest of these are in Europe, where they have developed largely independently of local Japanese communities. In this chapter, we examine

the contrasting cases of the Americas (the United States and Hawai'i for English-speaking America, and Brazil and Argentina for Latin America) and Europe. We give an overview of the history of Jōdo Shinshū in these locations, and the ways in which their differing histories have contributed to the development of different forms of ritual practice. This sets the context for a more detailed discussion of transformations in Jōdo Shinshū ritual in subsequent chapters.

Jōdo Shinshū in the United States and Hawai'i

From first missions to World War II

The earliest Jōdo Shinshū centres outside mainland Japan and Japan's colonies developed in conjunction with Japanese labour migration to Hawai'i and North America.[5] The first Japanese migrants arrived at the beginning of the Meiji period in 1868, and by the late 1890s there was a steep increase in numbers of Japanese migrants to both Hawai'i and the west coast of North America, particularly California. Many of the early migrants came from regions of south-west Japan such as Hiroshima and Yamaguchi prefectures where Jōdo Shinshū households predominated (Moriya 2019: 260–1), so a large proportion of them were (at least nominally) Jōdo Shinshū followers. Although other Japanese Buddhist schools later also established a presence in the Americas, Shin Buddhism, and in particular the Honganji-ha school, became over the next few decades both the largest and the best established of the Japanese Buddhist schools in both mainland United States and Hawai'i (Bloom 2000: 259).

The first overseas mission from Honganji-ha outside Asia was to Hawai'i, and was undertaken independently, in 1889 by Kagahi Sōryū 曜日蒼竜 (1855–1917), a Jōdo Shinshū priest from Oita prefecture in western Japan, and member of the Overseas Mission Society (*Kaigai Sen Kyōkai* 海外宣教会) in response to learning about harsh conditions endured by Japanese plantation workers there. The first official mission to Hawai'i from Honganji followed in 1897, and Satomi Hōni 里見法爾 (1853–1922) was appointed the first director of the Hawai'ian mission in January 1898. In 1899, Imamura Yemyo 今村恵猛 (1867–1932), was sent to Hawai'i as a missionary. In March 1900, Imamura became the second director of the Hawai'ian mission, and the first bishop (*kantoku* 監督, later *sōchō* 総長), under the new organisational system instituted by Honganji in 1918, a post he was to occupy until his death in 1932 (Ama 2011: 36).

During Imamura's term as head of the Hawai'ian mission, Jōdo Shinshū temples were established throughout the Hawai'ian islands. At each temple, Buddhist youth associations, Buddhist women's associations, Sunday schools, and Japanese language schools were established to support the local Japanese migrant communities. The Hawai'ian mission was officially recognised as the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i (HHMH) in 1907. The first mission to the mainland United States developed around the same time as in Hawai'i. The San Francisco Young Men's Buddhist Association was established on the model of Young Men's Christian Associations in 1898 (Mitchell 2016: 80),

and in 1899 the Buddhist Mission of North America (BMNA) was officially established, later renamed the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) during World War II.

Although there are important differences between the development of the missions in mainland United States and Hawai'i, as noted by Ama (2011: 38–42) they shared some common features. First, as the original *dekasegi* model of temporary, largely male migrant labour gave way to more long-term, family-based, settlement, demand began to rise for temple services, especially for funerals and care of the ancestors – long one of the main roles of temples in Japan. And second, both the mainland and Hawai'i shared a context of growing xenophobia, and discrimination against a range of ethnic minorities, including Japanese migrants. Japanese immigration to the United States was restricted to wives and children of Japanese men already resident in the United States in the so-called "Gentlemen's Agreement" of 1907–1908, while legislation in 1924 banned further immigration from Asia. In addition, a range of discriminatory laws passed by states on the mainland included Alien Land Laws in the 1910s and 1920s barring Japanese migrants from naturalising as US citizens, or owning property (Mitchell 2016: 54).

In this context, as noted by Mitchell (2016: 82) and Ama (2011) among others, the newly established Jōdo Shinshū temples faced pressures both to support their ethnic Japanese membership, and to provide a refuge or safe space in which Japanese language and customs could be preserved,[6] and to acculturate to local norms. In Hawai'i, Bishop Imamura was particularly active both in providing support to local Japanese plantation workers, and in instituting new forms of organisation and ritual to adapt to the new setting. He organised Sunday schools and Boy Scout troops (Bloom 1998: 33), as well as introducing new forms of service (see Chapter 8), and adapting the interior space of newly built temples (see Chapter 5).

At the same time, missions in both Hawai'i and the mainland sought to reach out beyond the ethnic Japanese community in their propagation efforts. The missions to Northern California sought to create links with those interested in Buddhism, in general, and offered classes on Śākyamuni's teachings aimed at those outside the ethnic Japanese community, alongside classes on Jōdo Shinshū for Shin followers, and lectures on Buddhism for a wider Japanese audience. The aim of propagating a pan-sectarian Buddhism, based on Śākyamuni's teachings, was also stressed in the formal statements of the aims of the early Buddhist missions in northern California (Ama 2011: 39). In Hawai'i, too, although when the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii (henceforward HHMH) was incorporated in 1907, its bylaws stated that it specifically aimed to propagate Shinshū teachings, Imamura seems to have been sympathetic to the idea of combining this with the propagation of a pan-sectarian form of Buddhism. He invited Colonel Olcott[7] to give a lecture on Buddhism when he visited Hawai'i in 1901 and worked closely with Ernest and Dorothy Hunt (1878–1967 and 1886–1983), two important figures in the creation of a distinctive American liturgy which owed much to Theravadin influences, as discussed further in Chapter 8. However, Imamura died suddenly in 1932, and in 1935 a new bishop was sent from Japan, Kuchiba Gikyō 口羽義教 (1882-? [repatriated to Japan 1945]). Kuchiba was opposed to the Hunts' non sectarian approach,

and dismissed Ernest Hunt. Thereafter, the emphasis in the HHMH shifted to a more exclusive Jōdo Shinshū focus (Tanabe 2005:91).

Overall, when we look at Jōdo Shinshū in America and Hawai'i in the period between the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants and World War II, the discrimination suffered by ethnic Japanese had two paradoxically opposed effects. On the one hand, the pressure to adapt and to blend in led to a degree of overt Americanisation in some publicly visible aspects of Jōdo Shinshū temples. One aspect of this was that temples became centres of American cultural activities from which Japanese migrants would otherwise have been excluded, such as sports activities including baseball, basketball and athletics; boy scout troops; and dances and other social events that would not be associated with temples in Japan. This leads Seager (1999: 55) to argue that "the temples actually served as vehicles for Americanization". On the other hand, Jōdo Shinshū temples also became important centres for the transmission of Japanese culture and language (through the Japanese language schools that they supported), and havens from discrimination for the ethnic Japanese. This fostered the perception of Jōdo Shinshū in the United States – in so far as it was known at all – as an "ethnic religion". At the same time, there was an interest within American Jōdo Shinshū in pan-sectarian Buddhism, one aspect of which was an attempt to reach out to a wider Buddhist community beyond the Japanese diaspora – although this also encountered some opposition. In any event, by the outbreak of World War II American Shinshū temples had taken on a distinctive character and social role which contrasted significantly with that of temples in Japan, and in many ways resembled more closely the role of American churches within the communities they serve. In terms of ritual, new hybrid forms developed during this period, which continue to form the basis of contemporary practice, as will be explored in subsequent chapters.

Anti-Japanese discrimination reached its peak after Pearl Harbour, when, in 1942, all people of Japanese descent living on the West coast of the United States were ordered to leave their homes and enter internment camps located throughout the mainland United States. They were to remain there until the war ended. Altogether, around 120,000 people suffered forced relocation. This was a period of great hardship for Japanese Americans, as has been documented in detail elsewhere (see, e.g., Hata and Hata 2011). During this time, Jōdo Shinshū ministers played an important role in supporting those imprisoned in the camps, and in providing activities and a social focus, although often this required considerable creative improvisation, for example, in order to hold rituals in absence of any of the usual ritual objects (Mitchell 2016: 88). The daughter of a Shinshū minister who was sent to a camp recalled in a conversation with one of the authors:

> My father said this was a great opportunity for Jōdo Shinshū to flourish – for three years there was nothing to do! They made makeshift *butsudan* 仏壇 (buddhist altars) and their own *gatha* (hymn) books. Most people in the camps had not been to the temple until then, but there everyone went. Then, once people settled back after the war, they continued going to the temple. It created a bubble where you could be safe.

Internment also re-shaped American Jōdo Shinshū in other ways, intensifying pressures from within the Japanese American community, in particular from Buddhist youth organisations, for a more explicitly American identity, and for less sectarian Buddhism, with fewer ties with Japan. In 1944, ministers voted to change their name to the Buddhist Churches of America (Seager 1999: 58).

Resettlement from the camps began in January 1945, with many internees returning to the areas they had been removed from, but some joining relatives in other parts of the United States, who had not suffered deportation. This resulted in the formation of new Japanese American communities in the mid-West and on the East Coast. For those who returned to the places they had lived before the war, many found that they had lost their homes, and temples became a place of refuge – often literally. The trauma of the wartime experience was thus an important factor in establishing Jōdo Shinshū temples at the heart of the Japanese American community, and cementing their dual role in both supporting ethnic Japanese within the United States, and asserting their identity as part of mainstream America.

Post-War developments

Post-World War II many of the features that developed in the BMNA (now the BCA) and the HHMH before the war have continued to be prominent: temple involvement with sporting activities, for example, basketball leagues;[8] weekly congregational services including hymn singing and a sermon; the temple as a centre for social activities including women's groups and youth groups; a Sunday school (now referred to as dharma school) attached to the temple; and the provision of weddings as well as death-related services. At the same time, Jōdo Shinshū temples in America have also acted as what might be termed Japanese "cultural" centres, supporting activities such as Japanese language teaching, martial arts training, *taiko* 太鼓 drumming or *ikebana* 生け花. Tanaka (1999: 9) argues that the popularity of these activities in contemporary North America demonstrates both a revival in interest in their "ethnicity and cultural heritage" on the part of third-generation Japanese Americans, and also a growing interest among non-ethnic Japanese Americans in various aspects of East Asian culture – an interest that was able to flourish in the post-war climate.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, the influence of the "Beat Generation" artists and poets was beginning to be felt in America, as part of an emergent "counter culture", which challenged mainstream American values, and looked outside America, and "the West" for alternative social and cultural models and sources of inspiration. Some were drawn to Buddhism, although, as noted by Masatsugu (2008: 425), this was often within an orientalist and exoticised frame – they did not come from a Buddhist background, and their approach to Buddhism was coloured by their search for something different from their upbringing. In many ways, their approaches to Buddhism contrasted sharply with that of the BCA, which, as described above, had adopted a model which tended to resemble that of American Protestant Churches. These two contrasting streams within post-war Buddhism (which were sometimes critical of each other) came together in the 1950s in the Berkeley Study Centre,

which organised first a seminar, and then a journal, the Berkeley Bussei (Mitchell 2016: 76–77, 2023), and later evolved into the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS). These encounters are indicative of the growing diversity in the American Buddhist landscape post-war, and challenge the stereotype of American Jōdo Shinshū in this period as an isolated "ethnic" religion.

Since the 1950s, Jōdo Shinshū in the United States and Hawai'i has continued to diversify, while at the same time facing some new challenges. There is a high rate of out-marriage among Japanese Americans, most of whom are now third, fourth, or even fifth generation.[9] This can lead to a more diverse temple membership, as spouses may join Jōdo Shinshū temples, but it can also lead to those who marry out of the community leaving the temple. And there has been a decline in temple membership more broadly, in both the BCA and Hawai'i. Looking at the BCA alone, Tanaka reports estimated membership figures of 21,600 in 1977, declining slightly to 20,021 in 1988, and to 16,902 in 1996 (Tanaka 1999: 3).[10] For 2024, the BCA website estimates the membership at around 12,000 members (Buddhist Churches of America website https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/about-bca consulted 21/7/24). The ethnic composition of temples has also changed, with an increasing number of both members and priests from outside the Japanese American community,[11] There are also a few temples that now have a majority non-ethnic Japanese membership.[12] The category of "Japanese American" has also become more complex, partly as a consequence of the high rate of mixed marriages, and also because the vast majority of Japanese Americans were born in the United States, as, in most cases, were their parents and grandparents. And the extent to which individual Japanese Americans identify with Japanese culture may be highly variable. So, although the Japanese-American community still forms an important base, that base has itself changed.

In this changing context, the role of temples in the transmission and dissemination of Japanese culture remains important, but they are also entangled in broader debates, some of which relate to the expectations of potential converts. One important issue here is the controversy around practice, and the question of meditation, as discussed in Chapter 6. These tensions are also apparent in Latin America, where Jōdo Shinshū is also rooted in the history of Japanese migration.

Jōdo Shinshū in Latin America

Migration from Japan in the Pre-War period

Japanese migration to Latin America began in the late 1890s, initially mainly to Mexico (1897)[13] and Peru (1899), with much smaller numbers entering Chile (1903), Cuba (1907), and Argentina (1907). There was also some transmigration from Peru to Bolivia (Masterson and Funada-Classen 2004: 27). Similarly to the United States and Hawai'i, many of the migrants came from areas of south-west Japan where Jōdo Shinshū was dominant, although there were also a substantial number from Okinawa (the former Ryūkyū kingdom),[14] in particular in Argentina (Masterson and Funada-Classen 2004: 89).

With the path of migration to Hawai'i and North America (including Mexico) closed from 1908 following the introduction of restrictions in the "Gentlemen's Agreement" referred to above, Japanese immigration to South America increased rapidly in the period up to World War II. In 1908, Brazil, subsequently to become the home of the greatest number of ethnic Japanese in the Americas, received its first group of Japanese migrants. Japanese migration to Brazil was actively encouraged by both the Japanese and Brazilian governments, as well as by Japanese emigration companies, who acquired areas of agricultural land on which Japanese farmers could establish "colonies" (Japanese *shokuminchi*; Portuguese *colônias*) (Usarski 2024: 95). As a result of these policies, between 1908 and 1938 Brazil counted more Japanese migrants than any other country besides Manchuria (Masterson and Funada-Classen 2004: 73). Altogether, close to 190,000 Japanese migrants entered Brazil between 1908 and 1941 (Lesser 2003: 5), and by 1940 the Brazilian census recorded 248,848 Japanese – 6% of the population (Masterson and Funada-Classen 2004: 131). The second largest ethnic Japanese community in pre-war Latin America was that of Peru, with over 20,000; followed by Argentina with around 5,400,[15] with much smaller numbers in Cuba, Paraguay, Panama, Colombia, Bolivia, Uruguay and Venezuela (Usarski 2024: 92). Here, we focus on Jōdo Shinshū in Brazil and Argentina.

In contrast to the pattern of development of missions in North America and Hawai'i, Honganji-ha was slow to respond to the Japanese migration to South America. One reason for this seems to have been that the Japanese government did not want to do anything that would potentially disrupt the process of immigration, especially in the light of the experience in the United States and Hawai'i. A distinct religious identity, supported by official missions, was thought to risk creating visible signs of non-assimilation, and hence attracting hostility. In the case of Brazil, in the pre-war period the Japanese Ministry of Foreign affairs therefore banned Buddhist or Shinto clergy from accompanying migrants – at least in their official capacity (Rocha 2006: 27).

The lack of official missions, in Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America, meant that in the pre-war period the main arena for Buddhist practice was thus the household (*ie* 家), with domestic Buddhist altars, or *butsudan* as focus (Shoji et al. 2015, André 2022). In Brazil, from the outset, the Brazilian government had only allowed migration by Japanese in family groups, in the hope that this would lead to greater stability and less turnover among plantation workers (Usarski 2024: 94). This also favoured the development of religious practice in the domestic sphere. However, despite this pattern of family migration, during this period most Japanese migrants planned to eventually return to Japan and there was therefore less concern about, for example, conducting funeral or memorial rites, as it was thought that these could be conducted by the household, or *ie* 家, back in Japan. Rocha, writing on Brazil, notes that when unexpected deaths rendered funerary rites necessary these were often improvised, and might be performed by a lay person with some knowledge of chanting (Rocha 2006: 32–33). Rocha also notes that many of the Japanese migrants converted to Catholicism, as a way of avoiding discrimination and as a strategy for assimilation and upward mobility (Rocha 2006: 33–35).[16] And in daily

life, some combined elements of Buddhist and Christian practice – for example, by placing Christian crosses inscribed with Buddhist quotes on graves, or Christian symbols on domestic Buddhist altars (Usarski 2024: 96–97).

Buddhist missionary efforts in Brazil in this period were not centrally coordinated from Japan, but rather were the result of individual efforts by contractual immigrants who hid their status as Buddhist priests, and by lay followers. This is not to say that there was no interest in establishing missions from Honganji-ha and other Buddhist organisations in Japan. There were several attempts to organise visits by priests to explore the possibilities of establishing missions. However, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to oppose sending Buddhist missions to Brazil on the grounds that this could create problems for continued Japanese migration, so in the end these attempts did not come to fruition (Nakanishi 2012: 85–90). Instead, from the late 1920s, individuals who were ordained as priests travelled to Brazil as immigrants and began to engage in unofficial missionary activities, in some cases attracting substantial numbers of followers. Initiatives were also taken by lay followers in the *colônias*, for example, in 1933, a dharma group was formed in the Hirano *colônia* in the state of São Paulo, and in 1934, a Buddhist centre was established there. The centre was initially called Shinshūji 真宗寺 or Dōshin Kaikan 同心会館, and after the war it was renamed Komyōji 光明寺, and became the first Jōdo Shinshū temple in Brazil (Nakanishi 2012: 74; Hiranoshokuminchi-nihonjinkai 1941).

Japanese migrant communities in South America during World War II

During World War II, the conditions of Japanese migrants varied depending on the country. Peru collaborated closely with the US deportation programme, and about 1,800 ethnic Japanese were deported from Peru, with the US government then deporting around 900 of these to Japan (Shoji et al. 2015: 3). In Brazil, the picture was more mixed. The size of the Japanese Brazilian community, and the fact that the Japanese colonies were largely in remote areas of the country, meant that large-scale deportations and internment on the pattern of the United States were not practicable, and Japanese migrants in isolated colonies in the interior of the country were able to retain their homes and land. But on the other hand, from the late 1930s the *nacionalização* (nationalisation) campaign led to a series of edicts targeting minority languages and cultures, including Japanese. This led to Japanese Brazilians experiencing severe discrimination and persecution throughout the country, especially in the São Paulo area, even continuing after the war. Around 4,000 ethnic Japanese from the São Paulo area were forcibly relocated in 1943, and post-war 172 Japanese were sent to a camp off the coast of São Paulo from 1946 to 1948, and suffered mistreatment, including torture.[17] Masterson and Funada-Classen (2004: 132) also point out that Japanese Brazilians identified more closely with Japanese culture than any other ethnic Japanese community in Latin America, and describe the experience of this period, and the discrimination against the Japanese language and culture as a "devastating trauma". This trauma was exacerbated by deep divisions within the Japanese community in Brazil in

terms of their attitudes to Japan, especially following Japan's defeat, which many refused to accept.[18]

Japanese-Argentinians on the other hand fared differently from other South American *Nikkei*, since the right-wing Argentinian government of the 1940s remained neutral and maintained friendly diplomatic relations with both Japan and Germany during the war. The Argentinian government, under US pressure, finally took the side of the Allies, but only in 1945, formally declaring war on Japan only months before the end of the conflict. Although some restrictions were imposed on Japanese nationals and their descendants, members of the community report keeping good relations with their neighbours and continued their community life with relative normality despite the restrictions imposed – which do not seem to have been thoroughly implemented (Gómez and Onaha 2008: 219).

Jōdo Shinshū in Latin America post-World War II

After World War II, the situation changed dramatically. With the ending of restrictions on religious propagation from Japan, in the 1950s, various leading figures from both the Honganji-ha and the Ōtani-ha, including the heads of both schools, visited South America, and official missions began to be established. In 1950, the Honganji-ha established a mission office in São Paulo. This was also a period of rapid growth of the ethnic Japanese population, largely in Brazil, which attracted by far the largest number of post-war migrants, many of whom came from Okinawa.[19] At the same time there was a shift in the Nikkei community towards regarding Brazil as a permanent home, and, linked with this, the provision of religious services for the ancestors became more important, in a pattern already noted above for Hawai'i and the United States. The first few decades post-war saw rapid growth in Jōdo Shinshū in Brazil, especially in and around São Paulo, in areas with a large ethnic Japanese population. And in 1957, the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of South America initiated a plan to build a Honganji-ha temple in Brasília, the new capital of the country on a site donated by the Brazilian government. In 1973, the *monshu* of Honganji-ha visited Brazil again to perform the inauguration ceremony in the main hall of the branch temple, the Templo Shin Budista Terra Pura which features later in Chapter 6, as one of the sites of ethnographic research conducted for this book.

The decision of most Japanese migrants post-war to make Brazil their permanent home, coupled with the establishment of official temples and the dispatch of priests to Brazil, led to a strong demand for funeral and ancestral services from these post-war temples, which were able to attract a substantial membership. The Honganji-ha temple in São Paulo currently has around 10,000 families attached to it, while a further 8,000 families are affiliated with the Ōtani-ha temple in the same city. A significant part of these temples' activities is the provision of funerals and ancestral services for their Japanese-Brazilian members. As of December 2024, there were 35 temples across Brazil affiliated to Honganji-ha, mainly concentrated in the state of São Paulo and the Southeast of Brazil, and 23 affiliated with Ōtani-ha. Honganji-ha temples in Argentina and Paraguay are also supervised from

Brazil, by the Federaçao Budista Sul-Americana Jodo Shinshu (Usarski 2024). The membership of these temples, from their inception until the late twentieth century remained strongly, often exclusively, Japanese or of Japanese descent. From the 1980s and 1990s, and more significantly in the current century, there has been an increase in non-Nikkei members, though they still constitute a clear minority overall.[20]

Along with this slow and limited demographic shift, Usarski (2008) also notes that the Shin Buddhist temples established in Brazil in the post-war era have faced some significant challenges. By the end of the 1950s, many Japanese-Brazilians had ostensibly converted to Catholicism. To some extent this was a continuation of the pre-war trend for conversion as a means of assimilation and upward social mobility noted above, but another aspect of this was the tendency for the responsibility for care of the ancestors to be delegated to the oldest brother and heir of the household, who retained a Buddhist (often Shin Buddhist) affiliation, while younger siblings were free to convert to Catholicism (Matsue 2014: 230; Nakamaki 1989). The trend to conversion to Catholicism was more marked in urban areas, where by 1958 50.3% had converted, compared to 36.5% in rural areas (Usarski 2008: 46–47) although Usarski (2024) notes in a subsequent article that these figures need to be viewed with some caution, as many continued to practise Buddhism, particularly in regard to ancestral observances, alongside Christianity.[21] There is also a generational dimension here: the percentage of Japanese-Brazilians self-identifying as Buddhists has dropped sharply among second-generation Japanese-Brazilians, and even more so among the third generation. By the year 2000, over 45% of Japanese-Brazilians identifying as Buddhist were over the age of 60 (Usarski 2008:47). In addition, as for the United States and Hawai'i, interethnic marriages have risen steeply, so that now most Japanese Brazilians marry out, which may mean, in some cases, adopting the religion of their spouse.

Compared to Brazil (which hosts the largest Japanese diasporic community in the world with over two million people), the ethnic Japanese community in Argentina is much smaller, numbering about 50,000, including those originally from Okinawa. Also, unlike the Japanese-American community in the United States, which is geographically spread out, partly due to relocation policies after WW2, the overwhelming majority of Japanese-Argentines currently live in the Buenos Aires area, with a smaller concentration in the province of Misiones, bordering with Brazil (Onaha 2011). Many Japanese Argentines, like their Brazilian counterparts, have converted to Catholicism – indeed Masterson and Funada-Classen (2004: 206) note that rates of conversion have been even higher in Argentina than in other Latin-American countries. However, even these converts have in some cases preserved Japanese Buddhist practices, especially in connection with funerary rites (Gómez 2011: 12).

As in Brazil, Jōdo Shinshū activities seemed to have remained focused on the homes of the followers until the 1960s. It was in this decade that the first Honganji-ha community was established, as a response to a desire to hold funerary rites for the community. The first gatherings took place on street Sarandí in Buenos Aires, where in 1965 a temple was established and the community sent

one of its members to be trained as a priest in Japan (Córdova Quero 2020). The Templo Honpa Hongwanji of Sarandí is still active and is affiliated with the Federação Budista Sul-Americana Honpa Hongwanji, which has its headquarters in São Paulo, and its membership is estimated to be around 500 people from the Japanese-Argentinian community (Carini 2018: 8). Unlike most Jōdo Shinshū temples in the world, the Sarandí temple does not have a website or any significant online presence, and its events are not advertised outside the community. In 2005, the former *jūshoku* of the Templo Honpa Hongwanji of Sarandí, Rev. Gustavo Aoki started an independent *dōjō*, 風来坊 (Fūraibō), where a much more diverse community has emerged and which has been the site of much ritual innovation, as discussed in detail in Chapter 7.[22]

Jōdo Shinshū in Europe

Introduction: contrasts with the Americas

Jōdo Shinshū in Europe presents a contrasting case to Jōdo Shinshū in the Americas in that it lacks a base in a long-term settled migrant community. Although there are some Japanese long-term residents in Europe, these are few in number – most Japanese in Europe are there short-term for either work or study. Because of this, unlike in the Americas, there has not been a significant demand for temple services to care for the dead. The expectation among short-term stayers is that this will be done by their home temple in Japan. Nor has there been a need for temples to provide social support for a migrant Japanese community, in the way described above for the United States and Hawai'i. Although there are doubtless individual cases of discrimination experienced by Japanese nationals in Europe, the Japanese community in Europe has largely emerged post-World War II, and did not experience the systematic segregation and discrimination suffered by ethnic Japanese in the Americas in the pre-war period and during World War II. Finally, there is not generally an expectation of regular attendance at religious services in Japan – most people have limited contact with temples, either in connection with funeral and memorial services, or sometimes for other special events in the ritual year, such as the *obon* お盆festival in the summer, when the ancestors are remembered and a range of festivities are held in temple grounds, *ohigan* お彼岸 (the autumn and spring equinoxes – again a time to remember the ancestors),[23] or the new year celebrations. Consequently, Japanese short-term residents in Europe do not generally seek regular contact with local Japanese Buddhist temples throughout the year, although they may visit at these times of special celebration. With the exception of two temples run by Japanese priests, Ekōji in Dusseldorf, and Three Wheels temple in London, discussed further in the following sections (neither of which are Honganji-ha temples – although the priests of Ekōji are ordained in Honganji-ha), there are very few Japanese members of the various Jōdo Shinshū groups in Europe. The vast majority of both members and priests are locally based converts not of Japanese

descent, and all the currently active groups date from post-World War II, most from the 1970s or later.

Early contacts with Jōdo Shinshū in Europe

As explained in Chapter 2, the history of Jōdo Shinshū contacts with Europe can be traced to the late nineteenth century, with the visits of a number of Japanese scholar priests to Europe, as well as visits by Europeans to Japan. But, as noted by Borup (2021) and Matsunaga (2022), while these visits had a considerable impact on Buddhism in Japan (including on Jōdo Shinshū); they made relatively little impression in Europe. Knowledge of Buddhism in Europe at the time was to a great extent based on textual study,[24] in a context where, in contrast to the situation in the United States, there were few migrants from Buddhist countries.

Accompanying this focus on texts was an interest in the material culture of Buddhism, including Japanese Buddhism, enhanced by the "*Japonisme*" boom in late nineteenth-century Europe. An interesting case here is that of the Guimet museum in France, founded by Émile Guimet, who visited Japan and a number of other Asian countries from 1876 to 1877, collecting statues, paintings and other artefacts for the museum (Ducor 2019: 138–9). During this visit, Guimet also attempted a survey of the major Japanese Buddhist traditions, and met with representatives of both Ōtani-ha and Honganji-ha, including Akamatsu Renjō and Shimaji Mokurai, both influential members of Honganji-ha, who had previously spent time in Europe, as described in Chapter 2. Guimet aspired to create a "living" museum (Ducor 2019: 139), and to this end organised religious rituals in the museum library when the opportunity arose. The first of these took place in February 1891, when a service for the annual memorial of Shinran, the *hōonkō* 報恩講, was performed by two visiting Shinshū priests, from the Jōshōji-ha 誠照寺派 (Koizumi Ryōtai 小泉了諦 1851–1938) and the Bukkōji-ha 佛光寺派 (Yoshitsura Hōgen 善連法彦 1864–1893). This seems to have been a hybrid form of ritual, put together by the priests concerned, including verses in Pali, Sino-Japanese, and Sanskrit, as well as two verses (*wasan* 和讃)composed by Shinran.[25] More than 200 people attended, including eminent figures such as Clemenceau, later Prime Minister of France, and the artist Degas (Chiba 2002: 440–498, Ducor 2019). However, despite the expressed hopes of the presiding priests, this did not lead to any recorded conversions.

Other attempts at propagation in Europe by Jōdo Shinshū scholar priests seem to have been focused on non-sectarian Buddhism. A notable example was the Society for Communication with Western Buddhists (Ōbei Bukkyō Tsūshinkai 欧米仏教通信会), established in 1887, and later reorganised as The Buddhist Propagation Society (Kaigai Sen Kyōkai 海外宣教会), literally, Overseas Missionary Society).[26] The Buddhist Propagation Society established a branch office in London in 1889, headed by the Irish-born Charles J.W. Pfoundes (1840–1907) from 1889 to 1892 (Bocking et al. 2014: 2), but this appears to have been short-lived. Overall, these early attempts at propagation in Europe do not seem to have made much

impact. There is no direct evidence of conversions as a result of the activities of the Buddhist Propagation Society, and no evidence of any specifically Jōdo Shinshū groups being established. Rather, for those in Europe who became interested in practising Buddhism, the focus remained on Theravada Buddhism, with a few even travelling to South Asia to seek ordination. The history of Jōdo Shinshū in Europe does not resume until after World War II.

European Buddhism Post-World War II

From the 1950s, while Theravada Buddhist groups continued to be an important strand, Zen Buddhism also started to become better known, particularly through the writings of D.T. Suzuki (Suzuki Daisetz 鈴木大拙 1870–1966). The popularity of Zen increased throughout the 1960s and 70s, and numerous Zen groups were formed throughout Europe. From the 1970s, two other forms of Buddhism also gained in popularity: the Japanese lay Nichiren Buddhist movement Sōka Gakkai, and Tibetan Buddhism. Also during this period, the number of Asian migrants to Europe increased, and established centres and temples across a range of traditions, such as Thai, Sinhalese and Burmese Theravada groups, but also Vietnamese and Chinese groups that incorporate Pure Land elements. Alongside this, some new groups were created in Europe: notable among these was the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, now known as Triratna. By the early twenty-first century, Buddhism in Europe presented a diverse and vibrant picture.[27] However, of the many Buddhist groups which had established a presence, and at least some level of public awareness, Jōdo Shinshū continued to be both very small, and little known, for reasons explored in more detail in Matsunaga (2019, 2022).

Jōdo Shinshū in Europe Post-War

The first Jōdo Shinshū group in Europe was established in 1956 by Harry Pieper (1907–1978), a German Buddhist living in Berlin who had converted to Buddhism in the 1930s. Pieper was introduced to the then *monshu* of Honganji-ha, Shōnyo 勝如 (Ōtani Kōshō 大谷光照) (1911–2002), when he visited Berlin in 1954, and received a form of ordination from the *monshu*. In 1956, Pieper founded a German Jōdo Shinshū community in Berlin, the first in Europe. Though Pieper's active involvement in the Berlin group was short-lived, owing to the decline in his health from the 1960s onwards, he had a larger impact elsewhere, as other Europeans interested in Shin Buddhism contacted him for information. These included Friedrich Fenzl (1932–2014), who established an Austrian Jōdo Shinshū group in 1980, and Jean Éracle (1930–2005), a former Roman Catholic priest, in Switzerland. Éracle received a form of ordination via Pieper, with Shōnyo's authorisation, and established the Buddhist Society of Jōdo Shinshū in Switzerland in 1970, as well as a small temple, Shingyōji 信楽寺.

Other early converts to Jōdo Shinshū in Europe who went on to become ordained in Japan were Jack Austin (1917–1993) from the United Kingdom, who

received ordination in 1977 together with Jérôme Ducor, who later became Jean Éracle's successor; and Adrian Peel from Belgium (1927–2009), a friend of Jack Austin's, who was ordained in 1979. Austin co-founded the Shin Buddhist Association of Great Britain in 1977, together with a Japanese Jōdo Shinshū scholar-priest, Inagaki Hisao 稲垣久雄 (1929–2021). Peel established a Jōdo Shinshū centre in Belgium in 1979, and a temple in Antwerp, Jikōji 慈光寺. The Shin Buddhist Association of Great Britain was short-lived however – it became inactive in the early 1980s when Inagaki returned to Japan following the death of his father, while at the same time Jack Austin became ill. From then until the early 2000s, Jōdo Shinshū had no official presence in the United Kingdom. Instead, those interested in Jōdo Shinshū found a home in the Pure Land Buddhist Fellowship (PLBF) a non-sectarian Pure Land group which had evolved out of the Shin Buddhist Association of Great Britain. A significant figure in the PLBF was Jim Pym, a friend of Jack Austin's, who is discussed further in Chapter 9.

The 1980s saw some setbacks for the emerging Jōdo Shinshū sangha in Europe, which was still very small in size. In addition to the suspension of the Shin Buddhist Association of Great Britain, in both Britain and Germany Jōdo Shinshū followers experienced some difficulties in gaining acceptance by other Buddhists. Some expressed doubts as to whether Jōdo Shinshū could be considered "real" Buddhism, often on the grounds that with its emphasis on reliance on Amida Buddha (often phrased in terms of "faith" in older English language publications) it looked suspiciously like Christianity in disguise. This was exacerbated by issues around practice: as discussed further in Chapter 6, there is a widespread expectation outside Asia that Buddhism should involve seated, silent meditation. The absence of this, combined with ambiguities around how the recitation of the *nenbutsu* should be considered, and whether it constitutes a practice, led to some questioning the authenticity of Jōdo Shinshū as a form of Buddhism. Linked to this there was opposition by some umbrella Buddhist organisations in Europe, notably the German Buddhist Union and the Buddhist Society in London to allowing Jōdo Shinshū groups (or Pure Land groups more broadly) to join.

On an institutional level, these obstacles were largely overcome by the early 1990s, following a number of years of advocacy by local Jōdo Shinshū members. In 1992, the German Jōdo Shinshū organisation was accepted into the German Buddhist Union, and in 1995, the Pure Land Buddhist Fellowship in the United Kingdom gained permission to meet at the premises of the Buddhist Society in London. However, although Pure Land Buddhism is now well accepted as a form of Buddhism by other Buddhist organisations in Europe, the legacy of this history remains. For European Shin Buddhists, who are mostly local converts, the concern to position themselves as Buddhists within the context of a broader Buddhist community which has not always been accepting of Jōdo Shinshū, has been influential in approaches to ritual adaptation. Jōdo Shinshū remains little known compared to other Buddhist traditions in Europe. And it remains challenging to explain Jōdo Shinshū to Europeans with no knowledge of this tradition, and with particular expectations as to what Buddhism should be – for example, that it should be focused around meditation.

The 1990s saw some further significant developments in Jōdo Shinshū in Europe, with the opening of two new temples. Both are located in areas with a high concentration of expatriate Japanese, and have Japanese resident priests. The Three Wheels temple in west London was established in 1994, near to the Japanese school in London. It belongs to an independent branch of Jōdo Shinshū, Shōgyōji, which is loosely linked to Higashi Honganji-ha.[28] It has maintained friendly relations with other Jōdo Shinshū groups in Europe, but is organisationally distinct.

Ekōji, an impressive Japanese style temple was consecrated in 1992 in Düsseldorf, a city that has a large number of Japanese expatriate residents. The main hall of Ekōji is constructed as a Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha temple (Figure 3.1), and the head priest (a position that has been occupied by a Japanese national since the establishment of the temple) is also ordained in Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha. However, the temple is not a recognised as an affiliated Honganji-ha temple. Established by Numata Yehan (沼田惠範 1897–1994), one of the founders of the *Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai* 仏教伝道協会, or Society for the Promotion of Buddhism, it is part of a larger cultural centre, called Ekō-haus, and is funded by the Mitsutoyo Corporation. This centre includes a library and a kindergarten, and hosts a range of Japanese cultural activities, including exhibitions, tea ceremonies, and *ikebana* classes. In line with the aim of the BDK to promote Buddhism

Figure 3.1 Ekōji, Düsseldorf.
Photograph by Louella Matsunaga

on a non-sectarian basis, Ekō-haus is in theory open to all Buddhist denominations, although in practice it is only currently used by Jōdo Shinshū and Zen groups. Even the main hall displays the pan-Buddhist symbol of the wheel of the dharma, rather than the Honganji symbol (Nottelmann-Feil 2022).

Ekōji has nevertheless become an important centre for Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha in Europe: as the only purpose-built temple it is used for annual *hōonkō* memorial celebrations attended by Jōdo Shinshū priests and lay members from across Europe, and was also used for pre-ordination training for European aspirants in 2019. Nottelmann-Feil (2022: 100) notes, however, that despite its location in an area with a high concentration of Japanese residents, there are rarely Japanese participants in the temple services, aside from the Japanese priests assigned to the temple and their families. This reflects the situation noted at the beginning of this section for Europe as a whole that most Japanese people in Europe are short-term residents for the purposes of work or study. In general, they tend to have little interest in attending temples while they are in Europe, given that they perceive temples primarily as providers of funeral or ancestral memorial services.

Other Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha groups which have been established in Europe in recent decades include one in Poland in 1996, and in Romania in 2003, while the UK group has revived and expanded. More recently still, a Spanish-speaking online group, called Jinenkō (自然講), was established in 2021, and has been growing rapidly. This last group differs from previously established groups in that it is based on language rather than geographical location – it meets exclusively online, and is attended by a number of people from Latin America, in addition to Portugal and Spain, as well as Spanish speakers based in other locations. As such, alongside other recently formed online groups, Jinenkō represents a new, post-Covid development in the Jōdo Shinshū sense of community, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

Conclusion

Reviewing the overseas areas of Jōdo Shinshū presented in this chapter, we can see some sharp contrasts. The situation in Europe currently is one of a number of small, geographically scattered groups. These are mainly located in Germany, Britain, Switzerland, and Belgium, with the beginnings of significant online groupings, in particular the Spanish-speaking Jinenkō, developing alongside the older geographically based groups. The overall number of people linked to the various Honganji-ha groups remains small, however, probably no more than 200 or so in total, although this is hard to calculate exactly, as there is no formal membership system. For Honganji-ha in Europe, the vast majority of both priests and lay members are local first-generation converts, who are not of Japanese origin, and have no family background in Japanese Buddhism, although many have come to Jōdo Shinshū having had a previous interest in other forms of Buddhism.

In the Americas, on the other hand, the history of Jōdo Shinshū has been closely intertwined with that of Japanese migration, and dates back much

further, to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Jōdo Shinshū sanghas in the Americas are both much larger and better established than is the case in Europe. However, the experiences of Japanese communities in North America and Latin America have differed in some important respects, and this in turn has impacted on the development of local forms of Jōdo Shinshū. In Hawai'i and North America, Jōdo Shinshū missions quickly followed the migrants, and played an important role in supporting Japanese ethnic communities. At the same time, the climate of growing anti-Japanese discrimination in the early twentieth century was a strong incentive to adapt to the local Protestant Christian context, both in terms of institutional provisions (e.g., the establishment of Sunday schools, little leagues, youth groups and women's groups along the local Christian church model) and in terms of ritual forms, as we shall see in Chapter 8.

In contrast, religious adaptation for Japanese migrants to Latin America in this context took a different shape, in which conversion to Roman Catholicism, was important. In this very different context, Latin America did not develop the kind of distinctive liturgical and organisational forms based on (Protestant) Christianity that are seen in Jōdo Shinshū in the United States and Hawai'i: the forms of liturgy in Latin American temples generally resemble closely those in Japan, not those in the United States. Further, Jōdo Shinshū has not acquired the same reach and social significance within the Nikkei community in Latin America as it has in the United States and Hawai'i. In 2022, Latin America had only about a third of the number of Honganji-ha temples compared to the United States and Hawaii and far fewer members in relation to the overall Nikkei population.[29]

These differences notwithstanding, the Jōdo Shinshū communities in the Americas share some important characteristics which differentiate them from the communities in Europe. In both North and South America, one important role for Jōdo Shinshū temples has been to provide funeral and memorial services for the local Japanese community, as they became permanently established, shifting away from their initial *dekasegi* (temporary migrant labour) orientation. This has created both a financial base for temples, and a basis for long-term multi-generational attachment to Buddhist organisations in the local community. And although in the Americas temple membership has become more diversified in recent years, this ethnic Japanese base remains important. It is largely owing to this base, as well as their much longer history, that the number of followers in the Americas is so much larger than in Europe – although there are concerns regarding falling numbers, and in particular the perception that the younger generation of Nikkei are drifting away from the temples.

Another difference between the Americas and Europe is that in Europe, it has been important for Jōdo Shinshū groups to establish a clear Buddhist identity within a wider Buddhist community. Rather than the pressure to adapt to the host culture experienced in the Americas, in Europe the pressure is more to affirm an identity that is distinct from the surrounding Christian-influenced culture. This

in turn has had an impact on ritual forms, as discussed further in Chapter 8. And, reflecting the smaller size of the communities, and absence of a secure financial base, there is little infrastructure in Europe in the form of purpose-built temples – aside from Ekōji, all the temples and other centres in Europe are adaptations to local houses.

In the following chapters, we explore how these contrasting characteristics of the Jōdo Shinshū communities in different locations have affected ritual adaptations. But first we take a closer look at ritual as a category of action, focusing on embodiment, examining the ordination training undergone by all overseas priests, both from Europe and from the Americas.

Notes

1 Shin Buddhism, referred at the time as *Ikkōshu* 一向宗, had been prohibited by the feudal authorities in the Satsuma domain (present day Kagoshima) as it was perceived as a threat to their power, in view of the uprisings by Shin followers in central Japan, although hidden Shinshū communities, commonly referred to as *kakure nenbutsu* 隠れ念仏, persisted. For a detailed account of hidden Shin Buddhism, see Chilson (2014).
2 For an estimate of the numbers of Japanese migrants to different destinations in the pre-war period, see Azuma (2011: 421).
3 Ōtani-ha in fact had a long history of contact with Korea, going back to the short-lived establishment of a Shinshū temple, Kōtokuji, in Pusan in 1585 (Kim 2012: 110).
4 For a detailed examination of the colonial history of Japanese Buddhism in Korea, see Kim (2012). For a study of Jōdo Shinshū missions to Asia pre-World War II, see Dake (2008); for the propagation of Jōdo Shinshu in China and Taiwan, see Ong (2012), and for the Ōtani-ha missions to Taiwan, see Matsukane (2006). A general overview of Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha propagation in Asia can be found in Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha Kokusaibu and Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha Asia Kaikyōshi Hensan Iinkai (2008).
5 In Hawai'i, the majority of migrants were recruited to work on sugar cane plantations and endured very harsh conditions (Moriya 2019).
6 Offering Japanese language classes was an important aspect of many temples' activities.
7 See Chapter 2 for more on Colonel Olcott.
8 Tanaka (1999: 9–10) estimated that in California "at least half of the Buddhist temples field teams and serve as sponsors or are affiliated with them in one form or another", an involvement which was also cited by one of the Californian ministers that Matsunaga interviewed as a significant factor in attracting people to the temple.
9 Already in 1999 Tanaka estimated the rate of out-marriage at around 50% (Tanaka 1999: 50).
10 This is a matter of concern for the BCA, which is actively looking at strategies to increase membership (https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/post/bca-discusses-declining-membership-strategies, accessed 1/12/24).
11 This diversification is also beginning to extend to the institutional hierarchy – in 2018, the president of the BCA was appointed from outside the ethnic Japanese community.
12 An example is the Spokane Buddhist Temple in Washington State on the Northwest coast of the United States. In 1994, the temple recorded 64 members, all but three of whom were Japanese or Japanese American. But by 2020, most of the sangha were European Americans, with only around 10 to 12 Japanese Americans out of more than 50 members (https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/post/bca-discusses-declining-membership-strategies, accessed 1/12/24). It is interesting to note here that aside from a number of East Asian American members (e.g., Chinese or Korean) who may be

assimilated into the "Japanese-American" category, the non-Japanese membership of the BCA is overwhelmingly white.

13 Migration to Mexico was curtailed following the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907–1908, as part of which the Japanese government agreed to restrict immigration to territories adjoining the United States (Masterson and Funada-Classen 2004: 33). Most of these early migrants to Mexico went on to settle elsewhere (Usarski 2024: 92).

14 Although now part of Japan, as noted above, Okinawa, formerly the Ryūkyū kingdom, was only incorporated into Japan in the nineteenth century, and has a distinct history, language and culture. In diaspora too, Okinawans and mainland Japanese have often maintained a distinct identity.

15 In the early years of Japanese migration, Argentina attracted Japanese migrants who had initially travelled to Brazil or Peru and had become unhappy with the working conditions there, but after World War I a majority came directly from Japan or the Ryūkyū islands (Okinawa prefecture), drawn by the wages which were substantially higher than those on offer in either Brazil, Peru, or mainland Japan (Masterson and Funada-Classen 2004: 89).

16 The Christian institution of godparenthood was also helpful in this regard.

17 This has been acknowledged by the Brazilian government, which issued a formal apology in July 2024. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/brazil-apologizes-persecution-japanese-immigrants-rcna163809#:~:text=A%20report%20by%20the%20Amnesty,tortured%20from%201946%20to%201948.&text=The%20Brazilian%20government%20on%20Thursday,years%20after%20World%20War%20II.
A former apology: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/11/brazil-japanese-community-apology-abuse.

18 The two groups are referred to in Japanese as *kachigumi* (the majority), or winning group, who did not accept that Japan had lost the war, and *makegumi*, or losing group, who recognised Japan's defeat. There were a number of violent confrontations between the two.

19 In the immediate post-war period, Okinawans suffered economically from the combined impact of the repatriation of Okinawans who had migrated to Japan's colonies, following Japan's defeat, leading to a steep increase in the islands' population and therefore pressure on resources, exacerbated by the expropriation of local land by the US administration for use as military bases; and lower wages for Okinawans than other workers under the US administration (Okinawa was under direct US rule from the end of the war until the islands' reversion to Japan in 1972). Consequently, the US occupying forces encouraged the migration of Okinawans to Latin America, with the majority going to Brazil, and a smaller number to Argentina. Migration from Okinawa to Latin America in the post-war period continued longer than from the Japanese mainland – until the late 1960s – reflecting the slower economic recovery of Okinawa compared to mainland Japan (Masterson and Funada-Classen 2004: 179–80).

20 Significantly, the proportion of non-Nikkei ordained clergy in Brazil and Latin America, in general, remains very small in comparison to the US. This is not only a reflection of a smaller non-Nikkei membership, but is also due to the fact that, in South America, the ordination training is only offered in Japanese and not in Spanish or Portuguese. This offers a sharp contrast with the mainland US, Canada and Hawai'i, which, through the BCA, offer training in English up to the level of *kyōshi* (教師), as further discussed in Chapter 4.

21 Rocha (2006: 92), writing on Zen in Brazil, points out that the Brazilian religious landscape is well known for its hybridity and creolisation.

22 Unlike Sarandí, Fūraibō has a significant online presence through its website and social media, where activities are advertised and also live-streamed: https://www.furaiboba.com.ar; https://www.facebook.com/Furaiboba.

23 *Ohigan* is a celebration that is particular to Japanese Buddhism, with the first *ohigan* ceremony dating back to the ninth century. *Ohigan* literally means "the other shore", explained as referring to the spirits of the dead reaching nirvana, or the Pure Land.
24 The main centres for the academic study of Buddhism in Europe were in Britain, France and Germany, with some significant figures here being the French scholars Eugène Burnouf (1801–1852), described as "the father of Buddhist studies in the West" (Ducor 2019: 137) and Léon de Rosny (1837–1914) in Japanese studies; and in Britain Rhys Davids, who founded the Pali text society (Thomas William Rhys Davids (1843–1922) and Caroline Augusta Foley Rhys Davids (1857–1942), and Max Müller (1823–1900), a student of Burnouf's of German origin, who became professor first of modern languages and later of comparative philology at Oxford University.
25 Guimet subsequently organised religious rituals in the museum which were performed by other Buddhist schools. For more on Buddhism in Britain in the Victorian period see Almond 1988.
26 According to a contemporary observer, Edward J. Reed (Reed 1880: 83–84, cited in Shields 2017: 25), Akamatsu seems to have aspired to propagate Jōdo Shinshū in Europe, but in practical terms his missionary activities were focused on establishing the Buddhist Propagation Society.
27 For a detailed discussion of the history of Buddhism in Europe, see Baumann 2002.
28 Although Higashi Honganji is a term popularly used for Ōtani-ha, the organisation now called Higashi Honganji-ha broke away from Ōtani-ha in the 1980s following a dispute.
29 Brazil alone has around two million inhabitants of Japanese descent, compared to around 1.6 million for the United States and Hawai'i combined.

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4 Creating the ritual body

Introduction

In 2019, a *tokudo* 得度 (ordination) training retreat was organised by Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha, for both Japanese and overseas aspirants. To prepare the overseas aspirants to take the retreat, three two-day pre-*tokudo* training sessions were held at the Jōdo Shinshū Center in Berkeley, California, organised by the Buddhist Churches of America. These training sessions covered a range of topics, including lectures on doctrine, Buddhist ethics, and topics in American Buddhism. A large proportion of the course was devoted to practising chanting, with a further section devoted to learning about priests' attire – what robes are worn when, how to put them on, and how to fold them. The acquisition of these skills was also strongly emphasised in the *tokudo* training itself, which took place in July of that year over an 11-day period of seclusion in the Nishiyama Betsuin 西山別院temple complex in western Kyoto.[1]

Alongside this, the *tokudo* training also included intensive training in various aspects of bodily practice and discipline. This included how to move, sit, and bow, during rituals (especially when entering the sacred space of the inner altar area, or *naijin*), how to treat ritual objects, and the correct presentation of the body, for example, rules regarding hair, and tattoos. Nor was bodily discipline restricted to the performance of services: it permeated all aspects of daily routine, including, for example, meal times, for which there were detailed rules.[2] During the pre-*tokudo* training, one of the trainers referred to creating "the ritual body", while during *tokudo* itself, reference was made to "embodying the teachings". These references were partly informed by the academic background of the trainers – many of whom were both priests and university academics. But we argue that they also reflect a deeply embedded emphasis on training through the body, a characteristic of training not only in Jōdo Shinshū, but throughout many areas of Japanese life, in both secular and religious contexts, as discussed further in the following sections.

This chapter explores the meaning of "creating the ritual body" and "embodying the teachings" in the context of the Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha ordination programme, by examining bodily practice and training. We ask what we can learn from this about the ways in which a system of beliefs, identity, and authority becomes inscribed in the bodies and actions of priests. We also consider the ritualisation of actions in Jōdo Shinshū beyond the ordination programme, in the everyday practices of both priests

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and lay followers. Finally, we address how this relates to processes of globalisation. Before moving to a detailed exploration of the ordination programme, in the next section of this chapter, we provide some context, with a discussion of the importance of embodied practice to a study of ritual, and of approaches to training in Japan.

Ritual mastery and remembering with the body

In considering the ordination training, Bell's analysis of "ritual mastery" seems apt (Bell 1992, 1997). Applying Bourdieu's notion of "practical mastery" to a ritual context, Bell defines ritual mastery as "a practical mastery of the schemes of ritualization as an embodied knowing, as the sense of ritual seen in its exercise" (Bell 1992: 107). As we shall see in the detailed description of the *tokudo* ordination programme in the following sections, much of the training was concerned with mastering a range of bodily practices. The aim, made explicit by the trainers, was that the prescribed ways of moving, posture, rules concerning attire and how to treat sacred objects should become automatic, so they could be performed without thinking once the ordination programme was complete. Bell goes on to point out that there is a circular relationship here, with the process of acquiring ritual mastery implying particular cultural/religious contexts or "schemes" within which practitioners are socialised, and which they come to embody, thus continually recreating them. Bell's emphasis on embodiment also speaks to a deep interconnectedness between the corporeal and the cognitive: practical knowledge is acquired with the body, and may not always be made explicit, or become fully conscious, echoing Bourdieu's notion of the "habitus" (Bourdieu 1977: 72–73).[3] We will explore further in the following sections the ways in which *tokudo* aspirants came to acquire embodied knowledge that went beyond the carrying out of ritual to encompass the conceptual schemes implicit in the practices learned.

As writers on the body from Mauss (1973 [1935]) onwards have pointed out, the mastery of prescribed bodily techniques also implies, and reinforces, structures of social authority. Douglas (2002 [1970]: 113) makes the case that "bodily control is an expression of social control", while Foucault (1991 [1975]: 59) writes of bodily disciplines relating to time, space, movement, and body-object relations producing "docile bodies" that can be "subjected, used, transformed and improved". But it is also important to note that this is not a passive process. Ritual mastery requires work, and active engagement from the trainee. Successful completion of the initial process of training, and continued practice thereafter, results in the acquisition of embodied skills which can be seen as a form of "bodily capital" (Wacquant 1995, 2004).[4] This in turn helps to both establish a priest's authority, as representative of Honganji, and to perpetuate the conceptual systems and larger structures of authority that underlie the various bodily practices. Also, the process of acquiring these embodied skills is not finite or limited to the 11-day training programme. For those with a long association with Jōdo Shinshū prior to becoming priests many of the bodily practices will have been absorbed many years before engaging in formal training, while for others (in particular recent converts) the training programme marks the beginning of a process of mastering initially unfamiliar forms, which requires continued work on completion of the training. For many in this position, the

completion of the ordination training may feel more like the beginning of a process than the attainment of "ritual mastery".

It is also important to situate the ordination training programme in the Japanese cultural context. The emphasis on embodied learning, or, to use a common Japanese phrase, *karada de oboeru* 体で覚える (learning, or remembering, through the body), is shared with other forms of training in Japan, ranging from art forms such as the tea-ceremony (Cox 2003, Kato 2004) to the martial arts (Cox 2003), junior college programmes for women (McVeigh 1997) and even corporate training programmes (Kondo 1990). In the religious context, Reader (1995) has described the importance of embodied practices such as cleaning as a form of training; while Swift (2022: 29) draws our attention to the emphasis on "sticking the teachings to the body" or "*oshie o mi ni tsukeru*" 教えを身に付ける in the context of the Japanese new religion, Sūkyō Mahikari 崇教真光.

A common theme running through these varied examples, whether in a secular or religious context, is that the process of training the body is not just concerned with transforming behaviour, or acquiring skills, but also transforming the self, broadly defined. Mind and body are not viewed as separable here, rather, working on the body is a way of acting on the self as a whole. Japanese philosophers such as Yuasa (1987) and Ichikawa (1975, 1993) have argued that this is characteristic of a distinctive "Eastern" understanding of the mind-body as an indissociable entity. Yuasa (1987: 24) traces this back to Buddhist ideas of oneness of body-mind – *shinshin ichinyo* 心身一如 – a phrase which was first used by the Zen master Eisai 栄西 (1141–1215), and which Yuasa notes is also used in the martial arts. There is a danger here of overstating (and essentialising) the particularity of Japanese approaches – as noted above, European language scholarship on embodiment also challenges any simple idea of mind-body dualism. And there is a long history in Europe too of self-discipline through bodily discipline – as explored by Foucault (1991 [1975]), for example. However, it is worth noting that the importance of embodied learning has long been made explicit in Japan, and positively valued.

One characteristic aspect of this is the emphasis on correct forms (*kata*, *katachi*形), and the idea that learning, and transformation of the self, begins with a mastery of these forms (*katachi de hairu* 形で入る – to enter through the form) (Kondo 1990: 106–7). Another important concept is *sahō* 作法. Japanese English dictionaries translate *sahō* as manners, or etiquette, but it has a wider meaning in Japanese. Used in the tea-ceremony, martial arts, haiku, Noh, and flower arranging, often as *reigi-sahō* 礼儀作法, it includes prescribed ways of moving, handling objects, and correct posture. But, as has been pointed out by Kato (2004: 29) and Cross (2009: 120) among others, there is a moral dimension to this in that it relates to the importance of the discipline of the body as a way of disciplining the mind.

Within Jōdo Shinshū, *sahō* is used to refer both to particular rituals, which may be referred to in, for example, printed service books, as [name of ritual] *sahō*, and also the prescribed postures, movements, attire, and way of using ritual implements. In a 2024 translation of a guide to Jōdo Shinshū ritual, the translators explain that there is no single way of translating *sahō*, and that it may be used to refer to etiquette, rituals, or guidelines (Jodo Shinshu International Office 2024:

312). It is also noteworthy in this context that in Japanese there is some overlap between the idea of etiquette and that of ritual – the word *girei* 儀礼, for example, is translated in Japanese-English dictionaries as meaning both etiquette and ritual. The Japanese version of the above guide begins with a claim for the importance of *girei*: "儀礼は心の表徴であり" (*girei wa kokoro no hyōchō de ari*) – a possible translation of this is "ritual/etiquette is the outward sign of what is in the heart" (Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha Gonshiki Shidōsho 2021: preface).[5]

This chapter examines how *sahō* is expressed in practice within Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha, first taking the example of the *tokudo* ordination programme, and then reflecting on the wider context of ritual and embodiment in Jōdo Shinshū. The description of the *tokudo* training programme given here is based on the July 2019 training for overseas aspirants. Two of the authors of this volume, Galvan-Alvarez and Matsunaga, participated in the overseas group of trainees, while the third co-author, Dake, was one of the lecturers on the programme. This account is based primarily on the recollections of Matsunaga and Galvan-Alvarez, although other trainees and trainers have also been consulted. This programme was run in parallel with training for Japanese aspirants – of 45 aspirants on the programme, 25 were from Japan, with the remaining 20 being mainly from the United States, but with some aspirants from Canada, Europe, and Hong Kong. The overseas group followed a predominantly English language programme,[6] with most of the training therefore conducted separately from that followed by the Japanese aspirants, although everyone participated in some of the services, and also in the daily meals and cleaning.

Creating the Ritual body, embodying the teachings: *Tokudo* ordination training in *Jōdo Shinshū*

In a wrap-up lecture at the end of the training programme, the day before the scheduled ordination ceremony, one of the trainers summarised what it meant to become a Jōdo Shinshū priest, or minister: "It's your life. It's not a job, it's a way of life. So, you are expected to live the life of a Jōdo Shinshū minister. You will live a life putting a robe on your heart". He went on, "every movement is part of spreading the dharma. Not only what you say, but also how you use your body … eyes are on you all the time". The message of conveying the teachings through the body is explicit here, and so too is the symbolism of wearing the robes, as taking on the identity of a priest in a way that goes beyond appearances, to "putting a robe on your heart". And there is a further important warning that becoming a priest means that others are observing you *as a priest*, and that priests need to be mindful at all times, in all of their actions, of what they represent.

Although clearly an ideal, which may not always be achieved, these statements show the importance attached to ministerial training as an embodied process. Considering the ordination training as a whole, this process extended beyond formal lectures and training sessions, to encompass the rules and daily practices that aspirants were expected to follow even outside the formal sessions. In this section, we will consider both the formal training sessions and the ways in which disciplines of the body permeated the programme as a whole. This included the pre-training

programme, which introduced the skills that would be developed in the ordination training itself. Some of these, involving memorisation and recitation of texts, we would later be tested on, together with a short test on basic points of doctrine and general knowledge concerning Jōdo Shinshū. Other skills taught had previously been part of the formal testing, but were no longer tested. These included how to offer incense; understanding the different robes we would wear on different occasions and how to tie them and fold them; and altar arrangements.[7] And another very important element was attention to posture and movement.

Posture and bodily movements: *Sahō* and embodying the teachings

The importance of posture and bodily movements was emphasised throughout the pre-training, as well as in daily practice in the ordination training itself. In one session of the pre-training, which summarised the assignments (*kadai* 課題) which we would be required to pass, a handout was distributed on "*ippan sahō*" (一般作法) – translated as "General Manners". Although not part of the formal assignments, it was explained that this *ippan sahō* was essential to learn, and a part of this session was devoted to talking through in detail the points listed on the handout. These included: how to sit (both on the floor in the formal position known as *seiza* 正座 in Japanese,[8] and on chairs – including position of hands and back posture, and the positioning of legs and feet); how to stand (including the correct angle of the feet); how to bow (both shallow and deep bows); how to walk, including how to enter and leave sacred spaces and the correct positioning of the arms and hands while walking; as well as three different ways of offering incense and the performance of *gasshō* 合掌 – joining the palms together – at the beginning and end of ceremonies.

Some elements of these "general manners" reflect widely accepted practice in Japan, in particular regarding how to sit on the floor in a formal way, and the importance of bowing. These might be expected to be part of most Japanese people's bodily *habitus*, that is, body practices which are so deeply ingrained through repeated practice from childhood that they are not fully conscious, although for younger Japanese people this is less likely to be the case (sitting *seiza*, for example, is much less common now in Japan than it once was). For many of the overseas aspirants, on the other hand, these were new skills to be learned – although again the picture here was complicated. A number had either lived in Japan, and/or came from a Japanese cultural background, and the North American candidates were active members of established temples – so levels of familiarity with practices such as bowing – and even more specific ritual skills such as incense offering – varied considerably.

Still, the culture gap in the embodied dispositions of some of the non-Japanese participants was noticeable in some contexts. For example, regarding bowing, it is a requirement to bow when passing in front of sacred images in the *hondō* 本堂, or main hall (such as the statue of Amida Buddha, or scrolls depicting Shinran or Rennyo). But it was not uncommon for non-Japanese participants to forget to do this, which prompted one of the trainers to remark in exasperation on one occasion – "you would bow to a friend if you met them, so how can you forget to bow to Amida?" – a comment which would have had more

force if directed at someone whose daily cultural habitus included bowing as a greeting. In general, though, errors in bodily movements and postures were dealt with simply by repeated patient correction, with the explicit aim of making these movements automatic, so that by the end of the training we would perform them without needing to think about it. In other words, the training aimed to create a new habitus, or set of bodily dispositions, appropriate for a Jōdo Shinshū priest. And in so far as these dispositions expressed core aspects of Jōdo Shinshū such as reverence for Amida Buddha and the founder, Shinran, or other significant historical teachers, it was indeed a training in "embodying the teachings" – albeit often in a recognisably Japanese idiom.

There was, however, an effort to adjust the training for foreign aspirants where possible. The most noticeable adjustment was that the requirement to sit *seiza* was waived for foreign aspirants as too physically taxing for those not accustomed to it – we were all required to sit in chairs for all the services held during the training. But there were still detailed rules about how to sit – knees and feet together, back upright, not touching the back of the chair. As one trainer warned us during the pre-training, this kind of sitting in chairs for long periods can also be very uncomfortable – indeed the ability to endure discomfort was itself another aspect of the training.

Training in *sahō*, including movement and posture, was not confined to the non-Japanese aspirants, and formed a core aspect of the ordination programme, with Japanese aspirants also subject to continual checks and correction where necessary. Although some elements of *sahō*, such as bowing, were familiar to Japanese participants in a general way, the attention given to the regulation of movement and posture was detailed and precise – a feature that can also be seen in many secular training programmes in Japan. An important point here is that the specific detail of required movements and postures may vary depending on context. For example, although bowing is a general practice, the depth and angle of a bow will vary depending on the situation, and training in bowing is also given to new corporate recruits in Japan. It is important that bowing in a formal context is performed correctly, and this is something that Japanese recruits too need to practise to perfect.[9]

There are also rules concerning specific bodily movements which may vary on an institutional level within Japan. For example, for Jōdo Shinshū priests, the rule for entering sacred space is to always enter with the left foot first.[10] Comparing this with the tea ceremony, in the Urasenke tea school the host enters with the right foot first, in the Omotesenke school with the left foot, and in Mashonokōjisenke with whichever foot is closer to the wall (Kato 2004: 54). So, within Japan, a mastery of the precise details of bodily practices in particular contexts, and within particular institutions, may serve both to mark the practitioner as skilled in that domain, and as belonging to a particular institution. And these specific details vary not only between religious and secular organisations, but also among Buddhist schools. One example is the practice of *gasshō*, or joining the palms together at particular points of the ritual. Although *gasshō* in some form is practised across all Buddhist traditions in Japan, the precise way of performing this, and in particular the positioning of the Buddhist beads (called *nenju* 念珠, literally mindfulness beads, in Jōdo Shinshū),[11] when performing *gasshō*, varies. Indeed, there are Japanese websites devoted to explaining this, for the benefit of those attending Buddhist rituals who may be uncertain as to the practice

in that particular school. Similarly, although the practice of offering incense is found across all Buddhist traditions, the prescribed way of offering incense varies widely. This dimension of marking institutional sectarian identity, as well as identity as a priest, through embodied practice, is also evident in the priests' attire.

Wearing the robes and the treatment of ritual objects

Attire, or how to wear the priests' robes, was strongly emphasised throughout the whole process of training. Before arriving in Japan, we were each sent sets of robes, so that we could practise putting them on correctly. These included special undergarments for wearing under kimono, a white kimono or *hakue* 白衣 for wearing under the priests' robes with a special white sash to fasten it, a black priest's robe for everyday use, called a *fuhō* 布袍, which can be normally worn either over the white kimono or over western style clothes, a black formal priest's robe, called a *kokue* 黒衣, with a black sash,[12] white *tabi* 足袋 socks (split toe socks), and black, or *sumi*[13] 墨 *wagesa* 輪袈裟 (priest's stole) and *gojō gesa* 五条袈裟 (larger priest's stole, worn when performing services in the inner altar area) (Figure 4.1).[14]

Figure 4.1 Galvan-Alvarez wearing training robes: *fuhō* and *sumi wagesa* with single strand *nenju*.

In addition, we were sent a double-stranded *nenju* (*futawa nenju*双輪念珠), and a special ceremonial folded fan for priests, called a *chūkei* 中啓 to use with the formal *kokue* robe and *gojō gesa* when performing services – for the less formal *fuhō*, we were told we would need to bring our single-strand *nenju* 単念珠, which all the aspirants already had. Some other items, such as the *zōri* 草履, or Japanese thonged sandals, were given to us when we arrived in Japan.

We were warned that before entering the training centre in Japan, we would have to leave our western clothes behind and would be wearing our new robes all the time, except at night (we could bring our own night wear). In addition, there would be frequent changes of robes – when performing services in the inner altar area or *naijin* 内陣we would be required to wear formal robe and *gojō gesa*, and carry the two-stranded *nenju* and fan, whereas for attending lectures, and for mealtimes, and attending services in the outer area of the temple or *gejin* 外陣, we would wear the less formal robes (*fuhō*) and *wagesa*, and carry our single-stranded *nenju*. Mastery of the correct way of wearing and tying the robes was one of the important skills which we were expected to acquire. Whichever robes we were not wearing would need to be correctly folded, and placed in a special box (we each had our own individual box) in the rooms that we would share with a small group of other trainees. There was also a specified order in which clothing should be placed in this box, reflecting the order of purity/sacredness of the clothing, with the most impure (the undergarments) at the bottom, and the *nenju* and *kesa* (priest's stole) at the top. Observing the correct folding and placement of robes during the training was strictly monitored, with inspections of our rooms while we were elsewhere. Incorrectly folded or ordered robes resulted in the person responsible being told to return to their room to re-fold the robes.

Clothing was also linked to movement, and both were put in the context of the notion of creating the ritual body. One of the trainers in the pre-training programme explained:

> We could maybe think of it as the ritual body … there's a term in ritual studies, the ritual body, your body, how you use your body, is part of the ritual. And the ritual isn't just walking in and sitting down, the ritual is how you stand, how you bow, what clothes you're wearing, how you use the clothes.[15]

He went on to explain that when you are wearing kimono you have to walk differently – if your stride is too long you pull the kimono apart, it gets loose, "so you learn this ritual body, you become more aware of your body in a different way".

Awareness of clothing, and, by extension, of the body, ran through the whole of the ordination training. As we were wearing the priests' attire for the whole of the 11 days, we had to develop a sensitivity to making sure our clothing was always correctly adjusted. We were encouraged to check our appearance in mirrors, and to check each other. Daily movements from one activity to another were punctuated by gestures correcting each other's attire before the trainers might need to correct it, and sometimes help with tying robes correctly. Other aspects of clothing which

we had to develop an awareness of during the residential training were the rules governing what clothing could be worn in what space. For example, when entering the toilet, or doing the daily cleaning, the black outer robe and *wagesa* had to be removed – these could not be worn in a "dirty" space, or for "dirty" activities. And, as noted above, there were also rules governing which robes should be worn in different spaces within the temple. Changes of attire thus served to create and reinforce the construction of space in terms of whether it was seen as "dirty" (or not), and to contribute to the creation of sacred space, as discussed further in Chapter 6.[16]

A further dimension of this was the treatment of ritual objects. In addition to the positioning and care of ritual objects on the altar, which was a separate aspect of our training; the *nenju*, the fan, and the service book were all objects that we carried regularly, and which had specific rules governing their treatment and use. Except for when we were conducting services in formal robes, and therefore using the double-stranded *nenju*, the single strand *nenju* had to be carried in our left hand at all times unless cleaning, using the bathroom, or eating, in which case it was left in the sleeve of our *fuhō*, or during lectures, when it could be placed on the tables in front of us. Even when going to the training centre office to collect the few specified personal items that were allowed to be stored there, if found not to be carrying the *nenju*, we would be sent away to get it. This reflects the perception that carrying a *nenju* is a basic part of a priest's identity, and something one should be sure to carry at all times.[17]

As in all Buddhist traditions, there were rules for the treatment of service books, and other sacred books, such as the Pure Land Sutras, the Collected Works of Shinran, and the writings of the Pure Land Masters.[18] When opening and closing these books, they first had to be held at chest level in front of us, parallel to the ground, and then raised to the forehead with the head slightly bowed before opening them, in a gesture referred to as "*itadaku*" 頂く – an honorific used when receiving something in Japanese. When using a service book, they should be held open with both hands, and with the fingers closed. They should also not be placed on the ground – when sitting *seiza* if it was necessary to put the service book down, it had to be placed on the fan that was always carried when performing a service. *Nenju* should also never be placed directly on the floor – they may also be placed on a fan if necessary, or on a cloth or a tray. For carrying ritual items, and using them during services, there were further rules as to how they should be held, and placed in the robes.[19]

These rules were explained as being correct, respectful behaviour towards sacred objects. But, in an analogous process to that suggested by Bell for the creation of sacred space, it can also be argued that the rules surrounding their use contributed to the demarcation of these objects as sacred. And following Rambelli (2017), these prescribed ways of behaving towards these objects can also be considered a form of ritual labour. At the same time, acquiring expertise in the handling of ritual objects is one of the skills that marks out identity – either as followers of Jōdo Shinshū or as Buddhists more generally. Lay followers (as well as priests) might be expected to follow the simpler rules (for example, concerning the treatment of books, or the carrying of the single strand *nenju* on the left hand), while priests were also expected to master the more complex rules, for the handling of ritual objects used only by priests in services.[20]

Robes as a marker of identity

Access to official robes and ritual items such as the service books is also a marker of identity and belonging, while also linking the wearer to a broader Buddhist community. The *kesa* in its various forms has a particular symbolic importance – the term *kesa* is a transliteration of the Sanskrit *kāṣāya*, which was used to describe the clothing worn by followers of Śākyamuni Buddha, which were made from pieces of discarded fabric. The form and use of articles of clothing derived from this changed, however, as Buddhism spread across Asia. In China, the term came to describe a kind of stole worn over clothing, and this practice was also adopted in Japan (Jodo Shinshu International Office 2024: 253–4). But while in this sense the *kesa* provides a symbolic connection to the first followers of Śākyamuni Buddha, and can be seen as a unifying symbol, it is also a means of differentiation. For example, within Jōdo Shinshū, as in other Buddhist schools, different styles of *kesa* are worn for different occasions, with the *wagesa* for more informal occasions; the *gojō gesa* for performing rituals in the *naijin*, and a more elaborate style of *kesa*, the *shichijō gesa* 七条袈裟, for some very special ritual occasions.[21]

The *kesa* worn (both *wagesa* and *gojō gesa*) may also reflect different statuses. Within Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha, *kesa* used for the priests' training are black, and although it is not forbidden to wear these after ordination, on successful completion of the training they are generally replaced by more colourful *kesa*. The black *gojō gesa* is replaced during the ordination ceremony itself with an ochre coloured unlined *gojō gesa* made of hemp, called a *kigesa* 黄袈裟 (literally, yellow *kesa*), bestowed on the newly ordained priests by the *monshu*, who conducts the ordination. The colour is said to be that of the original *kesa* in India, so again there is a symbolic connection made here with the history of Buddhism. The *kigesa* in turn is generally replaced by an elaborate brocade *gojō gesa* that the priest may purchase themselves after ordination, or which may be gifted to them (Figure 4.2).[22]

However, some newly ordained overseas priests chose to continue to wear the *kigesa*, at least for a period, rather than replacing it with the more elaborate brocade *gojō gesa*, and some local temples in Japan also have a tradition of wearing *kigesa* to some services.[23] There is also a range of *wagesa* and *gojō gesa* corresponding to different ranks within the priesthood, with a rule book produced by the governing body of Honganji-ha stipulating which *kesa*, and which robes, may be worn depending on institutional role and rank (both as an individual priest, and in terms of the rank of the temple to which the priest belongs).

Within these limitations, however, a very wide range of patterns of fabric are available, with special designs also produced to commemorate particular anniversaries. *Kesa* may also have a more personal meaning – on our successful completion of the *tokudo* training in 2019, the four new priests from the United Kingdom were all given a new *wagesa* by the director of the International Association of Buddhist Culture (IABC), an organisation linked to Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha.[24] These *wagesa* all had the same pattern of fabric – a design produced in commemoration of the accession of the current *monshu*. They thus serve as a symbolic link between those UK priests ordained at the same time, as well as marking our membership of the

Figure 4.2 Galvan-Alvarez and Matsunaga wearing formal robes – *kokue, gojō gesa* – and carrying fans and double-stranded *nenju* at *hōonkō* at Ekoji in Düsseldorf.

Photograph by Hironobu Shoju

Honganji-ha tradition, and our connection to the *monshu* who ordained us. Another sort of personal meaning is carried in the practice of bereaved families donating the expensive *gojō gesa* to temples conducting funerary services for their loved ones, with the name of the family embroidered in the lining of the *gojō gesa*. In the United States, rainbow *kesa* have been introduced in honour of Pride events, and of the LGBTQ+ community within Jōdo Shinshū. This innovation has recently been mirrored by the introduction of rainbow *kesa*, as well as rainbow *nenju*, by at least two of the robe suppliers to Honganji-ha in Japan.

These material goods can thus signal multiple meanings, including differences of status within Honganji, markers of significant events, links with other priests/followers, and identification – for example, with the LGBTQ+ community. They are also a field of innovation, with the creation of new designs, and a locus of some global currents of change becoming visible. Importantly, robes, *kesa*, and the way that they are worn, also mark institutional belonging. Different robe makers are affiliated to particular schools of Buddhism, although they may make robes

for several sub-groups within the school; and in order to purchase a robe, or a *kesa*, you should be on a register for priests of the school in question. For robes or *kesa* specific to some ranks, it may be necessary to complete an application form for approval by the school. Although *kesa* are worn by priests across all Buddhist traditions in Japan, the type, design, and way of fastening the *kesa* have many variations, as do the robes, which to those familiar with them mark out the particular institution to which the wearer belongs.[25] As an example, within Jōdo Shinshū, the prescribed way of tying the small knot of the *gojō gesa* varies depending on the school of Jōdo Shinshū,[26] and the number of pleats in the *kokue* robe, and the presence or absence of patterns woven into the fabric of the robes may also vary.[27] For the *kesa*, the crest of the particular school is often woven into the fabric.

Being allowed to wear the correct, authorised, priests' robes, and learning the correct way of wearing them, is thus an important marker of legitimacy, and being linked to a particular Buddhist school.[28] It was impressed on us that this also carries responsibilities, and on rare occasions, a priest who is deemed to have acted in a way that is not in keeping with the tradition may have their ordination, and hence the right to wear the robes, removed.[29] "Wearing the robes" thus becomes a metaphor for the role and demeanour of a priest, extending beyond the physical aspect of the clothing itself, to encompass correct bodily movements and postures, and beyond that a way of acting, or even living, which is not explicitly laid out, but which is implied in the comment of the trainer quoted above, that "you will live a life putting a robe on your heart".

Chanting, the *kadai*, and the importance of the voice

Although the care of robes and ritual objects were all important aspects of the training, we were not examined on these. The four assignments, or *kadai* 課題 which we were tested on, and which we had to pass in order to be ordained (along with a short written test) all concerned the voice, as well as the bodily aspects associated with these vocal ritual performances. The *Shōshinnenbutsuge* 正信念仏偈, commonly referred to as the *Shōshinge*, a 120-line piece written by Shinran in Sino-Japanese, which summarises the teachings of Jōdo Shinshū, had to be memorised in two different chanting settings; and we also needed to be able to chant the first six verses of the *Wasan* 和讃, poems composed by Shinran in Japanese which are chanted after the *Shōshinge* in services. The six *wasan* did not have to be memorised (in actual services in any case the *wasan* chanted rotate, so are not always the same), but we did need to master the tune to which they are sung, and the prescribed pattern of where to take breaths while chanting.

The final two assignments were to memorise and be able to recite the *Ryōgemon* 領解文[30] (literally, statement of understanding), in Japanese – a statement of the core elements of Jōdo Shinshū doctrine, composed by Rennyo; and to be able to recite one of Rennyo's letters clarifying Jōdo Shinshū teachings – the *gobunshō* 御文章. The *gobunshō* are supposed to be recited at most services in Japan, and there is a prescribed pattern of recitation for them in Japanese, which is quite different from ordinary speech or chanting. We did not have to memorise the selected *gobunshō* – this is always read from a book, which is kept in a special box, or

gobunshō bako 御文章箱 in temples – but there is a particular ritual for carrying the book to the place where it is read, and opening it, which we also had to learn. The point of this assignment was to master the patterns of intonation and where to take breaths when reciting the *gobunshō* – one specific *gobunshō* was assigned, but these patterns could then be applied to other *gobunshō*, once we had learned the notation showing how to recite them.

These assignments brought together the "three karmas" of body, speech, and mind (*shinkui* 体口意) referred to in the introduction. The recitation of texts and the chanting necessitated mastery of the voice in terms of rhythm, tone, pitch, and correct pronunciation, and also regulating breathing in order to pause at the correct places. But the content of the texts (which relates to the mind) was also important, as those selected for the trainees to memorise summarised the content of Jōdo Shinshū teaching. Although we had to memorise them in Japanese (or Sino-Japanese in the case of the *Shōshinge*), translations were available for us to study. And finally, posture and bodily movements were emphasised throughout, as recitation and chanting had to be performed using the correct bodily forms. One trainer explained that "liturgy is the essence of the teaching expressed through ritual. It may be hard to understand in the beginning, but it can reach people's hearts". He added that "sutra chanting is not just reading, we express with our whole bodies our gratitude for the teachings". To reinforce the point made at the beginning of this chapter regarding embodiment and the self, in the transformation of trainees to their new identity as priest, all three aspects of body, speech, and mind, were interwoven throughout the training. This was particularly evident in the residential training.

A rite of passage: embodied learning in the residential training centre

Although some preparation both in chanting and in *sahō*, including wearing the robes and the treatment of ritual objects, was given before the main residential part of the ordination training, during the residential training itself all this became part of our daily living. The impact of this is hard to overstate: it is very different to practise folding robes or tying the *gojō gesa* in a classroom, with a teacher on hand to help, and to have to do this when rushing to prepare for a service several times a day. As our western style clothing was left behind when we entered the facility at the start of the training, wearing the robes became part of our everyday routine, from the time that we awoke in the morning. Similarly, the required postures and movements were a thread that ran through our daily practice, with mistakes always subject to correction. In addition, there were many other aspects of group living which, while not part of the prescribed *sahō*, incorporated important aspects of our formation as priests. In this section of the chapter, we begin by outlining the structure of the training course and then consider in what ways this residential training could be said to embody the teachings.

Before the start of the residential training, we all gathered at the International Centre in Kyoto for a final pre-training/orientation session, which was to last two days. This was used to check that we had all the attire and other basic materials (prescribed books, writing equipment) that we needed, and that it was all marked

with our names. There was a further practice session in folding and tying robes, as well as talks on liturgy and rituals, and rules and regulations for priests. Teaching and practice sessions were framed by morning and evening services each day at the small temple space known as the Shishin Kyōdo 至心教堂 that formed part of the International Centre,[31] and there was also the option to attend morning service at the head temple, located nearby, at 6 am, which many took up.

A noteworthy aspect of the preparation to enter the training course concerned hair. The rule was that all male candidates had to have their heads and facial hair shaved prior to starting the residential course. This rule was waived for female candidates, provided they made sure to tie their hair back and up, so that the hair did not touch the *kesa*, or the collar of the robe.[32] Hair fastenings were limited to simple black bands and hairpins, and a small black hairnet if needed. However, female candidates were allowed to shave their heads if they wished, and many chose to do so, some on arrival in Japan. We had also all been notified some time previously that permed or coloured hair would not be allowed. The reasons for these rules were not made explicit, but shaving of the head is common in Buddhist monastic settings of various traditions, although not in Jōdo Shinshū, which does not cultivate a monastic lifestyle outside of the *tokudo* and *kyōshi* training retreats.

In the absence of a lifelong monastic lifestyle, these two residential training courses in Jōdo Shinshū are the closest that this tradition comes to a monastic experience, and for this reason elements of the course echoed more general Buddhist monastic practice, including the rule on hair. Matsuo (2007), writing on Japanese Buddhism more generally, links this to the avoidance of "ostentation" linked to the secular world, and notes that shaving the head has been historically symbolic of leaving the secular world to take up monastic orders, and that "the act of shaving one's head symbolizes one's 'death' as a secular person when becoming a monk" (Matsuo 2007: 8). It also makes the monk (or nun) "visible" and hence "accountable" to the secular world that they, paradoxically, are meant to be leaving – linking to the comment made by the trainer cited earlier that "eyes are on you all the time".

In other rules underlining the divide between the training we were about to undertake and the secular world, other forms of bodily adornment were also banned, including jewellery, cosmetics, and coloured contact lenses. And trainees with visible tattoos were required to cover them with flesh-coloured plasters for the duration of the training. Finally, all personal possessions other than study materials (including the prescribed sacred books), robes, nightwear, and basic toiletries and essential medicines were banned – no leisure reading, no phones, no computers or electronic devices. We were about to enter a period of seclusion from the outside world, where our lives would be strictly regulated, for the following 11 days. From an anthropological perspective, this had all of the characteristics of a rite of passage (Van Gennep 1960): separation from the usual secular world, a liminal period spent in isolation in the training centre, and finally re-integration in our new status as ordained priests in the ordination ceremony that took place at the end of the programme.

On the first day of the training programme, we travelled from central Kyoto to the training centre in the western outskirts of the city, having left our personal

belongings behind in the International Centre. After registration and a short briefing, we were tested on some basics of Buddhist teachings and of the specifics of Jōdo Shinshū. This was followed by the opening ceremony, and then lunch. We were all divided into groups, called "*han*" 班, which we would remain in for the duration of the training. Within those groups, we were further divided into single-sex groups with whom we would share a small tatami matted room in which we would sleep on futons. It would be our joint responsibility to keep our room clean and tidy, with the futons put away every morning, and all our possessions, including any robes we were not wearing, also kept tidied away inside the built-in cupboards in the rooms.

During the course, our days followed a prescribed pattern. Every day we would be woken at 5.30 am by the song of the training centre playing through the loudspeakers. We then began the day with cleaning our room and the common parts of the training centre – different people would be allocated different tasks each day. Cleaning involved both the sacred area of the altar and the areas seen as the dirtiest and most polluted – the toilets. Different clothing was worn for the different tasks – white under kimono only for ordinary cleaning, but with the priests' robes for everyday use (*fuhō* and *wagesa*) worn over these for cleaning and preparation of the altar.

This was followed by a roll call, and the morning service, starting at 7 am, which groups took it in turns to perform, with the others joining in from the *gejin* while also observing the group leading the service. This was an opportunity to put into practice all the skills we had been learning since the beginning of the pre-training, from putting on and folding the robes, to the correct movements and postures during the service, the chanting prescribed for that service, and the ritual recitation of one of Rennyo's letters, set as a prescribed text for *tokudo*.

We would then go to the eating area for breakfast. For breakfast, as for all meals, we were not allowed to start eating until everyone was present. This made any late comers very unpopular, as only a limited time was allowed for meals, and was an effective sanction against lateness. Serving the food and cleaning up afterwards was the responsibility of the trainees, and we were not expected to leave food on our plates. Special dietary needs were accommodated though. All meals were eaten in silence, and before and after eating, special phrases (in Japanese) expressing thanks for the food received were said in unison, with one designated person leading (these were similar, but not identical, to the standard Japanese phrases used at the beginning and end of meals, but somewhat longer and more elaborate).

After breakfast, the rest of the morning was spent in lectures covering various aspects of Jōdo Shinshū teachings and history, the roles of ministers/priests,[33] and the significance of *tokudo*. This was followed by a break for lunch, and further teaching sessions in the afternoon, most of which focused on liturgy and rituals. Of these, the majority focused on the usual style of chanting of sutras or the *Shōshinge*, although we were also given one session on Buddhist *gathas* – Buddhist songs set to Western style music (the different styles of music and chanting in Jōdo Shinshū are discussed in detail in Chapter 9). After a short break, we then had evening service, again performed in turn by the groups, followed by dinner, and a period when we could be tested on our set assignments,

gaining a stamp on a paper recording our progress each time that an assignment was successfully completed. All four had to be completed successfully by the end of the training programme, which itself created a degree of stress, as there were often long queues to be tested, and you might not make it to the head of the queue in the time allotted – and even then it was not uncommon for someone to fail the assignment, and be required to re-do it on another day. Finally, there was a bedtime service, also performed in groups, after which everyone took it in turns to use the communal bath (in our groups), and were otherwise busy with either rehearsing for services the next day or self-study, before a short break and lights out at 11 pm.

Throughout the training programme there was a strong emphasis on cooperation within our groups. We were expected to ensure that the programme ran smoothly by following the detailed prescriptions for everyday life, such as making sure that our slippers were lined up properly in front of our rooms, and at the entrance to the bathroom, and being punctilious with time keeping. If any individual was not fully complying with the rules of the centre, or was having difficulty with their robes, chanting, or any other aspect of *sahō*, their group was expected to correct and support them. And, as the services were performed in groups, all members of the group needed to work together and practise intensively in order to perform the service successfully. The aim of inculcating a sense of group responsibility was made explicit in the lectures in the pre-training, and reflects both a Japanese style of pedagogy, where group style learning is favoured throughout much of the education system from pre-school onwards,[34] and the monastic flavour of the training programme. We were also warned that the training would be physically and mentally taxing. This seems to have been another aspect of the experience as a rite of passage, and had the effect of both testing our commitment, and in many cases creating strong bonds with others who went through the experience with us.

The ordination ceremony

By the morning of the tenth day, after much arduous and intensive practice, everyone had successfully passed the four assignments, and we were ready to prepare for the ordination ceremony. The morning began with a tonsure ceremony, followed by shaving of the head by barbers brought in for the occasion. All participants took part, with all the men having their heads shaved, as well as the women who had opted to have their heads shaved when they entered the facility at the beginning of the training. The other women who were not having their heads shaved were required to have the fine hair on the nape of their necks and faces shaved (except for those who specifically requested that it not be done). We then all had a bath, and dressed in our *hakue* (white under kimono), but this time with a *hakama* 袴 – a kind of loose divided skirt – on top. These were to be worn when entering the ordination ceremony as symbolic of our lay status prior to ordination. Carrying with us our formal priests' robes to be put on afterwards, we were taken by coach to the head temple in central Kyoto, some distance from the training centre.

Arriving at the temple, we had a final briefing, and were led into an ornately decorated side room to leave our clothing. Entering the *goeidō* (founder's hall), everything was dark, with the doors shuttered, and the only light coming from candles and oil lamps, reflecting off the golden pillars. This is a reference to the circumstances in which the founder, Shinran, was said to have been ordained at age nine, in the late evening. We were seated, and performed a particular kind of ritual bow called *kikyorai* 起居礼, then remaining seated and bent forward in a deep bow, we placed one hand behind our ear. The attendants of the *monshu*, who was performing the ordination, then placed powdered incense in our left hands, which we then rubbed on our clothes. This was a ritual of purification of the body, derived from India. One of the trainers also commented later that the incense perfumes the air, and reminds us to be mindful of the Dharma (teachings). We then recited the three treasures (taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha) in Japanese, and then the *Ryōgemon*. Then, while we were still seated, the *monshu* came behind us and touched everyone in three places on the head – this is called the *okamisori* 剃刀and is the ceremonial enactment of tonsure – the bestowing of *tokudo*, and the moment at which we became priests.

After this, the *monshu* left the hall, and we went back to the side room where we had left our robes, and removed our *hakama*, and changed into our formal priests' robes, and *sumigesa*. The two-stranded *nenju* and fan were carried throughout the ceremony, both as lay and as priests. Returning to the hall, a representative of the newly ordained priests received the ochre-coloured *kigesa* for everyone, while another representative received the ordination certificates containing our *hōmyō* 法名, or Buddhist names.[35] The *monshu* then recited a line from the *Ōjōraisan* 往生礼讃, a text by the Pure Land master Shandao: *jishin kyō ninshin, nanchū ten shinan, daihi den fuke, shinjō hō button* [自信教人信 難中転更難 大悲弘（伝）普化 真成報佛恩] – "To realize shinjin oneself and to guide others to shinjin is among difficult things yet even more difficult. To awaken beings everywhere to great compassion is truly to respond in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence" (translation from CWS volume 1: 120).[36] The newly ordained priests again performed the ritual bow *kikyorai* three times. The ceremony concluded with a final message from the *monshu*, after which first the *monshu*, and then the newly ordained priests, left the hall. Wearing our new *kigesa*, we assembled in front of the temple for a commemorative photo. With this, the transition from lay to ordained priest was complete, with our new status marked the following day by participating in the 6.00 am morning service at the head temple, followed by a visit to the Ōtani mausoleum 大谷本廟 (*ōtani honbyō*), where the remains of Shinran are kept, and a return to the training centre for a final ceremony and to assemble our belongings, before leaving the centre.

Conclusion: embodying the teachings? Authority, authenticity, and adaptation

The ordination training sought to transform us into ritual practitioners with at least a basic grasp of the most frequently performed liturgy and ritual. The constant correction, and insistence on perfecting every detail of bodily movement, posture, and

dress, as well as the chanting and other recitations, could sometimes feel exhausting. But the intended outcome was for us to leave the centre having internalised these ritual practices to a point where they could be performed smoothly, without having to think about every step of the process. When watching each other practice, the impact of this became clear. Obvious mistakes and hesitations would disrupt the ritual, and distract our attention, detracting from the capacity of ritual to create a particular kind of space-time interval which can be experienced as separate from the mundane world of daily life. In this sense, ritual may accurately be seen as a kind of performance which requires intensive training to perfect, and which is most effective from the point of view of the audience when this process of training and attention to technical detail remains invisible. It also has an important aesthetic and multi-sensory dimension, with attention paid to sound (through chanting and recitation), visual aspects (altar decorations, the robes and movements of the priests), and smell (through the use of incense, which also has a purificatory symbolic aspect).

From the point of view of those undergoing the training, the (albeit imperfect) mastery of ritual process, dress, and bodily movements acquired underpinned our new status as priests. Differences in ritual practice in the various Jōdo Shinshū communities worldwide notwithstanding, the fact that the same training is undergone by all priests no matter where they are from, contributes importantly to the creation of a global community of embodied ritual knowledge. For those joining from outside Japan, on return to our own countries, wearing the robes, and being able to chant and perform a range of rituals were the most tangible signs of our new status. As well as conferring a symbolic authority, this also created a link with the head temple – and with the Japanese (or, going further back, Chinese, and ultimately Indian) roots of Jōdo Shinshū.

But this in turn can create some ambiguities in the context of the re-positioning of Jōdo Shinshū in different localities outside Japan. On the one hand, the links between local Jōdo Shinshū priests and the head temple in Japan, as embodied in ritual practice, can be experienced as a source of legitimacy and authority, and as also demonstrating links with a wider Buddhist tradition. On the other hand, some of these ritual practices may be seen as unsuitable to the local context. For example, although the ritualised recitation of Rennyo's letters in Japanese was one of the key skills tested during *tokudo*, in many Jōdo Shinshū groups outside Japan Rennyo's letters are only read in the local language, and without the ceremonial carrying of the box containing the letters. The various skills acquired during *tokudo* training may not therefore be practised consistently by priests returning to their home countries. And in some cases, we can also observe ritual innovation on the part of local priests. We explore some of the local adaptations of ritual, and ritual innovations in the following chapters, beginning with the ways in which the ritual body relates to the creation of ritual space.

Notes

1 The length of ordination training varies widely among Japanese Buddhist organisations, and even among the different schools of Jōdo Shinshū. The account in this chapter is specific to the Honganji-ha.

2 This type of detailed regulation of daily activities is common in monastic settings, as has been noted in the context of Japanese Zen Buddhism by, for example, Reader (1995) and Sharf (1995). Jōdo Shinshū is not a monastic religion, but the secluded training period undergone during *tokudo* in the Honganji-ha school parallels the monastic experience in other Buddhist traditions in a number of respects, as discussed further in the following sections.

3 The phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (2002 [1945]) is another important influence here, in his insistence on the necessity of an embodied perspective. Critiques of mind-body dualism in Western language writing are both too well-known, and too extensive to retain us in detail here. One very useful source on this is Csordas (1994). For challenges to mind-body dualism in Japanese writing, and alternative views of mind-body relatedness, see, e.g., Nagatomo (1992), Ichikawa (1975, 1993), Yuasa (1987), Ozawa-de-Silva (2002), and Kasulis (1992). Yuasa and Ichikawa have been particularly influential in discussions of this topic.

4 Wacquant builds on Bourdieu's notions of different forms of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1977, 1990), to develop the idea of "bodily capital" in his study of boxing.

5 Authors' translation.

6 Some of the sessions were in Japanese, as was much of the feedback, but with English language translation provided.

7 The requirements for *tokudo* have changed again since 2019, with aspirants now required to pass exams on doctrine, Honganji-ha bylaws, and ritual before they can proceed to the residential training. There is also now a distinction between aspirants (pre-exam) and those recognised as *tokudo* candidates (after passing the exam).

8 *Seiza* is the form of sitting on the floor used in formal contexts in Japan, and involves kneeling sitting on one's heels, with the back straight.

9 For an example of bowing training in a Japanese retail company, see Matsunaga (2000: 64).

10 A publication from one of the BCA temples explains that the left foot is said to represent samsara, or the realm of suffering, delusion and ignorance, which one is symbolically leaving on entering the sacred space. When leaving the sacred space, one exits with the right foot, representing nirvana, which one is symbolically leaving (Kodani and Hamada 1995: 32). However, many of the priests we spoke to had not heard this explanation (and some were unaware of the rule itself). A simpler explanation may be that Jōdo Shinshū ritual practice follows that of the Tendai tradition, from which much of it originates. Manuals of correct ritual practice in Tendai also specify that one must enter sacred space with the left foot, and leave with the right.

11 These beads are also sometimes called *juzu* 数珠 – however, *juzu* literally means "counting beads", whereas *nenjū* means mindfulness beads. As the beads are not used for counting in Jōdo Shinshū the term *juzu* is not used in this tradition of Buddhism.

12 The black robes worn by Japanese Buddhist priests are thought to originate from robes worn by government officials in Tang dynasty China (Kodani and Hamada 1995: 24). For detailed histories of the origins and changes in Buddhist robes and *kesa* accompanying the spread of Buddhism to East Asia, see Izutsu (1974, 1993).

13 Literally, ink.

14 The black *wagesa* and *gojō gesa* are generally only used for the training programme – on receiving ordination these are usually replaced by colourful *wagesa* and *gojō gesa*, as described later in this chapter.

15 The trainer subsequently clarified that here he was referring to the way in which we use robes to store ritual objects, such as the fan, or service book. The fan had to be placed in the robes in a prescribed way when not being carried (i.e., when the right hand, in which the fan was carried, was needed to perform a ritual action), and service books had to be kept in the robes when not in use. During the ordination training we spent some time practicing how to smoothly remove and replace service books as needed.

16 There are echoes here of Mary Douglas's work on "purity" and "pollution" (Douglas 1966).
17 Sometime after completion of the *tokudo* training, a Japanese priest remarked to one of the authors, "a priest without a *nenju* is like a samurai without a sword!".
18 We were only allowed to bring prescribed sacred books with us, from a list provided, for the training programme. No secular materials were allowed.
19 These, and other rules are explained in detail in manuals on the correct performance of rituals in Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha – see Jōdo Shinshū Hongwangji ha Gonshiki Shidōsho (2021) and Jodo Shinshu International Office (2024).
20 There are a great many of these rules, surrounding ritual objects used on the altar, and in a range of ceremonies. For the *tokudo* training, we were only instructed in the most basic of these rules, while further skills regarding other ritual implements are introduced in subsequent training programmes, for example, the *kyōshi* 教師 training which priests must undergo in order to become head priests of temples (*jūshoku* 住職).
21 The *shichijō gesa* was first introduced in Jōdo Shinshū in 1561 for the 300th memorial of Shinran. In 1599, permission was given for ordinary priests to wear the *shichijō gesa* for special ceremonies (Jodo Shinshu International Office 2024: 254).
22 *Gojō gesa* can be very expensive, reflecting the craftsmanship that goes into weaving the material used – although the prices start at a little over 20,000¥ for the black *gojō gesa* worn during *tokudo*, or around 40,000¥ for a small sized summer *gojō gesa*, they can go as high as nearly 700,000¥ for a full size winter *gojō gesa* made with real gold thread.
23 There is also a series of lectures held for two weeks at the end of July called the *Ango* 安居 lectures at Ryukoku University, which is affiliated with Honganji-ha, where the participants have to wear the *kigesa*. These lectures have been held annually since 1640 and are an occasion to study Buddhist doctrine. The name *Ango* literally means "peaceful dwelling", and is a translation of the Sanskrit *vārṣika*, which originally denoted the rainy season, when monks stayed in their monasteries to concentrate on Buddhist studies and practice (Inagaki 2003: 7).
24 Although the IABC is closely linked to Honganji-ha, and has historically provided support for the ordination of European priests in Honganji-ha, it also has some board members who are affiliated with other Jōdo Shinshū schools, and is not solely a Honganji-ha organisation.
25 There is also a broader Buddhist symbolism – an exhibition in the Kyoto Handicraft Museum in 2024 featured a section on knots used for various ceremonies and rituals, including the tea ceremony, and also priests' robes, and their symbolism. The exhibition noted that: "the decorative knots called *shutara* 修多羅on the back of Buddhist priests' robes represent the sutras".
26 There are also parallels here with the tea ceremony, where the style of tying knots on boxes used in the tea ceremony varies according to the tea ceremony school.
27 In addition to the formal *kokue* robe coloured robes (*shikie* 色衣) also exist, and may be worn for certain formal occasions.
28 This concern for legitimacy and authenticity can also be seen in the production of ritual objects. For example, the authorised service book that must be used in the *tokudo* ordination training is distinguished not only by its format (including the use of a particular form of *furigana* (phonetic transcription of Chinese characters that is no longer widely used), but also by a stamp inside the book which marks it as the authorised version produced by Honganji-ha). A range of ritual objects, from small scrolls through to service books, are distinguished from cheaper copies in this way by the presence of the authorised Honganji stamp.
29 As some people in the past have received *tokudo* and then dropped out of contact, a requirement has also been introduced to maintain regular contact with one's supervising temple. If there is no contact for five years, then the status of priest is revoked.
30 In the Ōtani-ha tradition this is referred to as the *gaikemon* 改悔文, literally statement of change and repentance.
31 European trainees were formally attached to the Shishin Kyōdo, following their ordination.

32 The explanation aspirants were given at the time was that we should mimic as closely as possible the appearance of a shaved head, without actually shaving our heads. This necessitated longer preparation time in the mornings and large quantities of hair gel as well as hairnets and hairpins!
33 In the United States, the word generally used for people who have been ordained is minister, while elsewhere a range of terms are used, including priest, the term used in much of the literature, and which we use in this book. As the majority of those being ordained were from the United States, however, the term "minister" was used during the training programme.
34 See, e.g., Hendry (1986).
35 We had all also previously received *hōmyō* at the Buddhist confirmation ceremony, or *kikyōshiki* 帰敬式, and had the option to retain these, or to ask for a new Buddhist name at the time of ordination.
36 This quote is very popular among Jōdo Shinshū priests, and is significant in Shinran's life, as it is connected to an epiphany recorded by his wife, Eshinni 恵信尼 (1182–1268), in which he reflects on the words of Shandao as the essence of his understanding. See Dobbins (2004: 30–32).

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Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii https://hongwanjihawaii.com

5 Ritual space

In this chapter, we turn to ritual space, and consider the ways in which ritual space is structured through architecture, and the interior disposition of ritual spaces. We argue that the construction and use of space both reflects and constitutes social relationships of authority and power.[1] In the context of Jōdo Shinshū, this is also intertwined with discourses of globalisation and localisation, and, especially for the Japanese diasporic communities, with the process of constructing new collective identities. We consider both the exterior form of temple buildings, in Japan and overseas, and interior space in Jōdo Shinshū temples, and the ways in which participants in rituals move through this space. In examining the ritualised ways in which bodies move through space, both constituting, and sometimes challenging divisions of ritual space, we also return to the theme of embodiment introduced in Chapter 4.

Temple architecture: identity and change

If we think about Japanese temples, a number of common architectural features spring to mind: curved sloping roofs, imposing gates, and walls topped with their own roofs, encircling the temple compound.[2] However, there is a considerable variety even within the category of "traditional" temple architecture, depending partly on the school of Buddhism, but also on the histories of individual temples. Jōdo Shinshū is known for the large halls in its main temples, built to accommodate large numbers of lay followers, and for the greater proportion of space within the temple for the laity relative to the area reserved for priests, as discussed further in the following sections. And there is also variation among Jōdo Shinshū temples, ranging from small, re-purposed family homes at one extreme, to the enormous head temples of Nishi and Higashi Honganji in Kyoto at the other.[3]

Over the past hundred years, there have also been some innovations in the design of Jōdo Shinshū temples. The first part of the twentieth century saw the construction of a number of temple buildings in Japan, as well as in some of Nishi Honganji's overseas missions, in a new hybrid style, incorporating Indian as well as Middle Eastern and European elements, as explored by Jaffe (2006, 2019). According to Jaffe, one inspiration for this style was British colonial architecture in India – sometimes referred to as "Indo-Saracenic".[4] Some examples of temples built in a hybrid style in this period are, for Japan, the Kobe Betsuin 神戸別院 (1930) and Tsukiji Hongwanji

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in Tokyo (1934); and in occupied China, Myōshōji in the Kwantung (Guandong) leased territory (1938) and the Shanghai Betsuin上海別院 (1931).

The Kobe and Tsukiji temples were both commissioned by Kyōnyo 鏡如 (Ōtani Kōzui 大谷光瑞, 1876–1948), the 22nd *monshu* of Honganji-ha. Kyōnyo had a keen interest in exploring Buddhism in other Asian countries, and, before becoming *monshu*, led three expeditions to central Asia to examine Buddhist sites and collect manuscripts. Jaffe (2006: 272, 288–9) links the design of these temples with Kyōnyo's interest in promoting a "pan-Asian" Buddhism – seen through the lens of Japanese imperialism – and argues that such developments in religious material culture played an important role in shaping the imaginings of new forms of Buddhism among lay followers, through their interactions with these new spaces, with a refocusing on Buddhism's shared historical heritage.[5]

Another noteworthy temple built in a hybrid style which predates the Japanese examples listed above was the Hawai'i Betsuin temple in Honolulu. Commissioned by the Bishop (*sōchō* 総長) of the Hawai'ian mission, Imamura Yemyō, it was completed in 1918. According to Ama (2011: 105), it may have provided a model for the later Tsukiji Hongwanji temple in Tokyo.[6] This temple is described on its website as "[blending] Indian elements – representing the roots of Buddhism, with the Chinese and Japanese features common to Hongwanji temples in Japan, and the western forms representing Jodo Shinshu Buddhism's future in Hawaii and the Americas" (https://hawaiibetsuin.org/temple-history/, accessed 1/5/25). Here we have an example of the complexity of the globalisation process in Jōdo Shinshū, and the ways in which new forms of architecture in the twentieth century took on a symbolic value, evoking both imaginings of the past and the future as well as the geographical range of Buddhist traditions.[7] It is difficult to identify a clear centre and periphery in this process: rather, we can see influences flowing in more than one direction, within a context characterised by the aspiration on the part of prominent individuals within Honganji to assert both the connections between Jōdo Shinshū and the historic origins of Buddhism and to re-situate it in relation to the west (Figures 5.1 and 5.2).

The high-profile projects described above were undoubtedly exceptional in their scale and ambitions. The Indo-Saracenic style emerged within a particular historical period, and temples in this style are a small (though interesting) minority of temple buildings, both within Japan and overseas. The majority of temples in Japan are still in the more familiar Sino-Japanese style. Outside Japan, while the Hawai'i Betsuin remains a rare example of the Indo-Saracenic style, Jōdo Shinshū temple buildings (and other places used for meetings and services) are very diverse, and have adapted to their new context in a range of ways. This has also changed over time as overseas groups have become more established.

Typically, in the early stages of overseas transmission, when groups are small and lack the means to construct a purpose-built temple, re-purposed private homes have been used. For Hawai'i in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Tanabe and Tanabe (2013: 18) describe the use of single room private dwellings as places of worship, with a shelf in a recess being used as an altar. These spaces served as living spaces as well, and many of the features thought of as basic elements of Jōdo Shinshū temples, for example, the division into *naijin* (inner sanctuary) and

Figure 5.1 Tsukiji Hongwanji.
Photograph by Louella Matsunaga

Figure 5.2 Honpa Hongwanji Hawai'i Betsuin.
Photograph by Enrique Galvan-Alvarez

gejin (outer sanctuary, or space for the laity), discussed further in the following sections, were simply not possible in this context. This use of private dwellings as places for Jōdo Shinshū followers to gather, often with very restricted availability of space to set up an altar or hold services, was also common in the early years of Jōdo Shinshū in the continental United States (Buddhist Churches of America 1998), and continues to be the dominant pattern in Europe, where Jōdo Shinshū arrived much later (in the 1950s), and still has a very small membership.

For the Americas, as the early migrants became more prosperous, a range of temple building styles began to emerge. These included buildings imitating temples in rural Japan with their sweeping hip and gable curved rooves and carved gables, as well as what Tanabe and Tanabe (2013) refer to as a simplified Japanese style, often with straight or only slightly curved rooves, and some more hybrid buildings, combining elements of contemporary Western style buildings with some Japanese style external features, for example in roof design. These buildings also tended to use local materials. From the 1960s onwards, more contemporary buildings started to be built, often showing the influence of Japanese temple architecture, but with some following the design of Christian meeting houses or churches,[8] and others in the style of warehouses or large private residential homes (but designed as temples on the inside). There is a mix here of buildings which are very visibly East Asian, and easily identified as temples, and others which are indistinguishable from their surroundings. Tanabe and Tanabe (2013: 24), writing on Japanese Buddhist temples in Hawai'i, argue that "Architecture is evocative, and the temples have mirrored the homeland, incorporated American values, and argued for an international ideal at the same time that they have tried to remain true to their traditions".

A similar pattern can be seen in South America, where most temples were built from the 1950s onwards. With the exception of São Paulo Betsuin, which follows the Indo-Saracenic style of temples like Tsukiji Hongwanji and Honolulu Betsuin, the vast majority of temples in South America are a combination of local and adapted Japanese architecture. It is not uncommon for temples to follow a traditional Japanese temple model, but using local materials. For instance, the wooden walls and paper sliding doors are replaced by concrete walls and wooden hinged doors and the dark roof tiles, characteristic of most temple buildings in Japan, are replaced by red concrete roof tiles. There are also a few temples housed in Brazilian country houses, made out of concrete and painted white. These are particularly present in the interior of Brazil, and they do not stand out as religious or Japanese constructions in any significant way.

Gordon (2023: 77) suggests another dimension to the design of some temples in the warehouse or storehouse style in the United States: "the desire to avoid discriminatory treatment", and to blend in, noting the widespread use of the term "church" rather than "temple" in the early twentieth century, for the same reason. But Gordon also notes that even these apparently "nondescript" designs could be creatively reinterpreted to give them a distinctive Buddhist meaning. He cites the example of the Buddhist Church of San Francisco (BCSF), designed in the warehouse/storehouse style, but also featuring a stupa on the roof. The temple and stupa were built in 1938 as a replacement for an earlier building, with the stupa housing relics of Śākyamuni and two of his disciples donated by the then Emperor of Siam

(now Thailand) in 1935. Gordon cites the former head minister of the BCSF, Reverend Kobata on the temple design:

> I thought how appropriate that our structure that holds both the sacred relics of the historical Buddha and his disciples, and is the spiritual home that is the BCSF, as well as the flag-ship temple of the BCA [Buddhist Churches of America], was designed to look like and be a Storehouse of the Dharma. A storehouse's function is to preserve and protect its contents; it's a repository of artifacts from the past that will provide an enduring sense of timeless value to the future.
>
> (Gordon 2023: 81)

Gordon argues that what we see in Jōdo Shinshū temple design in the United States is thus a complex landscape of adaptation to the local setting. This includes historically, a desire to blend in and avoid discrimination; alongside, in some cases at least, an assertion of Buddhist and/or Japanese identity. He mentions in this respect the temples of the two Honganji schools in Little Tokyo in downtown Los Angeles, close to the Japanese American National Museum. While the museum provides exhibits and historical records documenting the suffering of the ethnic Japanese community in the United States during World War II, when Japanese Americans were confined in camps, the two temples, built in a Japanese style, provide a striking visual evocation of Japanese cultural identity (Gordon 2023: 82–87). The present temple buildings date from 1969 and 1976 respectively – a period when it had become safe to assert a Japanese cultural identity within the United States. In the next section, we turn to temple interiors, where we can see a similar process of adaptation and the creation of hybrid forms in the American context.

Temple interiors and sacred space: Jōdo Shinshū temples in Japan

The symbolic, and often architectural, centre of a traditional Buddhist temple is the *hondō* (main hall). This space holds the *gohonzon* (御本尊, central object of reverence) and it is where most ceremonies, dharma talks and rituals are conducted. It is also the space where the priests, who run, and often live in temple premises, engage with their lay audience through a variety of ritualised interactions. In Jōdo Shinshū in Japan, the head temples have two main halls, one dedicated to Amida Buddha (the *Amidadō*, or Amida hall), and another dedicated to the founder, the *Goeidō*, as explained in Chapter 2 (Figure 5.3), but in ordinary local temples there is one main hall. This hall is divided in two main sections: the *naijin* (inner sanctuary, or inner sanctum) and the *gejin* (外陣,outer sanctuary, or seating area for the laity). The *naijin* is where the various altars are located, including the central one that enshrines the *gohonzon*. Where the *gohonzon* is either an image of Amida Buddha or the characters of the *nenbutsu*, this is usually flanked on either side by altars to Shinran and Rennyo.

Access to the *naijin* is generally restricted to ordained priests.[9] In Japan, when performing services in the *naijin*, priests are usually expected to wear the appropriate formal robes, as explained in Chapter 4. They might also access the *naijin* in the less formal *fuhō* robe, or the informal *samue* 作務衣 (loose fitting work clothes

Figure 5.3 Nishi Hongwanji, the head temple of Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha in Kyoto, showing the two halls: the *Amidadō* on the left of the picture, and the *Goeidō*, or founder's hall, on the right.

Photograph by Louella Matsunaga

worn by priests) for example to clean this inner sanctum, but not to perform ceremonies. In larger temples there are two further sections on either side of the *naijin*, known as the *yoma* 余間 (literally, remaining space), with on the extreme right a scroll showing Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子 (572–622),[10] and on the extreme left a scroll of the Seven Masters of Jōdo Shinshū.[11]

The *naijin* is always higher than the *gejin*, allowing those in the *gejin* to, literally, look up towards the inner sanctum. The distance, barriers and elevation that separate *naijin* from the *gejin* vary depending on the Buddhist tradition and, often, the individual temple. In Jōdo Shinshū temples the *naijin* is only very marginally higher than the *gejin*, so that the priests performing a ritual at the inner altar area and the lay congregation sit almost at the same level, reflecting the emphasis in Jōdo Shinshū teachings on *ondōbō*, *ondōgyō* (御同朋・御同行),or the idea of followers, both priest and lay, as fellow travellers on the same path, and the historical origins of Jōdo Shinshū services as communal gatherings of priests and lay, as described in Chapter 2. The participation of large numbers of laity in Jōdo Shinshū gatherings also led to a change in the relative size of *naijin* and *gejin*, with the expansion in the area of the temple halls allocated to the *gejin* as compared to the *naijin*. Although in many Japanese temples the *naijin* is larger than the *gejin*, in Jōdo Shinshū temples this is reversed, and the *gejin* is normally much more spacious than the *naijin*. The two main halls of the head temple of Nishi Hongwanji, provide a clear example of this, as shown in Figure 5.5. Another noteworthy feature is the spatial orientation of the halls. The altars are arrayed along the long side of the rectangular space, creating the opposite orientation to a Christian church, where the altar is at the short end of the rectangular space, with the central aisle along the

middle of the long part of the rectangle. The effect of this is that the participants in a Jōdo Shinshū service are never very far from one of the altar areas in the *naijin*.

However, there are still important distinctions between priests and laity within Jōdo Shinshū, and, as noted above, the *naijin* is generally reserved for ordained persons, and is clearly demarcated as a separate sacred space. Characteristically, this part of temple features rich ornamentation, bright colours, and the use of brocade and gold. It is usually further separated from the *gejin* by a carved transom, or *ranma* 欄間, with animal or floral motifs, from which curtains, or reed or brocade blinds may be hung, while pillars, often gilded, along the edge of the *naijin*, may provide a further physical differentiation. For Jōdo Shinshū, the *naijin* is said to represent Amida Buddha's Pure Land, and this is sometimes given as a reason for the restrictions on accessing it.[12]

In many Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha temples there is also an ambiguous, in-between space between these two spheres, sometimes referred to as the *chūgejin* 中外陣 or *uchigejin* 内外陣 (literally, middle-*gejin* or inner *gejin*). In large temples this area is often demarcated by a moveable fence that can be shifted to increase or reduce its size (Figure 5.4). This is the space where *gagaku* musicians might sit and perform, as described in Chapter 8, and also where the *gobunshō* (letters written by

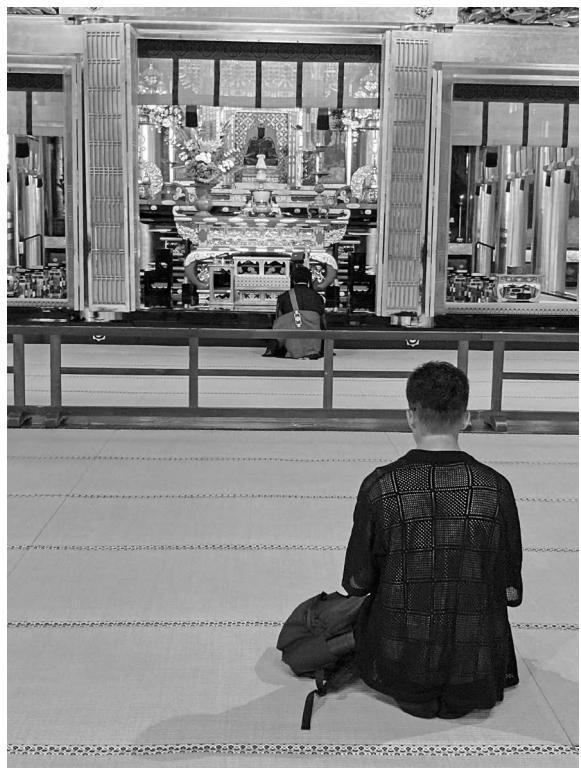

Figure 5.4 Interior of Nishi Hongwanji in Kyoto, showing the *naijin*, *chūgejin*, and *gejin*.
Photograph by Louella Matsunaga

Rennyo), are recited and where dharma talks are given. In this way, the *chūgejin* represents an ambiguous space of moveable boundaries between the sacred (in Japanese *sei* 聖) and secular (or profane) (*zoku* 俗). Or, to put it another way, as explained by one of the Honganji-ha teachers of ritual, although the main division between sacred and secular is the division between the *naijin* and *gejin*, within both the *naijin* and the *gejin* there are gradations between the categories of *sei* and *zoku* depending on the distance from the *gohonzon*, with the *chūgejin* representing the most sacred part of the *gejin* (the altar area is the most sacred part of the *naijin*). There are also some differences in the ways in which these different spaces are used in different temples in Japan. In smaller local temples the *naijin* is used only for major ceremonies such as the *hōonkō* (see Chapter 2) and *eitaikyō* 永代経 memorial services, while most other ceremonies are performed from the *chūgejin* or *gejin.* In the head temple most ceremonies are performed from the *naijin*.

Within the *naijin*, there are elaborate prescriptions regarding the layout of the altar or altars, and the ritual objects arranged there. Of these objects the most important is the *gohonzon*. For Jōdo Shinshū, this is most commonly a statue of Amida Buddha, but may also be a picture scroll depicting Amida Buddha, or a scroll with the characters of one of the forms of the *nenbutsu*, or a statue of Shinran Shonin in the Founder's Hall. Where the *gohonzon* is a statue, the face is generally partly obscured by a flower decoration called the *keman* 華鬘 – this is explained in an English language handbook outlining the traditions of Honganji-ha as implying that:

> the Truth or face of Amida Buddha is never seen completely… each man and each sentient being sees from his own unique and peculiar point of view, and … there is always a different or deeper view of the Truth to be seen. This ornament is mentioned in the Larger Sutra as hanging from the branches of the jewelled Trees in the Pure Land.
>
> (Kodani and Hamada 1995: 8)

Similarly detailed explanations are provided in the same book for the symbolism of other objects and decorations within the *naijin* – however, it is doubtful how many of these explanations are known to the majority of followers. It is the overall impression conveyed by the *naijin* to those who do not enter it that it is more important – a sacred space for the performance of ritual which is intended to evoke Amida's Pure Land for those watching from the *gejin*. At the same time, this division of space represents important distinctions between priest and lay, the Buddha realm and the realm of samsara. This division is reinforced, and continually recreated, by the rules around correct movement and clothing in the sacred space, as detailed in the account of ordination training in Chapter 4.

On the other hand, the *gejin* is a public space open to anybody and no special clothes are required to enter it, although when rituals are performed from here the priests performing the ceremony will wear robes. In contrast to the rich decoration of the *naijin*, the *gejin* is generally fairly plain – in Japan it is likely to be a tatami-matted area, as shown in Figure 5.5, but sometimes also equipped with chairs for those who have difficulty sitting on the floor for long periods.[13]

Figure 5.5 Interior of Nishi Hongwanji, looking from the back of the *gejin* into the *naijin*. Photograph by Louella Matsunaga

There are some cases though, where the modernisation of temples in Japan has resulted in the adaptation of the *naijin* to create a multipurpose space.[14] An example of this is Saikōji 西光寺, a temple in Osaka, which was extensively redesigned in 2015, with the construction of a new hall to replace the original seventeenth-century hall. The new temple hall occupies a smaller space, in response to changing financial and demographic needs, and was rebuilt in reinforced concrete rather than the original wood, owing to the need for disaster prevention. At the same time, the space that remains was redesigned to be readily accessible to older followers, and young parents with pushchairs. There is level access to the *gejin*, and a hard surface (rather than tatami mats) enabling the use of wheelchairs and pushchairs. Chairs have also been provided in this area.

The *naijin*, as is customary, is constructed as a platform on a slightly higher level than the *gejin*, and within the *naijin* the altar is arranged with a *gohonzon* and altar decorations from the original temple. However, the part of the *naijin* between the altar area and the *gejin* has become an area that can be used flexibly.[15] For services, it is arranged in the usual way, with a special seat and table for the priest leading the ritual to perform the *raiban sahō* 礼盤作法, which is a key part of major ceremonies. In this context, access is restricted to ordained priests only, as is general practice. However, since the refurbished temple re-opened, the platform which usually serves as a *naijin* has also periodically been used as a stage

for concerts of classical music held within the temple, and also sometimes performances of *rakugo* (落語 a popular stylised form of Japanese storytelling) – part of the temple's efforts to reach out to the local community and to broaden their appeal. In this case, musicians, or *rakugo* performers, are seated on the platform now transformed into a stage, and the priest's seat, table, and ritual equipment used in the *raiban* ritual are removed. For the duration of the concert, this raised platform is no longer a *naijin*, but a stage, and can be accessed by all – whether ordained or not, although the area immediately around the altar remains restricted.

This flexible use of temple space, while still only seen in a handful of temples in Japan as far as we are aware, is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates the way in which sacred space is not an absolute, fixed, category inhering to the structure of the space itself, but rather something that is constantly recreated by the way in which the space is used. And secondly, it illustrates the ways in which the arrangement of sacred space within temples is adapting to changed and changing circumstances. These characteristics, of flexibility and adaptation, can also be seen in the construction and use of sacred space in Jōdo Shinshū temples outside Japan.

Spatial arrangements in the Americas

This basic Japanese spatial arrangement of the *hondō*, with the division of *naijin* and *gejin*, along with their hybrid contact zone, the *chūgejin*, was recreated in the temples associated with the Japanese diaspora in the Americas as they became more prosperous, and were able to construct larger temple buildings. Gilded altar furnishings were brought from Japan, resulting in altar arrangements that became, in the Tanabes' words "more lavishly Japanese" (Tanabe and Tanabe 2013: 20).[16] However, a few significant differences have also developed over the years.[17]

One of the most immediately visible differences from Japan is that it is common for people attending services in the United States to sit in pews rather than on tatami or regular chairs,[18] with a central aisle between the pews along the model of Christian churches.[19] Also widespread throughout the country is the presence of an organ,[20] or sometimes a piano or electric keyboard, for the singing of "hymns" or *gathas*, often in English and in a musical style similar to Christian music, as we will discuss in Chapter 9. These two developments are in fact interlinked, as Jōdo Shinshū services in North America developed a distinctive pattern, closely resembling that of Christian services, with participants standing, sitting, and standing again at prescribed points in the service – for example, standing to sing hymns. This is quite different from services in Japan, where attendees remain seated (whether on the floor or more rarely on chairs) throughout, except to offer incense. Another change, introduced after World War II in the United States, with the aim of making the temples as American as possible in terms of their interiors, was the display of the American flag, often together with the Buddhist flag.[21] This has, however, become much less common in recent years, although the American flag is still displayed in some temples.

A further adaptation is that from the second generation of Japanese Americans, the need was increasingly felt for a space for community social activities.

For Japanese Americans pre-World War II, in the context of discrimination and widespread exclusion from other possible venues where Americans gathered to socialise, the temple was an important social focus. Temples hosted a wide range of activities including youth groups, scouts, women's organisations, and baseball teams. To accommodate all of this, it became common for temples in the United States and Hawai'i to have a social hall as part of the temple complex – sometimes with the temple built above it, sometimes next to it (Tanabe and Tanabe 2013: 20).[22]

There were also some changes in the arrangement of the *naijin* and the *gejin*. In the United States, a typical temple presents a *naijin* and *chūgejin* that are on the same level and which are significantly higher than the *gejin*, unlike in Japanese temples. This elevated space can be reached (from the *gejin*) through a small flight of stairs, whereas in a standard Japanese Shinshū temple, one could easily walk into the *naijin* from the *gejin* in one step. The speakers preach from a podium, placed in the raised *chūgejin*, which is no longer a fluid and moveable space, but very much built into the spatial arrangement. The elevation of the *naijin* and *chūgejin* can be seen as yet another Christian element that was brought into American Jōdo Shinshū to assimilate the tradition to the United States, resembling the pulpit and altar area of many Christian churches. Although this marked spatial separation signals a more distinct division between the priest(s) (normally referred to as ministers in North America[23]) and the congregation, other American developments complicate this assumption. For instance, it is very common for ministers in America to conduct ceremonies from the *naijin* while wearing *fuhō* and *wagesa* and, in some temples, non-ordained members are sometimes invited, occasionally, to the *naijin*, or, more commonly to the *chūgejin* to give announcements or talks from the podium. However, other temples have placed a smaller lectern in the *gejin*, right next to the steps that lead to the *chūgejin* and *naijin*, where lay people might speak from.

The fact that both *naijin* and *chūgejin* are at the same height, only separated by a set of golden columns or a golden frame, removes the ambiguity and movability of the *chūgejin* and makes it feel like an extension of the *naijin*. In fact, the division between both *naijin* and *chūgejin* is often ignored by most laypeople, who see, and commonly refer to, the whole raised area as *naijin*. This architectural arrangement, which places the *chūgejin* on a level with the *naijin*, cancels the sense of descent conjured by the *chūgejin* in traditional temples, as a place where the priests descend to use the vernacular and teach. In a typical American temple or church, the congregation has to look up towards the priests both when they are performing a ceremony and when they are giving a dharma talk. Also, the fact that it is far more common in the United States for priests to do sutra chanting wearing *fuhō* and *wagesa* from the *naijin*, as well as giving their dharma talks wearing the same robes from the *chūgejin*, contributes to blur the distinction between both spaces, which are perceived as one, higher realm, separate from the congregation in the *gejin*.

Furthermore, in the United States, we find a uniquely ambiguous figure, the minister's assistant.[24] Minister's assistants are not ordained but are lay members of the congregation who have undergone training and education in America (ordination requires travelling to Japan). To signal their special role, minister's assistants wear a short (i.e., waist-long) black robe that mimics the much longer *fuhō* (which goes

below the knee and above the ankle) and a special *wagesa*-like stole, different from that of priests. In some temples, they access the *chūgejin* and even the *naijin*, giving talks from the former and occasionally performing ceremonies from the latter. Other temples, however, do not allow minister's assistants to access the *naijin-chūgejin* and a minority of temples do not participate at all in the Minister's Assistant Program.

These two distinctive developments in the BCA context, the establishment of the minister's assistant programme, and the relaxation of rules governing access to the *naijin*, are in fact linked. Both were innovations introduced by the former Bishop of the BCA (2004–2012), Koshin Ogui, as he explained in an interview with Matsunaga in 2023. Ogui began by inviting dharma school students into the *naijin* while he was minister at the San Francisco Buddhist Church in the early 1970s. His reasoning was that Jōdo Shinshū emphasises a lack of discrimination, or "oneness", in the teachings, but that the *naijin-gejin* division, as traditionally maintained, creates discrimination, or segregation between priests and laity. Because of this, it did not make sense to him to say that the *naijin* was only for ordained ministers. Each Sunday, he would invite one of the dharma school classes into the *naijin*, while the other classes remained in the *gejin*. The students were prepared for entering the *naijin* by learning the correct behaviour – how to hold the service book, and other aspects of the correct etiquette of bodily movements. They were also given *monto shikishō* 門徒式章 (shorter stoles worn by lay people that mimic the *wagesa* worn by clergy) to wear for the occasion.

Ogui said that he found the effects of this were very positive – the children in the *naijin* area knew they were being watched, so they behaved well, and were very proud of being there. And, according to Ogui, their parents were very moved by seeing their children in the *naijin*, which made them respect the *naijin* more. Ogui also began inviting other lay people into the *naijin*, for example, to arrange the flowers – previously they had had to hand the flowers to an ordained priest, standing in the *naijin*. Later, after he became Bishop in 2004, he instituted the minister's assistant programme in order to address the looming shortage of ministers in the BCA, and to encourage more involvement of local people (as against ministers dispatched from Japan). He also designed the special robes for the minister's assistants referred to above. And, in line with his views about erasing the visible spatial discrimination created by the *naijin-gejin* divide, he invited the minister's assistants into the *naijin*.

These practices were surprising to new ministers arriving in the United States from Japan, and were opposed by many of them. Ogui was also advised against allowing wider access to the *naijin* by the International Department of Honganji. However, Ogui, and other ministers who supported this move both then and subsequently, continued to invite minister's assistants (and other non-ordained persons) into the *naijin*, and the practice gradually spread. More than ten years later, while conducting fieldwork in California (where most BCA temples are located) most of the heated discussions one of the authors of this book, Galvan-Alvarez, witnessed revolved around spatial arrangements and who has access to which section of the sacred space, as discussed further in the following sections.[25]

Turning to Brazil and Argentina, the pattern is similar to that of the United States in some respects. Brazilian temples feature a raised *naijin* and *chūgejin* that stands

above the congregation, like the altar of a Catholic church. This may (rarely) be in the more 'traditional' Japanese style (made out of tatami mats) or, more usually, 'local' (made out of tiles or wooden floors). For instance, the Honpa Hongwanji temple in Buenos Aires, architecturally more Argentinian than Japanese, features a higher *naijin* than is commonly found in Japan. The *naijin* is made out of wooden panels rather than tatami and the *gejin* is a tiled floor with many chairs. On the other hand, the restaurant-*dōjō* (道場) Furaibo, which will play a key role in Chapter 7, has created an improvised '*naijin*' by placing a few tatami mats around the main altar, located in the main dining area of the restaurant. Therefore, the elevation is minimal (that of a tatami mat) and non-ordained musical performers, who sometimes entertain customers while they eat, are allowed to access this space. In the Templo Shin Budista Terra Pura de Brasília, non-ordained members were equally and casually invited onto the raised *naijin-chūgejin* area,[26] and the *yoma* area, in the context of Contemplative Meditation, a practice and that is described in the next chapter and that is not performed in any other Brazilian temples.

Furthermore, the often tiled *gejin* of South American temples feature either pews or chairs in almost equal measures. The only formal temple in Argentina has chairs, but many Brazilian temples, especially in the region of São Paulo have pews, much like the North American *churches*. The preference for pews or chairs cuts across the Honganji-ha and Ōtani-ha, both amply represented in the urban areas of Brazil, not displaying any significant sectarian, regional or ethnic pattern. There are other ways in which South America differs from the United States, for instance, the presence of flags in the temple buildings or precincts. Temples in Brazil and Argentina do not display flags of any kind, with the exception of the Buddhist flag, which might be very occasionally displayed outside the building but not in the temple hall. Interlocutors in Brazil could not recall ever having seen a flag, other than the Buddhist flag, at a temple, and felt strongly that this would be inappropriate.

Europe

In Europe, a region without a significant Japanese population and where the presence of Jōdo Shinshū is still very small,[27] there are no spaces officially recognised as Honganji-ha temples, although there are a few which term themselves "temples", using the Japanese character for temple, *ji* 寺, in their names, and which are popularly referred to as temples by followers.[28] Most groups in Europe have tended to meet in the private residences of ordained members where an individual room is used for services, enshrining a *gohonzon*, but with no demarcated *naijin* and *gejin*.[29] Services may also be held in borrowed or rented premises, with the priest bringing in the necessary ritual equipment. There is always a clear central object of reverence: either a statue of Amida Buddha or a *myōgo* 名号 scroll with a calligraphic representation of the *nenbutsu*, placed on an altar with, at a minimum, a candle holder, an incense burner and a flower vase.

When performing services, priests in Europe are likely to wear the less formal *fuhō* robes, except on special occasions – for instance, annual celebrations such as *hōonkō*, memorial services or funerals, where formal robes (*kokue* and *gojō gesa*)

may be worn. However, attention is still paid to the prescribed bodily movements: for example, stepping forward to the altar area with the left foot to offer incense, and stepping back with the right foot – so there is still a sense in which bodily movements continue to be used to create sacred space, even in the absence of the physical demarcation of an identifiable *naijin*.

Where the space is used on a longer term or permanent basis there may also be a few other altars and images around the room in no consistent pattern, adapting to the architecture and possibilities of each individual room, as well as sometimes reflecting local histories. In Shingyōji 信楽寺 in Geneva, Switzerland, for example, there is a scroll showing a portrait of Harry Pieper, revered as the pioneer of Jōdo Shinshū in Europe, [30] and another scroll showing Jean Éracle, who established Shingyōji, in *kokue* and *kigesa*. There is a small space demarcated as the *naijin*, from which the priest associated with Shingyōji, Rev. Jérôme Ducor, performs important ceremonies. A difference between the *naijin* and *gejin* may also be created in Shingyōji by the arrangement of chairs, which are placed in horizontal rows in the *gejin* and vertically facing each other in the *naijin*. However, lay people can enter the *naijin* section of the space and there is not such a strict division between clerics and lay overall in terms of space.

Another feature of Shingyōji is that it is one of the European sacred spaces that is located in a regular residential building, like most Jōdo Shinshū meeting places in the region. The idea of a 'Buddhist house' (or Buddhist apartment) in some ways echoes the early stages of development of Jōdo Shinshū ritual spaces in the Americas, as discussed above, and could be said to be a hybrid iteration of the space that seems to have been key to the development of early Shinshū in later Kamakura period Japan: the Shinshū *dōjō*. The *dōjō* was a small dedicated space, sometimes located at the residence of the leader of a local Shinshū community (Dobbins 2002, 65–69). This leader or elder could have been ordained or self-ordained (自得度, *jitokudo*) but had not necessarily been trained at any of the main temples in Kyoto. The *dōjō* was a space where people came together to chant the *nenbutsu* and the sutras and to listen and discuss the dharma in a less formal and ritualistic way than that of the later-developed temples of the Honganji tradition. The 'Buddhist house/apartment' also has this informal and quasi-familiar quality: from the outside, at least, the building looks and feels like any other common residence.[31]

In sharp contrast is Ekōji in Dusseldorf, built as a traditional Japanese temple (with a low *naijin* and a moveable *chūgejin*), as part of Ekō-haus, a centre for Japanese culture, as described in Chapter 3. Although the *hondō* at Ekōji embodies in most details a Honganji-ha sacred space, as noted in Chapter 3, the temple is funded and maintained by Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai (BDK, 仏教伝道教会) and in compliance with this organisation's rules about propagating Buddhism overseas, it must remain non-sectarian and open to all Buddhist traditions. A spatial instantiation of this principle can be observed in a hall within the temple complex called the *Shakadō* 釈迦堂 which contains a revolving scroll which can be used as a *gohonzon* of different Buddhist traditions, so different groups or sanghas can use it as their meeting place and have the object of devotion of their respective tradition.

Nevertheless, Ekōji is a focus for the various Jōdo Shinshū communities in Europe, as the place that hosts the yearly Hōonkō Seminar for all the European groups,

and that has also hosted many of the biennial European Shin Conferences. Because Ekōji is the only traditional temple space in Europe that replicates the structure and arrangement of large Jōdo Shinshū temples, it has also been used for training *tokudo* candidates. Part of the preparation for *tokudo* or ordination involves learning how to move in ritual space, and therefore how to create ritual space through movement in a space that is specifically designed to be moved through in highly choreographed and context-dependent ways. These choreographed movements are demonstrated when the officiating priests enter and leave the *naijin*, and perform the various ritual gestures that make up the ceremonies conducted in the temple.[32]

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, many dharma gatherings have become virtual and new ones have emerged, often bringing together individuals who before would not have met face to face with any regularity. This has been particularly significant in Europe, where followers are often geographically scattered, and may find it difficult to meet in person. These virtual spaces, in the form of Zoom meetings, YouTube livestreams or GoogleMeets rooms, have created new connections and disconnections, in some cases reconfiguring the sense of national and international sanghas. For instance, individuals in Sweden, Brazil or the United States have attended dharma discussions hosted by British Shin Buddhists. Or a British priest could become the guest speaker of a BCA Sunday service, without leaving their residence in the United Kingdom. Analogously, European aspirants to the *kyōshi* certification (training required in order to become head minister of a temple - see p.151) could join American and Canadian candidates for virtual training sessions from their own homes across the Atlantic. These new media and the (dis)connections they enable have created new spaces for Buddhist practice and therefore have reshaped the social structure of many communities. When it comes to ritual space, there is no *naijin* and *gejin* in a Zoom room, even if the celebrant is joining the session from the *naijin* of an actual temple. This way of gathering contributed to temporarily suspending conversations about sacred space and who is allowed to enter and inhabit it. We return to the discussion of rituals conducted in virtual space in Chapter 9.

Who can access the *naijin*? A North American debate

While the varying spatial layouts of temples in Japan, the Americas, and Europe, clearly constrain ritual performance, this is not the whole story. Bell argues that the ritualised body and its physical movements should not be seen as determined by the space in which they are situated, they also serve to create ritual space: "through a series of physical movements ritual practices spatially and temporally construct an environment organised according to schemes of privileged opposition … This is a circular process that tends to be misrecognized, if it is perceived at all" (1992: 98). For Jōdo Shinshū, the division between the *naijin* and the *gejin*, and the requirements in order to access it, including ordination status, robes to be worn, and how to enter it and move within it, highlight the ways in which bodies may create (or undermine) ritual spaces, and the disputes that can arise around this.

Because most European Shinshū meeting spaces do not have a clear physical division between *naijin* and *gejin*, and therefore lay and priest, this has never been a major ritual issue for European communities. However, at least pre-pandemic,

the question of who could sit at the *naijin* (or even access the raised *chūgejin*, often conflated with the *naijin* in the American Shinshū imagination) was one of the most divisive and heatedly discussed in the continental United States. These conversations were about the proper use of ritual space and who has the right to use it. As such, they offer an exceptional window into American Jōdo Shinshū, with its vast regional varieties and varying sensitivities around ritual which are often entangled with ethnicity, social class and political ideology.

A brief, but heated, exchange at the 2018 BCA National Council Meeting perfectly instantiates these dynamics. The issue being debated was access to the *naijin* for Minister's Assistants, especially those who, in remote temples without an ordained minister, often conduct services from the *naijin* and give talks from the podium at the raised *chūgejin*. The room was clearly divided on the matter and a young Japanese-born minister made the point that in Japan not even the *jūshoku* (resident minister) conducts regular services from the *naijin*, unless it is a special occasion. Access to this restricted area is limited to special ceremonies and the celebrating priests would only wear formal attire (*kokue/shikie* and *gojō gesa*) to go into it. Fairly spontaneously, a much older Japanese-American woman (likely a *sansei*, 三世, i.e., third generation Japanese descendant) rose to her feet and replied: "This is America and this is our tradition". This short incident illustrates a number of the issues around how ritual is perceived in North American Jōdo Shinshū.

On the one hand, the young Japanese minister perceives himself as a representative of the high ritual culture of the head temple, a missionary teaching Japanese-Americans the proper way of being Buddhist, and, in a sense, Japanese. His passionate defence of restricting access because that is the common practice in Japan implicitly construes him as the embodiment of traditional authenticity. On the other hand, the older Japanese-American woman is standing up, literally, to defend (Japanese-) American authenticity as an autonomous centre of culture. She is implicitly rejecting the young minister's point as 'colonial', and reclaiming American Shin ritual as a centre in its own right, not a periphery in relation to Japan. For the Japanese priest, allowing access to the *naijin* to lay people, or even to priests who do not observe the proper decorum (for example, in terms of attire), is a trivialisation of sacred space. For the Japanese-American laywoman, allowing a Minister's Assistant (arguably a neither lay nor priest kind of figure) to access the *naijin* is an expression of gratitude to the assistant for the service they offer to the temple. This microcosmic culture clash can be said to pit values of humility, self-effacement and showing propriety by meticulously observing regulations against values of public recognition, and expressing appreciation by placing the Minister's Assistants centre stage. It also reveals contrasting understandings of the meanings of ritual spaces, and of hierarchy and authority within Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha, in particular concerning the positioning of priests, or ministers. This highlights some of the points of friction that can emerge when, generally young, Japanese ministers, often raised in their family temples, meet Japanese-American congregations well established for generations.

The hybrid ritual spaces of the BCA, with their higher *naijin*-cum-*chūgejin* and church-like atmosphere, encompass a range of attitudes, currents and

counter-currents of spatial thought and practice. Paradoxically, the elevated podiums can be a stage of egalitarian dynamics, allowing different voices and bodies (both ordained and non-ordained) to inhabit and speak from this raised position. However, the opening of this space to non-ordained members could also be said to erode the ritualised sacredness of the space, which is meant to symbolise the realm of nirvana, the Pure Land. This is a place where, according to the official position at least, only certain kinds of bodies and voices should be seen and heard. Arguably, even ordained persons who are granted access do not enter the *naijin* 'just as they are' but are transformed through elaborate bodily and sartorial practices. They do not move as they normally would and do not chant or speak in their natural voices; they are ritual bodies that are understood to be performing the activity of a Bodhisattva, not expressing their usual, ordinary selves.

From this perspective, in the symbolic universe of the ritual, the priests performing sutra chanting at the *naijin* are channelling the dharma, like actors in a sacred play. In this sense, being allowed to access the *naijin* is not a question of recognition of the individual's merits, but something dependent on the level of training and ordination status. The young minister's point seems to be that the *naijin* is a place that is normally looked at reverently from the outside, from the *gejin*, by those attending a service, not a place that one should take pride in occupying. The tension between the warmth, recognition and egalitarianism of inviting people (even if they are not ordained) into the *naijin* and the deep reverence, humility of the more traditional understanding which restricts access to the ordained, offers us a window into how ritual and ritual space take centre stage in conversations about the identity, authenticity and development of American Jōdo Shinshū.

Crossing the *naijin-gejin* divide: constructing a fluid ritual space

Another interesting event Galvan-Alvarez observed involved a somewhat transgressive opening of the *naijin* to people who normally sit in the *gejin*. The All-Night Nembutsu held at Pasadena Buddhist Temple in June 2018, discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, commenced with the minister, Reverend Gibbs, inviting the participants, who were all lay, to circumambulate the Buddha statue enshrined as *gohonzon* by walking on and off the *naijin*. In this way, the spatial order of a traditional Japanese Buddhist temple, which rests in the *naijin*/*gejin* division, was disrupted. Not only were lay people enabled to cross the boundary between the inner and the outer sanctum, but both priest and lay walked in a circle, from outer to inner and from inner to outer, in a horizontal loop. Further, whereas most ritual activities in a temple setting involve sitting (either at the *naijin* or the *gejin*), with minimal, mindful and somewhat solemn walking to and from one's seat – or fixed place, the circumambulation constructed a much more dynamic, fluid and rhizomatic ritual space. In the egalitarian circle, the boundaries of priest and lay were blurred together with the symbolic realms of samsara and nirvana, Pure Land and Saha world. In this way, the transgression of sacred space had a distinct non-dualistic doctrinal flavour. The participants walked together into the 12 hour long *nenbutsu* retreat while chanting first *kimyō jinjippō mugekō nyorai* (帰命尽十方無碍光如来), which was then

replaced by other forms of *nenbutsu*, such as the more common *namo amida butsu* (南無阿弥陀佛, often shortened to *namandabutsu, namandabu* or *namanda*) or the less commonly used *namo fukashigikō nyorai* (南無不可思議光如来)[33]. Gibbs explained that *kimyō jinjippō mugekō nyorai* was Shinran's and Rennyo's favourite form of *nenbutsu*, but the latter had to refrain from using it because of pressure from Hieizan (比叡山), the monastic centre of the Tendai School (*tendaishū* 天台宗). The act of inviting both lay and ordained folk into the *naijin* while uttering an unusual form of *nenbutsu*, abandoned because of its potentially subversive implications, had a distinct rebellious quality.

The transgressive space created by this unorthodox *nenbutsu* retreat, symbolically initiated by ritually walking away from the duality of priest-lay/*nirvana-samsara*, was also animated by a deeply reformist attempt to reconnect with Jōdo Shinshū's dissident roots. The spatial and ritual separation of priests and lay, embodied by the *naijin*, was dissolved, evoking Shinran's notion of fellow travellers who walk the same path *ondōbō ondōgyō* (御同朋・御同行) and mimicking the early Jōdo Shinshū *dōjō*. In the same vein, the form of *nenbutsu* chanted at the beginning of the event, a formula connected with the allegedly antinomian potential of Jōdo Shinshū, and side-lined at the time of the *ikkō ikki* (一向一揆) uprisings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,[34] seemed to highlight the egalitarian, revolutionary and liberatory interpretation of Shinran's message.[35]

Conclusion

From the facades of temple buildings to the multiple variations inside the *hondō* we can appreciate many transformations and adaptations to place, time and circumstance. These changes might relate to materials, architectural styles or various approaches to repurposing pre-existing buildings. They also reflect broader trends, for example, the aspiration for a Buddhist modernity in Japan and (some of) the Japanese diaspora through the Indo-Saracen style, or the strategic convenience of assimilating to the church model in Brazil and the United States at times of widespread discrimination. Adaptations to local sensitivities and available materials can be seen, for example, in the raised *naijin*-cum-*chūgejin* in the Americas and the common use of local materials producing more Americanised buildings and interiors. And another important factor is the need to craft sacred spaces out of pre-existing structures when there are no resources for building a temple from scratch (e.g., Hawai'i in the initial stages of the spread of Jōdo Shinshū, or Europe).

Through these examples we come to appreciate temple buildings as places where both difference and similarity are negotiated. In the Americas, temples express a complex (dis)connection to Japan, sometimes mimicking the architectural styles of the country of origin explicitly, sometimes localising and hybridising them, or containing this connection inside the building by erasing all 'foreign' features on the outside. And Japan too has seen architectural innovations. Temples like Tsukiji Hongwanji are perhaps the best example of how this crisscrossed, global and hybrid imagination penetrates and encompasses Japan, creating a vast web of influences that complicates any straightforward ideas about centre and periphery.

The quality of temple buildings as sites where identity and belonging are negotiated foreshadows the boundaries we find inside these buildings. This is particularly the case in the Americas, where who gets to access the *naijin* is a much bigger issue than in Japan or Europe. The higher *naijin*, from Vancouver to Buenos Aires, reflect a clear adaptation to Christian architecture, but also signal the significance played by this boundary in many American contexts. The issues concerning access concern conflicting perspectives on the appropriate use of sacred space as well as different ritual sensibilities. This variety reflects the many intersections of origin, locality, religious ideology and expectations that shape the cases explored in this chapter. The ritual division of space embodied by the *naijin* and *gejin* is as much about status (e.g., who can access the space, i.e., ordained members) as it is about ritual performance (e.g., in which garments and with which prescribed movements may a person enter and inhabit the space), theoretically limiting access to certain bodies and certain voices. In the same vein the use of a Jōdo Shinshū sacred space (whether the *naijin* or the *hondō* as a whole) for performing practices that have historically not been part of the tradition remains a contested issue in most American contexts. A particular subject of controversy here has been the introduction of meditative and contemplative practices in some overseas Jōdo Shinshū centres, as explored further in the next chapter.

Notes

1 See, e.g., Lefebvre (1991) for a discussion of the relationships between space, authority and power.
2 A detailed description of Japanese temple architecture is beyond the scope of this chapter, however, it is worth noting that many of its features were adapted from forms used in China, as well as influences from elsewhere in Asia. For a more detailed analysis, see Nishi and Hozumi (1985: 12–39).
3 Economics plays an important part here – the very small Jōdo Shinshū temples in Japan typically lacked the funds to build on a larger scale – constraints which have also been significant for many in the sangha outside Japan.
4 This term was originally used for Mughal architecture in India, but by the 1870s came to denote a style of British colonial architecture under the Raj (Jaffe 2019: 179). A prominent Japanese architect associated with this style was Itō Chūta 伊東忠太 (1867–1954), who designed Tsukiji Hongwanji in Tokyo.
5 See Chapter 2 on the repositioning of Buddhism in Japan during the Meiji period.
6 It is interesting to note here that the hybrid design was chosen by Imamura in the face of opposition from his Japanese-American parishioners, who would have preferred a more traditional Japanese style temple (Moriya 2001:189).
7 The Hawaii Betsuin is by no means an architectural exception in the Hawai'ian context. Many Buddhist temples exhibit hybrid features that combine a number of global styles. For instance, the Jōdo Mission in Honolulu (of the Jōdoshū school) is meant to be modelled on the Taj Mahal and it resembles South Asian Muslim architecture, which caused one of the authors, Galvan-Alvarez, to first assume it was a mosque. Likewise, Hilo Betsuin, belonging to the Honganji-ha, looks from the outside like a mission church from Central or South America, with many outward features of Spanish colonial architecture. However, the inside of Hilo Betsuin combines pews with South Asian arches, resembling Islamic architecture, as well as a mostly typically Japanese *naijin* with lots of golden adornments, except that the columns that demarcate it are Greco-Roman in style. Analogously, the Sōtō Mission (of the Sōtō Zenshū 曹洞禅宗school) and the Palolo Hongwanji (of the Ōtani-ha school), both in Honolulu, are, on the outside, built like

Indian temples, which could be Hindu, Buddhist or Jain. Their outside appearance resembles the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhgaya (Bihar) or iconic Hindu temples like the Rajarajeswaram Temple in Tamil Nadu, with a central, tall pyramidal structure, but also with interior spaces that include pews and further hybrid combinations of global elements.

8 One temple in Oxnard, California was actually originally a Lutheran church, but was remodelled as a Jōdo Shinshū temple in 1966 (Buddhist Churches of America 1998: 275).

9 There are some exceptions to this, as discussed further in the following sections.

10 An imperial prince who is credited with establishing Buddhist teachings in Japan. Revered as a spiritual leader by Shinran, he is often referred to as "the Father of Buddhism in Japan" (Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha 2002: 25).

11 Nagarjuna (referred to in Japan as Ryūju 龍樹 (c. second to third century CE, India); Vasubandu (Seshin or Tenjin 世親/天親) (c. fourth century CE, India); Tan Luan (Donran 曇鸞) (476–542, China); Tao Ch'o (Dōshaku 道綽) (562–654, China); Shandao (Zendō 善導) (613–681, China); Genshin 源信 (942–1017, Japan); Hōnen 法然, also known as Genkū 源空 (1133–1212, Japan).

12 For one explanation along these lines, see the website of the Salt Lake Buddhist temple in the USA, although this website expands the category of those who can access the *naijin* to "those who are learning about the rituals" as well as clergy – a significant addition in view of the controversy in the United States regarding who can access the *naijin*, as explored further in the following sections (Visitor guide Salt Lake Buddhist temple https://www.slbuddhist.org/visitors, accessed 29/7/25).

13 An exception to this is Tsukiji Hongwanji in Tokyo, where there is no tatami in the *gejin*, which is entirely filled with rows of chairs.

14 Similar dynamics concerning a multipurpose *naijin* can be appreciated in a diasporic context, that of the Restaurant-Dōjō Furaibō in Buenos Aires, discussed in Chapter 7.

15 The flooring in this area is of the same material used in Japanese school gyms, so it is resilient.

16 The Tanabes were writing on Hawai'i, but many of the points they make apply in the continental United States too, and some can be extended across the Americas as a whole.

17 While accepting Wilson's (2012) point that there are important variations among temples in the United States, and it may therefore be problematic to make generalised assertions about "American Buddhism" or "American Jōdo Shinshū", there are nevertheless some common characteristics of Jōdo Shinshū temples in the United States which are sufficiently widespread to be able to paint a broad picture (while recognising that there will always be exceptions).

18 The sangha that forms the focus of Wilson's ethnography, Ekōji, in Richmond, Virginia, provides an interesting exception to this pattern. While the initiative for establishing the temple came from a minister and former BCA. Bishop, Reverend Takashi Kenryu Tsuji, the premises for the temple were purchased in 1985 with the assistance of the Numata foundation, or Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai, which promotes Buddhism across denominations. The space is currently shared by five different Buddhist groups, who have worked out creative ways of sharing that draw on each other's material culture – and which does not involve the use of pews. Wilson writes that "the Pure Land group sits on Zen cushions placed before sutra benches crafted by the Tibetan practitioners" (Wilson 2012:8).

19 The use of Western style seating (at that time chairs rather than pews) was insisted on by an early missionary to Hawai'i, Bishop Imamura, at the time of the establishment of one of the first temples in Hawai'i in 1900. Imamura felt that "the interior should express the western style furnishings of its location" (Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i 1989: 22–23)

20 Tsukiji Hongwanji in Tokyo also has a pipe organ, unusually for temples in Japan. It was donated by the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai in 1970.

21 See Chapter 2 for more on the Buddhist flag.

22 In post-war Japan too, there was a fashion to build an assembly hall in temple complexes for community activities such as boy scouts, women's groups, and funerals. But with the decline in membership of many temple groups, and the increase in funerals organised by professional funeral companies, the use of these halls has also fallen into decline.

23 Although throughout the book we refer to members who have been ordained into the tradition as priests, when discussing case studies specific to North American we refer to said 'priests' or 'ordained members' as 'ministers', in accordance with the local custom.
24 The institutional ambiguities of the role of the minister's assistant have been explored at length by Mitchell (2010, 118–120).
25 Reflecting on these and other innovations in a conversation with Louella Matsunaga in 2023, Ogui compared the adaptations that he introduced to the development of a new form of *sushi* 寿司 in California, the California roll – or alternatively the export of Toyota cars adapted to the US market with a left-hand drive, saying, "Toyota can make changes like this without losing quality, so we can too".
26 The Templo Shin Budista in Brasília offers a unique combination of Japanese and Panamerican tendencies, in so far as both the *naijin* and *chūgejin* are raised, though to a different degree, with the former being higher than the latter. This triple structure consists of a *gejin* made out of tiled floors, a slightly elevated *chūgejin* made out of wooden panels including a podium, and a *naijin*, also with wooden panels, at the highest level. Unlike in most American temples, the Brasília temple is large enough to include *yoma*, which is made out of wooden panels, like the rest of the raised area, but which has been fitted with soft cushioned materials so that lay members can comfortably sit in it.
27 Numbers of followers of religious movements are notoriously hard to estimate. This is a very approximate estimate, based on conversations with European Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha priests.
28 The school's requirements to be considered a temple are not particularly demanding in spatial or architectural terms: the space concerned simply needs to be equipped with a Buddhist altar. However, these requirements also involve the appointment of a resident priest (*jūshoku*), who by definition ought to have the *kyōshi* qualification, which the vast majority of European clergy do not have. In the same vein, a temple ought to be supported by a sizable community of members, so they can appoint an assembly of representatives and elect a temple president and most European Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha communities are not large or structured enough to comply with these regulations. Although there are two larger Jōdo Shinshu temples in Europe, Three Wheels in London, and Ekōji in Düsseldorf, Three Wheels belongs to a different school of Jōdo Shinshū, and Ekōji is not officially a Honganji-ha temple, as explained in Chapter 3.
29 There are a few exceptions to this pattern. For example, Jikōji 慈光寺, in Belgium, formerly occupied a house bequeathed to the group, in which the ground floor was converted into a *hondō* including a raised *naijin*, clearly separated from the *gejin*. However, the most recent resident priest, Fons Martens, died in 2018, leaving Jikōji without an ordained priest. At the time of writing some of the remaining members of the Belgian group have relocated to a new address and one of them is training towards ordination in 2025.
30 An image of the Pieper's portrait, dressed in formal robes (*shikie, gojō gesa*) and carrying *futawa nenju* and *chūkei* can be found in http://www.pitaka.ch/pieper.htm
31 This is also true of Three Wheels, which was established in 1994 in a suburban house in west London. From the street, it is indistinguishable from other residential properties, but at the rear it has a Zen-style garden, and the main room on the ground floor contains a Buddhist altar and is used for services.
32 See Chapter 4.
33 *Kimyō jinjippō mugekō nyorai* might be roughly translated as 'take refuge in the Tathagata [Buddha] whose light shines unhindered throughout the ten quarters' and *namo fukashigikō nyorai* as 'take refuge in the Tathagata of inconceivable light'. They are both ways of referring to Amida Buddha in the Sino-Japanese forms of Buddhism and were often chanted alongside the more common *namo amida butsu*, which has nowadays become prevalent, almost to the exclusion of any other formulation of *nenbutsu*.
34 The *ikkō ikki* leagues were associated with Shinshū, and took their ideological grounding from the teaching that "all believers possess equal standing in the eyes of Amida" (Dobbins 2002:140).

35 The dissident history of Jōdo Shinshū is explored at length by Dobbins (2002) through the issue of *zōaku muge* 増悪無碍, often assimilated in translation to the term 'antinomianism' (47–62), its connection to the *ikkō ikki* (140–144) and the complicated socio-political implications of using the *kimyō jinjippō mugekō nyorai* scroll as *gohonzon* (133–136).

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6 Mindfulness and meditation

Introduction

In November 2019, as part of the Hōonkō Seminar at Ekō-haus in Germany, Reverend Professor Kenneth Tanaka concluded one of his lectures with a "Shin Nembutsu Meditation". Participants, both lay and ordained, sitting together in their ordinary clothes in a lecture room, were instructed to sit quietly on their chairs with their hands on their laps, while Tanaka explained the steps of the "meditation" he had designed. At this point, a minister who is not sympathetic to the use of meditation in a Jōdo Shinshū context politely left the room. While sitting quietly, participants listened to the various steps of Tanaka's "contemplation", which were introduced as grounded in the *Contemplation Sutra* (*Bussetsu Kan Muryōjū kyō* 仏説観無量寿経 more commonly referred to as *Kangyō*) and which involved reflecting on the physical, mental, social and spiritual forces that support their lives.[1] After sitting quietly, focused on the breath in a similar way to mindfulness meditation, those present stood up and walked around the room in a circle while rhythmically chanting Na-Man-Da-Bu. Towards the end of the group recitation, Tanaka read, in English, the passage of the 18th vow and the postscript of the *Tannishō* (歎異抄), a popular Jōdo Shinshū text. The English reading overlapped with the chanting of the *nenbutsu* as participants were encouraged to imagine Amida, either as an anthropomorphic figure, the six characters that make up the *myōgō* or name of Amida (南無阿弥陀仏, i.e., *namo amida butsu*) or any of the objects from the physical, mental, social or spiritual realms that embody the "life-giving compassionate workings" or "immeasurable life" (*amitāyus*) that supports and enables their existence. As soon as this practice concluded, the minister who had previously left the room quietly re-entered.

The issue of meditation in Jōdo Shinshū has been the subject of much discussion in recent years, both among Shinshū followers and in academic writings, in particular in the context of Shin Buddhism outside Japan. Although, as this vignette illustrates, meditative practices are encountered within Jōdo Shinshū, meditation tends to be viewed as external to the Shin tradition. This is a view rooted both in a critique of self-power, or *jiriki*,[2] practices (Dake 2005: 107–8), and in an (often narrow) interpretation of meditation and the practices regarded as internal to Jōdo Shinshū. In other words, the issue of meditation has to do as much with recognised

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forms of ritual or orthopraxis as with doctrine or orthodoxy. The two cannot be entirely disentangled, but they represent distinct dimensions in the debates that will be explored in this chapter. We also argue that the term meditation itself needs unpacking and that a broader view of meditation, encompassing notions of mindfulness, is needed.

The English word "meditation", and its equivalents in other European languages, is widely understood to denote a silent, sitting practice. As Amstutz (2014) has noted, in a certain popular Western imagination this form of practice is seen as somehow synonymous with Buddhism itself. Amstutz suggests that this is part of the explanation of Jōdo Shinshū's relative lack of appeal in the United States outside the ethnic Japanese community, writing that "Shin does not meet stereotypical (Orientalist, White) Western expectations of Buddhism which are based on monasticism or meditation" (Amstutz 2014: 143).

This speaks to a wider issue of how Buddhism has been re-imagined, both as part of the revival movement in South Asia beginning in the late nineteenth century, sometimes referred to as "Protestant Buddhism" (see, e.g., Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988), and also as Buddhism has spread outside Asia, under the influence of Buddhist modernism.[3] An important aspect of this has been the close association drawn between Buddhism and meditation in modernist narratives, and the extension of the practice of meditation from the ordained to lay followers (Gombrich 1983, Baumann 2002: 57). But it is also worth sounding a note of caution here regarding the role of silent seated meditation even among the ordained or in monastic settings. Sharf (1995a: 242) writes that "meditation plays a minor if not negligible role in the lives of the majority of Theravada monks".

Similar observations have been made concerning Zen Buddhism (Reader 1986, Sharf 1995a, 1995b, Dessi 2013). In Japan, Zen temples resemble temples of other Buddhist schools in their emphasis on dealing with funerals and memorial services for the ancestors, while lay members may rarely, if ever, practice seated meditation. Arguing against an overemphasis on the role of meditation in Zen monasticism, Sharf (1995b: 426) notes that "Zen monastic training involves a prolonged course of instruction in the elaborate ritual and ceremony of monastic life", including chanting, how to wear robes, how to make offerings, and how to conduct memorial rites. As Dessi argues, "the identification of Zen with meditation is mainly dependent on ideas elaborated by the wave of Buddhist modernism started in the Meiji period, and by the writings of scholars related to the Kyoto School and Suzuki Daisetsu" (Dessi 2013: 76). MacMahan (2008: 185) also points out that, paradoxically, at the same time as meditation has become identified as a key element of Buddhism in modernist interpretations, especially outside Asia, it has also become viewed as "the element most detachable from the tradition itself". Meditation and mindfulness have become re-articulated as therapeutic techniques, for example, as a means of relaxation or stress management, among others, in a range of secular contexts.

If we were to find a practice shared by all Buddhists, we would be on much safer ground by looking among various forms of chanting and recitation, offering incense or bowing, rather than seated meditation. Interestingly, these more

universally shared and popular Buddhist practices are sometimes re-interpreted as "cultural accoutrements" in the same Western popular imagination that enshrines "meditation" as the essence of Buddhism. This has led in some cases to other forms of ritual (aside from seated meditation) being rejected as, at best, "skilful means" and at worst an obstacle that veils the essence being sought (Sharf 1995b: 435).

This imaginary of Buddhism as meditation is thus highly problematic. As argued by the authors cited above, it ignores the historical evidence, which points to the widespread adoption of seated meditation as a key Buddhist practice being a modern phenomenon. In this sense, the absence of "meditation" from the Jōdo Shinshū tradition is hardly an anomaly within the history of Buddhism. The focus on meditation in the narrow sense of silent sitting also ignores the ways in which Buddhist traditions have conceptualised their own practices. For instance, there is no word in Sanskrit, Chinese, or Japanese that could be considered an exact equivalent to the English word "meditation", which comes from Latin and has a rich Christian heritage.[4] The concept of Buddhist practice, cultivation, or focused attention (i.e., mindfulness) encompasses many forms of mindful engagement, such as chanting, offering incense, bowing as well as silent sitting practices. Dake (2005: 108) also points out that even within American Buddhism the significance of meditation is extremely broad, covering a range of disciplines from "just sitting", or *shikan taza* (只管打坐), as taught by Dōgen (道元1200–1253) to "the quieting of one's thoughts" as a preliminary to other forms of practice.

A shift in focus to the term "mindfulness", especially if understood as a translation of the Sanskrit *smriti* or the Chinese character 念 (*nen*), may help us see through the popular, Western imagination of meditation, revealing the many forms of ritualised focused attention that exist within various Buddhist traditions. The various ritualised forms in which body, speech and mind are engaged *mindfully* across Buddhist traditions offer us a helpful lens for understanding Buddhist ideas about what constitutes practice or cultivation. Jōdo Shinshū contains, both historically and contemporarily, many such forms of ritualised mindful engagement, such as saying the *nenbutsu*,[5] reciting the sutras, offering incense, bowing, wearing robes, carrying *nenju* (念珠, literally, mindfulness beads) or expressing respect towards texts while engaging with them, by studying or reciting them.[6]

These forms of ritualised mindful engagement are by no means exclusive to Jōdo Shinshū – as noted above, they are in fact shared by most, if not all, Buddhist traditions. However, what is perhaps unique about the Jōdo Shinshū tradition, and to the Honganji-ha school in particular, is the way these practices have been reinterpreted, not as a means of cultivating merit or insight, but as expressions of gratitude. Such a construction has its own complicated history, but it is arguably rooted in a distinctly passive understanding of the logic of *tariki* (other power, 他力), the idea that we do not become awakened through our own efforts but through the power of Amida Buddha's vow.

The rising popularity of "mindfulness" (understood as a secular, silent contemporary practice), together with the association between Buddhism and meditation

in Western societies, presents an interesting challenge to Jōdo Shinshū temples and communities outside Japan. As Dake has written elsewhere,

> it could be said that the question of meditation in America is posing a fundamental challenge to the traditional framework, which has historically taken the negative attitude that all practices performed as a process for the realization of *shinjin* (信心), including meditation, are self-powered practices.
>
> (Dake 2005: 108)

This extends beyond the question of silent seated meditation to encompass also saying the *nenbutsu*, arguably the central practice of Jōdo Shinshū.

The current orthodox position within the Honganji-ha is that "*shinjin* is the true cause of birth, saying the name is an expression of gratitude" (*shinjin shōin shōmyō hōon* 信心正因称名報恩). However, this phrase is not found in Shinran's writings. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, the view that saying the name is an expression of gratitude became the orthodox position in Honganji-ha following the *sangōwakuran* (三業惑乱) incident of 1797–1806 (Shimazu n.d.), but there continues to be a debate within Jōdo Shinshū regarding this interpretation, and, by extension, regarding the understanding of self-power and other power, and the way in which this relates to a range of practices including both the *nenbutsu* and various forms of meditation (see Dake 2005, Shimazu n.d.).

The challenge of how to deal with mindfulness and meditation in Jōdo Shinshū temples and communities outside Japan is not new. Dessi (2016, 2013: 70–76) describes initiatives in Hawai'i going back to the 1970s, and within the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) going back to the 1980s to introduce seated, Zen-style meditation in Jōdo Shinshū temples. Some of these were associated with prominent figures within Jōdo Shinshū, for example, the former bishop of the BCA Koshin Ogui, who introduced seated meditation at the Cleveland Buddhist Temple in Ohio while he was minister there.[7] From the 2000s, debates on offering seated meditation within BCA temples intensified, with some temples taking the view that this is not part of Jōdo Shinshū practice, while others have adopted various creative approaches to the issue, including offering silent practices, blending silent and vocal practices (involving, for example, chanting the *nenbutsu* and/or the sutras), or reinterpreting established Jōdo Shinshū practices as mindfulness and presenting them as such. In turn, more conservative priests have raised their objections to the use of mindfulness and meditation in a Jōdo Shinshū context, both in terms of ritual orthopraxis and doctrinal orthodoxy.

In 2005, a symposium on meditation in Jōdo Shinshū was co-organised by the Jōdo Shinshū-affiliated Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley and the Stanford Center for Buddhist Studies, and in the same year, official public support emerged both from overseas bishops and from the directors of the BCA for "the integration of meditational practices within Jōdo Shinshū … provided that meditation remained a preliminary practice for *chōmon* (聴聞), namely listening to the Jōdo Shinshū teaching" (Dessi 2013: 73). The presentation of meditation as a preparatory practice for listening to the dharma, and as an opportunity to pause and clear the mind, rather than

as a means to enlightenment, seems to have been a compromise acceptable to many as a way of addressing the local demand for meditation and the concern over meditation as a self-power practice, and has also been endorsed by the current Bishop of the BCA, Marvin Harada (Harada 2005, cited in Dessi 2013: 72).

However, this compromise does not resolve all the issues implicit in this debate. The conversation about Jōdo Shinshū, meditation, and mindfulness is an ongoing and difficult one. It brings into question the rationale and purpose of mindfulness within a system that has its own forms of mindfulness but which had, also, long reinterpreted them, in the light of concerns around self-power, as expressions of gratitude rather than mindfulness practices. One could ask the question, if the *nenbutsu* or chanting the sutras are a form of mindfulness, why would Jōdo Shinshū followers or temples need to engage in forms of mindfulness from outside the tradition? They seem to have those same tools already in their own heritage. However, an orthodox, post-*sangōwakuran* understanding of Jōdo Shinshū praxis seems to preclude them from being recognised as forms of conscious attention. Hence, the inherent ambiguity and threat of "mindfulness" to a "conservative" or "passive" understanding of the Jōdo Shinshū tradition: on the one hand, it seems to reveal Jōdo Shinshū as lacking a key component of Buddhist practice that has suddenly become popular, forcing Jōdo Shinshū temples to import it from other traditions (secular or Buddhist) and, on the other, it brings up uncomfortable questions about Jōdo Shinshū practices vis-à-vis the larger Buddhist tradition, potentially triggering a (re)interpretation of *nenbutsu* recitation and sutra chanting.

In Europe, the debates around the issue of silent seated meditation have been relatively underdeveloped. Local groups' responses to requests to offer meditation have been variable, with a range of viewpoints expressed by local priests.[8] Some, as in the example at the beginning of the chapter, are opposed to the practice of silent seated meditation, while others feel uncomfortable offering it as they feel ill-equipped to offer meditation sessions in view of their lack of training in this area of practice. As noted by Matsunaga (2022: 20), "many Shin Buddhist priests in Europe, if asked to provide meditation classes, will simply direct the enquirer to an alternative Buddhist group". Some priests have, however, noted that the absence of silent seated meditation in most European Jōdo Shinshū groups is a deterrent for Europeans when enquiring about Jōdo Shinshū (Matsunaga 2019: 248).

In the Americas, on the other hand, there has been a longstanding debate around these issues, as outlined above, and there have been a number of initiatives explicitly involving mindfulness and meditation. In this chapter, we focus on examples of these drawn from the BCA and from Brazil, and based on fieldwork conducted by one of the authors of this book, Galvan-Alvarez, between 2015 and 2019 on a series of visits that lasted from a month to six months.

Mindfulness and meditation in the BCA[9]

Mindfulness and meditation classes are now present in many BCA temples, but they remain a contested issue at the national and local levels. Though some temples actively refuse to host mindfulness or meditation classes, in many cases, they are

tolerated despite the reservations of some in the ministerial team. A brief conversation at L.A. Betsuin, the central temple of a metropolitan area known for its conservative approach and emphasis on Japanese language and culture, instantiated this tension. Galvan-Alvarez was surprised to find an advertisement at the *betsuin* for "mindfulness classes", and on asking about this, a member of the ministerial team was quick to explain: "The *rinban* (輪番)[10] does not encourage it but it happens". The exception to the conservatism of the L.A. area is Orange County Buddhist Church (OCBC), which offers regular "mindfulness services" or "mindfulness meditation", as described in more detail in the following sections.[11]

In the Bay area, and at the Buddhist Church of San Francisco (BCSF) in particular, mindfulness and meditation classes are less of a contested issue, though their existence is by no means free of tensions. Galvan-Alvarez attended and participated in the weekly sessions of "mindfulness meditation" for about six months and identified a number of patterns in the way the practice was introduced and interpreted. Although there were slight variations in each session, most of them consisted of a guided, silent (save for the guiding instructions) meditation focused on mindfulness of the body and the breath, with periods of both sitting and walking. This quieter period was often followed by the recitation of the *nenbutsu*, as well as modern, English language Jōdo Shinshū pledges or prayers like the Golden Chain[12] or the Jodo Shinshu Creed and the offering of incense in the "mindful" and ritualised fashion normally followed at Jōdo Shinshū services. These sessions were led by Leo Joslin, a (non-ordained) minister's assistant of mixed Caucasian and Japanese ancestry in his early 60s, with a background in psychotherapy and previous Buddhist experience in Thich Nhat Hanh's tradition.[13] Joslin emphasised many times that we do not practise mindfulness to become enlightened, but for a number of other non-soteriological purposes. Whereas enlightenment is regarded as happening through the force of Amida's vow, in accordance with Jōdo Shinshū orthodoxy, sitting quietly and paying attention to the breath could have other benefits.

Among these, over the months, there was a recurring non-soteriological message regarding the benefits of mindfulness or meditation practices: being free from stress or anxiety, feeling good, making *samsara* more manageable. On the other hand, a more Jōdo Shinshū rationalisation of the practice emphasised how by sitting quietly we get to know ourselves better and develop insight into our "true *bombu* nature",[14] which in turn makes us more ready to receive or accept Amida's help. In this way mindfulness can be seen as aligned with and aiding *nishu jinshin* (二種深心), a term often used in Jōdo Shinshū to denote two types of "deep mind" or "deep heart".[15] By incorporating the recitation of the *nenbutsu* and other English language Shinshū texts at the end of the session, the format, whether deliberately or unconsciously, not only offered the possibility of developing insight into one's true (ordinary, deluded) nature by quietly following the breath (and realising how difficult it is for the mind to settle) but also an insight into the all-encompassing nature of the Buddha's embrace and salvation (by reciting the *nenbutsu*, and the Jōdo Shinshū Creed).

Although this understanding of mindfulness as a way of *nishu jinshin* was hinted at occasionally, there were other elements in the way the practice was introduced that did not try to explicitly re-interpret it in a Jōdo Shinshū framework. For instance, the

(mental) health rationale for mindfulness seems to completely dissociate the practice from its Buddhist roots, which, paradoxically, in a Jōdo Shinshū context works as a way of legitimising mindfulness as a non-*jiriki* (self-power) practice, because it has been stripped of its Buddhist meaning. When speaking from a therapeutic angle, Joslin, who worked in the care sector, talked about mindfulness as a form of habit-building willpower, which resonates with a self-power sensibility. However, the technique was sometimes presented as having Buddhist origins and quotes from teachers like Thich Nhat Hanh or the Pali sutras were engaged to make the point that mindfulness is a practice recommended by "our original teacher, the Buddha [Śākyamuni]". The ambivalences about mindfulness in a Shinshū context, either reframed as a Shinshū practice or as a therapeutic, secular exercise are telling. These creative tensions were sometimes explored in "dharma chat", a period set after each mindfulness session for the participants to sit around and converse over tea and biscuits. Many of those informal conversations offered different rationales for mindfulness practices, both from Joslin and other participants.

The case study of BCSF's "mindfulness meditation" sessions is an example of the complications of accommodating "meditation" and "mindfulness" in a Shinshū context, when the premise is that Shinshū has no such thing as mindfulness or meditation. However, some groups, both in the United States and in Brazil, are taking a new approach to bridging this gap. The easiest bridging, perhaps, is to rationalise common Jōdo Shinshū practices, especially sutra chanting, as a form of mindfulness meditation. Sutra chanting is a much better candidate than the *nenbutsu*, since it is not invested with the same soteriological importance. Sutra chanting is, according to Shandao's classification of the five right practices (*goshōgyō* 五正行), an auxiliary act (*jogō* 助業), so though considered one of the right practices, it always comes second to the reciting of the *nenbutsu*. There were countless instances during fieldwork on the U.S. West Coast when Galvan-Alvarez heard the rationalisation of sutra chanting as a form of mindfulness, whether the term was explicitly used or carefully avoided. In some cases, it would be presented as a way of focusing the mind in order to hear the dharma (in the form of a talk that often follows the chanting), or as a means to harmonise the sangha by paying attention to each other's voices and trying to keep the beat together. Also, in the context of a non-sectarian youth event hosted by the BCA at the Jodo Shinshu Centre in Berkeley, called "TechnoBuddha", a Jōdo Shinshū ministerial candidate introduced the practice of sutra chanting (to an audience who were not exclusively Jōdo Shinshū) as a form of "mindfulness", "healing", and as a "catalyser for social interconnection or oneness".

In the same vein, the OCBC, a particularly innovative and successful church in the L.A. area, offers "mindfulness services" on a weekly basis. The format here is different from BCSF, where the instructor often guided the group through detailed reminders about following the breath. In the sessions Galvan-Alvarez could attend at OCBC., participants were first warned that they were not sitting to attain enlightenment, thus complying with Jōdo Shinshū orthodoxy. Then they were left to sit in silence without much formal instruction except for a few points on posture. However, if the participants struggled with simply sitting in silence they were encouraged, at least in one of the sessions, to count three breaths by thinking of the

Buddha on the first breath, thinking of the dharma on the second breath and thinking of the sangha on the third breath. The quiet period was followed by traditionally Jōdo Shinshū sutra chanting, which was explicitly presented as sound/verbal meditation. The session finished with a dharma talk on an introductory Jōdo Shinshū topic. Unlike at BCSF, these sessions were usually led by ordained members with a much more sectarian focus and background.

What is significant about these sessions is not only the fact that sutra chanting was presented as a form of verbal or aural mindfulness practice, but also that the instruction to "think on the Buddha, dharma and sangha" on three consecutive breaths echoes the practices of *nenbutsu*, *nenpō* (念法), and *nensō* (念僧) (mindfulness of Buddha, mindfulness of dharma, mindfulness of sangha) which can be found in almost every Buddhist tradition (including Theravada) and which are also explicitly mentioned in the Amida Sutra (*Amida kyō*, 阿弥陀経). Without fully spelling it out, the way for regarding *nenbutsu* as a form of mindfulness is paved through this simple instruction. Although OCBC is not openly trying to reformulate doctrine, some of their ritual innovations are providing new pathways for reinterpreting traditional practices for a contemporary American audience.

At a time when Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha is decreasing in membership, both in Japan and overseas, OCBC represents a reversal of this pattern, with membership nearing a thousand at the time of fieldwork.[16] OCBC is also a wealthy and active institution, with its own publishing house and plenty of online materials and courses. There is no proof that OCBC's success is in any way directly linked to its "mindfulness services", but their more open and flexible approach seems to be reaching potential new members effectively. The mindfulness services Galvan-Alvarez attended gathered a relatively small group of people (5–10), but the Sunday service, in the impressive auditorium-like *hondō* was very well attended, with at least a few hundred people present. The format of Sunday service followed the Japanese-American tradition, except that pews had been replaced by comfortable cinema theatre-like seats and big screens at both sides of the *naijin* displayed mobile signs with the text of the sutra or gatha being sung. OCBC is in Anaheim, an affluent part of L.A., where many Japanese-Americans have moved to in the last few decades, doubtlessly contributing to the successful outreach activities of the Church.

Whereas not a few BCA temples struggle to afford a full-time, fully qualified and appointed minister (*kaikyōshi* 開教使), OCBC has three plus a large ministerial team of six minister's assistants, including some who have undergone *tokudo* ordination.[17] A key figure behind OCBC's development has been its head minister since 1986, Reverend Marvin Harada, who has been serving as Bishop of the BCA since March 2020. One of the distinctive features of OCBC, other than its corporate image and impressive breadth of online materials, is a more open doctrinal approach to the Jōdo Shinshū teaching. Unlike most BCA temples, OCBC features occasional Ōtani-ha speakers, and tries to present Jōdo Shinshū as part of the larger Mahayana tradition, rather than as a separate and unique branch.

In the same spirit, albeit in very different circumstances, Reverend Elaine Donlin, from BCSF, has also developed a new ritual practice that engages mindfulness and meditation in order to present Jōdo Shinshū as a recognisable form of Buddhism.

In her 60s and from a Euro-Latin white background, Donlin is also the founder of the LGBTQ+ chapter of BCA Her ritual innovation, the Metta Gatherings, have been taking place once a month at BCSF and its supervised temples (i.e., Enmanji, Buddhist Temple of Marin) since 2012. The practice was put together by Donlin, originally as a way of addressing the fact that many newcomers would stumble upon Sunday service and never go back to the temple. She felt that both the Japanese (sutra chanting in a classical form of Sino-Japanese) and American (e.g., hymns, pews) elements of Sunday service were not working for potential new members who were unfamiliar with BCA services, because the former were unexplained and too foreign and the latter too familiar in an undesirable or confusing way. The Metta service aims to introduce the Jōdo Shinshū teaching of the *nenbutsu* in a way that is recognisable and understandable for a broad American audience with some exposure to Buddhism. It always begins with a talk by Donlin, often featuring some reflections on current events from a Buddhist, though not always necessarily Shinshū, perspective. Another theme in the talks was to draw connections between Jōdo Shinshū and other Buddhist traditions, as a way of situating the practice of the *nenbutsu*. The talk is followed by a short guided meditation, different every time and often from a tradition other than Jōdo Shinshū, and finally the liturgy created by Donlin.

This liturgy contains quotes from the Pali *Metta Sutta,*[18] which were read in English by Donlin, inviting the participants to think of different people to whom they wish to extend their focused, loving attention. Performing this exercise over the months Galvan-Alvarez was struck by how imagining loved and hated ones and, ultimately, all beings "living in peace" or being "free from difficulty" was akin to visualising the Pure Land. In conversation with Donlin, she confirmed that her intention was precisely to invite the participants to imagine the Pure Land, not as an idea, but as an emotional reality. This meditative section was followed by a short liturgy, recited entirely in English (except for the *nenbutsu*), which contained the Three Refuges (taking refuge in the Buddha, the dharma and the sangha); the Jōdo Shinshū Creed, an adapted and Jōdo Shinshū-flavoured rendering of Śantideva's famous Bodhisattva verse of aspiration,[19] a loud, meditative and continuous recitation of *nenbutsu* for 2–3 minutes and a freely translated version of Shandao's verse of dedication of merit.[20] This liturgical sequence is reminiscent of Tibetan Buddhist liturgies, which Donlin practised for 20 years before encountering Jōdo Shinshū, featuring the preliminary refuge, aspiration, something akin to mantra recitation (i.e., *nenbutsu*) as its climax and a concluding dedication of merit. Finally, participants were invited to offer incense (*oshōkō*, お焼香) in the traditional Jōdo Shinshū way, thus making a connection with the rituals they might encounter at other occasions if they keep on coming to the temple.

The Metta gatherings are a unique and original way of presenting Jōdo Shinshū in the United States, but at the same time they reflect a number of important trends in American Buddhism more widely, across sectarian and ethnic lines. Compared to Japan, and other spaces in the Shinshū diaspora, Buddhist sectarian divisions are relatively de-emphasised in the United States. Wilson (2012: 120–52), in his study of the multi-denominational sangha in Richmond, Virginia, Ekōji, has written about the positive valuation given to hybridity, in the sense of combining elements of more than one Buddhist tradition, within American Buddhism as a whole. It is not unusual

in the United States to find Buddhist services that include liturgical elements from diverse sources, and indeed, as Wilson notes, the standard services of the BCA are themselves hybrid, including influences from both other forms of Buddhism (e.g., the use of Pali refuges) and influences from Protestant Christianity.[21] The cosmopolitan San Francisco Bay Area hosts one of the highest concentrations of Buddhist denominations in the world. People in this part of the United States[22] who are interested in Buddhism have access to countless formulations, practices and Buddhist ideas in a way that differs sharply from traditionally Buddhist countries. The Metta gatherings emerge from that milieu but they are also trying to contribute a louder, recognisably Jōdo Shinshū voice to the conversation. As discussed above in Chapter 3, despite being the oldest Buddhist denomination in the United States, Jōdo Shinshū has remained relatively unknown outside the Japanese-American communities until recent years. Donlin's project seems to be not only grounding Jōdo Shinshū in the wider Buddhist tradition by establishing links with other practices and denominations, but also articulating a Jōdo Shinshū voice that speaks contemporary "Buddhist English" and is recognisable to the wider American Buddhist community.

The Metta Gatherings introduce the *nenbutsu* alongside other popular Buddhist practices and contextualise Jōdo Shinshū practice and teaching through turns of phrases, ritualised behaviours and emotive motifs that feel familiar to a non-Jōdo Shinshū, American Buddhist audience. Although the practice seems tailored to converts or potential converts, it has attracted the devotion and support of not a few people who have grown up as Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists. This is especially visible at Enmanji, located in Sebastopol in the heart of the Wine Country in California, and home to many ethnic Japanese farming families who have been associated with Jōdo Shinshū for generations. At Enmanji, Metta Gatherings often have a larger attendance than regular Sunday services. While regular Sunday services are almost exclusively attended by families who have grown up in Jōdo Shinshū, the Metta gatherings attract not only a combination of curious locals/Buddhist converts but also a substantial number of participants drawn from the local ethnic Japanese community.

The popularity of the Metta Gatherings among long-standing members in temples like Enmanji or the Buddhist Temple of Marin is significant, as it highlights the pitfalls of assuming a simple correlation between ethnic/cultural background and ritual sensibilities. The example of two *sansei* 三世 (third generation Japanese American) women in their 70s/80s from these two North Bay temples, who were among the most enthusiastic about the practice, is a case in point. Raised in a BCA temple with a standard Sunday service format, neither saw Donlin's innovation as problematic. In fact, the emotional quality of Metta was extremely appealing and touching for both. One of them, in her 80s, described her experience of attending the gatherings as a "one-hour oasis of calm". For her, the ritual forms or the (non-)sectarian pedigree of Metta were irrelevant; she found that the practice spoke to her in a much more emotive, embodied way. At the opposite end of the spectrum, a Jōdo Shinshū convert from a Jewish background expressed his affinity to Metta because it offered a story and a rationale to the, otherwise unexplained, practice of the *nenbutsu*. In a brief exchange after a Metta Gathering, he mentioned that, because of his Jewish origins, he expected any ritual or practice to tell a story and that he felt the story was missing when he attended Jōdo Shinshū

rituals. Galvan-Alvarez mentioned that every ritual gesture in traditional Jōdo Shinshū ceremonies (or in fact in innovative ones) did indeed tell a story, to which he answered that he assumed that that was the case but that the story remained impenetrable to him; he had no interest in chanting in a language he didn't understand and enjoyed Metta because it spelled out, in English, the meaning of Jōdo Shinshū symbols and practices.

Although Donlin's original intent in offering the Metta Gatherings seems to have had in mind individuals like the last male informant, the support and enthusiasm of members like the two women discussed above has undoubtedly contributed to keeping the gatherings going and to gaining acceptability in the temples. The diverse audiences drawn to the practice highlight that we cannot think along ethnic lines alone when looking at innovations in American Jōdo Shinshū practices like Metta. Although opposed by some long-standing members on the basis that these practices are "meditation" and therefore not appropriate for a Jōdo Shinshū sacred space, the example of Metta also underscores that Japanese-American Buddhist audiences are by no means cut off from interdenominational Buddhist-American discourses. This is also evident in the active role that many Japanese-Americans, including ministers, have played in the introduction of meditation sessions across a number of temples in the BCA, as described above. What appeals to converts or potential converts, also appeals to some members born into ethnic Japanese Jōdo Shinshū families. Much in the way that the second generation Japanese-American, or *nisei*, found Christian aesthetics appealing and homely, since they were part of their background as a generation born and raised in America, third and fourth generation Japanese Americans, the *sansei* and *yonsei* (四世), assess their Buddhist culture not only through the lens of "tradition" (i.e., inherited behaviours and motifs) but also through the narratives that make up the current American religious landscape. Such a landscape, especially in places like coastal California, has little in common with the Christian-dominated 1930s when the Japanese-American ritual tradition was first crafted by the *nisei*. In places like the Bay Area, this landscape draws on a shared modern Buddhist vocabulary that can be said to be relatively widespread across ethnic communities, social classes, and gender/sexuality lines.

Perhaps one of the most significant features of the Metta Gatherings is that they engage the recognisable language of mindfulness and meditation, sometimes including snippets of silent practice in the liturgy, but largely focus on a broad, ecumenical reading of the central themes of the Jōdo Shinshū tradition. This unashamedly innovative ritual addresses the expectations of the popular imagination while integrating many crucial aspects of Jōdo Shinshū ritual (e.g., *nenbutsu*, *ekō* 回向) and dialoguing with a certain Jōdo Shinshū sensibility (e.g., references to gratitude) in an open, pan-Buddhist and inclusive spirit. A similar problem triggered a very different solution many miles to the south, in the Brazilian capital of Brasília.

Jōdo Shinshū in Brasilia

Built on land provided by the Brazilian government in the 1960s, after a succession of setbacks, the Templo Shin Budista Terra Pura was inaugurated in 1973. The construction of a Jōdo Shinshū Buddhist temple in the new capital was at the request

of the local migrant ethnic Japanese community, who had relocated from elsewhere in Brazil to seek land in Brasilia's green belt zone, and needed a temple to perform funerals and ancestral memorial services. The temple also held festivals (the most popular being the *obon* festival in August), and provided a cultural centre for the community, a place where people could gather to eat Japanese food and hold events relating to the Japanese arts (Matsue 2014: 232).

However, the temple faced significant challenges: compared to São Paulo and Paraná, where most Japanese Brazilians live, the new capital only had a very small number of Japanese immigrants or descendants. In addition, over the post-war period, "traditional" Japanese Buddhist organisations (excluding the new religious movements) in Brazil as a whole experienced a significant decline in membership, with younger people of Japanese descent increasingly deserting the temples of their parents and grandparents, and in some cases converting to Catholicism, especially in urban areas (Usarski 2008: 46–7). In 2007, one Honganji-ha minister in Brazil criticised what he saw as a failure of the temples to either attract local non-ethnic Japanese, or to retain younger ethnic Japanese adherents, and commented that Brazilian Jōdo Shinshū temples were mainly attended by elderly Japanese migrants: "today only Japanese-speaking adherents frequent the temples. All this reminds me of an old people's home" (Usarski 2008: 48).

By the late 1990s, the Templo Shin Budista Terra Pura hosted a relatively small community of mostly Japanese Brazilian members.[23] Most dharma talks were given in Japanese, the main language of most of the attendees. Matsue (2014: 232) notes that "as the elderly people have died, the temple started to face a generational crisis. The younger generation was no longer interested in the Buddhist rituals and the number of the temple's supporters declined significantly". Successive resident ministers at the temple had tried to address this issue, and to broaden the appeal of the temple beyond the Japanese-Brazilian community, for example, by translating Jōdo Shinshū Buddhist texts into Portuguese, and holding study classes for non-ethnic Japanese with an interest in Buddhism. A young priest appointed from Japan in 1989, Imai Kyōya (今井慶哉), had also introduced Zen-style meditation sessions (Matsue 2014: 234–5).

Against this background, a newly ordained minister, Reverend Ademar Sato, a second-generation Japanese-Brazilian, was assigned to the temple in 1998. Born in São Paulo in 1942, Sato had been involved in Liberation Theology circles in the 1960s and went into exile after the 1964 coup that ushered in a military dictatorship. While exiled in Chile, he worked closely with Salvador Allende and later became one of the founders of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT, i.e., Worker's Party), together with Lula (President of Brazil at the time of writing, and also formerly president from 2003 to 2011), with whom Sato maintains a decades-long friendship.

Frustrated by the fact that people would come to the temple asking for meditation, he decided to reconstruct and revitalise a contemplative practice which had virtually died out in Japanese Pure Land: the *Kangyō*, or *Contemplation Sutra*. Although in Jōdo Shinshū, the *Kangyō* contemplation seems to have never been a part of the tradition, as Shinran placed little emphasis on the visualisation aspect of the sutra, the practice seems to have survived for a few centuries through other Japanese

Buddhist lineages. However, according to Sato, this meditation now seems to have almost died out in Pure Land schools (i.e., Jōdo Shinshū and Jōdoshū) in Japan; there are very few monks or priests who can teach it, and it is very rarely performed in temples. This method of contemplation based on 13 progressive visualisations that aim to make the practitioner *see* the Pure Land was widely practised by key figures of the Pure Land tradition like Shandao and Genshin.

Compared to the recitation of *nenbutsu*, the *Kangyō* offers a rather complex path of practice, requiring a great deal of sustained attention, imagination and, traditionally, a monastic lifestyle and setting. Although Hōnen is said to have realised this practice's ultimate aim (i.e., to see and experience the Pure Land), he did not recommend this elaborate and demanding discipline, advocating instead the universal, easy, vocalisation of the *nenbutsu* (Machida 1999: 61–2). This choice, linked to the egalitarian ethos of Hōnen's movement, seems to have contributed to the practice becoming further and further marginalised in both Jōdo Shinshū and Jōdoshū traditions. Reconstructing a practice that is no longer alive is an act of ritual archaeology and creative imagination. Sato had to rely on texts alone, using Shandao's commentary and a number of academic works (largely in Japanese) about the practice of the *Kangyō*. Not only the instructions needed to be translated to Portuguese, but a practice that was done in seclusion over the course of many days, had to be condensed into a one-hour (or less) format so people could do it when attending the temple on a weekday evening.

At the time of Galvan-Alvarez's fieldwork in Brasília, Sato had abandoned the more elaborate reconstruction of the *Kangyō* contemplation for a simplified form of visualisation also focused on Amida Buddha. After a number of years of following the 13 visualisations, Sato realised that they were too difficult for most people to follow, even in the simplified form in which they were presented. However, Galvan-Alvarez was able to talk to many members who used to do the practice, and some who still kept it up privately. Sato's approach to presenting the *Kangyō*, or the new, easier visualisation, took the form of a very free guided meditation. Every session started with the chanting of the *Shōshinge*, which was presented as "vocal meditation", which enabled the practitioner to *soltar a voz* (i.e., relax, let loose, let go of the voice) and clear the mind, a preliminary step for settling into visualisation. Very little was explained about the *Shōshinge* or its meaning, the point was to use the sutra to free the voice, to let it reach its full potential and thus settle the mind. The text was chanted in a very slow and meditative way. Then Sato would invite participants to come and sit at the *yoma* (an area on either side of the *naijin* in larger temples)[24] to do the meditation sitting on tatami rather than chairs. He would play on the temple's PA a Chinese melodic recitation of "*namo amituofo*"[25] and take a seat in front of the Buddha. Using a head mic set he would provide semi-improvised instructions, which changed slightly in every session Galvan-Alvarez attended, interspersed with occasional, seemingly random, long and "meditative" recitations of *namandabu*. The congregation would normally join in reciting the *nenbutsu* three times when Sato uttered it, but they would otherwise remain in silence. The background music and Sato's almost constant talking did not lead to introspection, but evoked the sense of being constantly engaged, embraced.

Sato's technique, akin to that of a jazz musician who freely combines a set of learned patterns, prevented the practitioners from drifting off into their own thoughts and demanded their constant attention. Although when doing the *Kangyō's* 13 visualisations, Sato followed the order prescribed in the sutra, the way each instruction was presented and developed changed every time. In the new "Meditation on the Buddha's Light" participants were invited to feel the presence of the Buddha in front of them, the Buddha's light entering and purifying their bodies and minds. In the context of visualising the image of the Buddha and receiving the purifying light, Sato spoke of the "entrusting mind", open and all-embracing, "like the blue sky of Brasília". After feeling the light embracing and transforming their bodies, the practitioners were encouraged to let the light shine forth and in turn reach those they loved, hated and, eventually, all beings. One of Sato's veteran students explained to Galvan-Alvarez that this phase was connected to *ekō* (回向), or merit transference. The meditation resembled practices from a number of different traditions, notably Tibetan *guru yoga* practices, where a Buddha-figure blesses the practitioner's body through visualisation; *qi gong* health practices, where the body is dissolved into light by bringing awareness to its different parts and organs; and *metta* (referred to above), a Theravada meditation based on sending loving-kindness to all beings. Whereas the visualisation practice clearly echoed the imagery of the *Contemplation Sutra*, it has also incorporated many other elements from outside the Jōdo Shinshū tradition.

Using Rocha's term (2005), this was a creolised form of Buddhism, evoking a Japanese Buddhist past through local images and sensitivities. Sato's contemplation is not only a Japanese Buddhist practice adapted to a Brazilian audience; it is a creative reinvention of a Pure Land practice through many components that coexist in the Brazilian religious landscape. As noted in Chapter 3, even more so than in its neighbouring countries, multiple affiliation and freely combining elements from different religious or spiritual traditions is the norm rather than an anomaly in Brazil (Vasquez and Rocha 2013: 25–36). Brasília has large Tibetan and Theravada Buddhist temples, and a vibrant and pluralistic religious scene where Catholicism coexists and mingles with many local religions and new religious and spiritual movements that freely combine Christian, Asian, African and indigenous elements. The spontaneous and hybrid character of Sato's meditations and procedures is deeply embedded in the *brasíliense* (i.e., from Brasília) landscape. Indeed, Sato's approach seems to be appealing to the local population, and in particular to its educated middle classes, who turn to Buddhism as a rational, scientific religion. This was a community with a very marginal Japanese presence, which had instead attracted a strong support base of non-*Nikkei* doctors, lawyers, civil servants and academics. Both the meditation sessions and the more traditional *ofício* (service) were very well attended (50–80 people), and the temple was constantly welcoming newcomers. The age range of the group was impressively large, from people in their late 70s to teenagers.

Sato's creative re-imagination of the *Kangyō* offers a successful model from the margins which is outside Jōdo Shinshū's established orthopraxis. This new, reinvented, contemplative practice simultaneously looks at the past and the future, reaching far into the past to recover a forgotten practice that is in turn recreated in a localised, diasporic and hybrid context. It also instantiates some of the inherent

ambiguities of diasporic reformulations of Jōdo Shinshū ritual, which aim to recreate a Japanese Buddhist past in the American present. On the one hand, the periphery aims to rediscover or revitalise a practice already forgotten in the centre and to, in some cases, reintroduce it back to the centre, as we will see in the next chapter. From this angle, the periphery becomes a repository of tradition, more conservative, "orthodox" and established than the centre. On the other hand, the periphery seeks to transmit the practice to a local audience by translating it, not only linguistically, but also culturally and emotionally. The hybrid outcome offers an inverted reflection of Japanese modernity, a re-envisioning of its past from a foreign place, and time.

Conclusion

To conclude, the issue of mindfulness and meditation raises important questions about a hard division between ritual orthopraxis and doctrinal orthodoxy. The concerns about silent sitting meditation open up broader conversations about *jiriki* (self-power) and *tariki* (other power) and the role and nature of practice in Jōdo Shinshū. The opposition to or interest in certain practices external to the tradition (i.e., quiet sitting) masks larger debates regarding mindful forms of engagement. This returns us to the question of how to understand the *nenbutsu* – as a form of vocalised "mindfulness of the Buddha", or as a "spontaneous expression of gratitude". To understand why the issue of meditation/mindfulness has been so central in discussions about Jōdo Shinshū outside Japan, we need to examine both the impact of Buddhist modernism on understandings of Buddhism outside Asia, and the ways in which this intersects with internal Jōdo Shinshū debates, running through the history of the Honganji tradition.

The range of responses to these issues that we can observe in different Shin Buddhist temples and communities highlights the hybrid, multifaceted, and changing character of contemporary Jōdo Shinshū. At the core of this, there is an ongoing conversation about authority and authenticity – what constitutes authentic Shin practice? To what extent can rituals be adapted and still be considered authentic? Does authenticity mean conforming to a ritual order established by Honganji and/or its local representatives? Or could it have a broader meaning? Is ritual practice a way of expressing the teachings, or the intentions of the founder? And who gets to decide? As we have seen in this chapter, some ministers in the United States and Brazil have turned to a creative reinterpretation of existing practices to emphasise the mindful component. Another approach to (re)incorporating mindful practice in a Jōdo Shinshū context has been to turn to a reimagined past for ritual forms that might satisfy the appetite for meditation overseas. Others have created hybrid services encompassing elements from multiple Buddhist traditions. In doing so, they are adopting a ritual language which may be more accessible in the context of settings such as the West Coast of the United States or Brasília, which are home to a wide range of Buddhist and other religious groups. Another example of how these tensions around authenticity and authority continue to be instantiated overseas, is the diverse ways in which the *nenbutsu* has been reimagined and ritualised as a meditative practice. These relatively recent developments are explored and discussed in the next chapter.

Notes

1 Tanaka mentioned as context for his innovation the research of one of the authors of this book, Galvan-Alvarez, who had presented the year before (2018) a paper at the 18th European Shin Conference in Southampton, the United Kingdom, on the meditative practices of various diasporic Shinshū communities.
2 See introduction for an explanation of the distinction between self-power (*jiriki*) and other power (*tariki*) from a Jōdo Shinshū perspective.
3 For those interested in exploring this topic further, some useful references are MacMahan (2008) on Buddhist Modernism, and Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988).
4 Gombrich tells us that the Sanskrit term used to refer to Buddhist "meditation centres" in Sri Lanka, *bhāvanā madhyasthāna*, was actually a literal translation from the English – Gombrich goes on to say, "the institution of the meditation centre is an import, and one due largely … to western influence" (Gombrich 1983: 20, cited in Sharf 1995a: 257).
5 Although the *nenbutsu* in Jōdo Shinshū is interpreted as a vocal practice, the recitation of the phrase "*namo amida butsu*", the word *nenbutsu* in its original sense meant being mindful of the Buddha. Shinran follows Shandao's understanding of *nen* as recitation, but this emphasis on the vocal does not preclude the mental or mindfulness dimension, as he explains in "Notes on Essentials of Faith Alone": "Know that 'thinking' [念] and 'voicing' [称] have the same meaning; no voicing exists separate from thinking, and no thinking separate from voicing" (CWS 1997: 468).
6 See Chapter 4 for more details on the regulation of these practices, and the ways in which respect for sacred objects is expressed through bodily disciplines.
7 Ogui, already mentioned in Chapter 5, although ordained as a Jōdo Shinshū Buddhist minister, practised sitting, Zen-style meditation under Suzuki Shunryū (鈴木俊隆), one of the popularisers of Sōtō Zen (曹洞禅) on the West Coast of the United States (Dessi 2013: 71). He has had a longstanding interest in exchanges between Zen and Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism, as explored in his book *Zen Shin Talks* (Ogui 1998).
8 A few Jōdo Shinshū priests in Europe do offer meditation classes – Three Wheels Temple (not a Honganji-ha temple) is a notable example.
9 As discussed above mindfulness and meditation are loaded words with multilayered meanings and complex histories within and beyond Jōdo Shinshū contexts. For this reason, in the following section we will use them in accordance with the particular usage in each case study.
10 *De facto* head priest of a *betsuin* (別院).Since all temples with the status of *betsuin* have the *monshu* as *de jure jūshoku* or head priest, the *monshu* normally appoints a representative to perform the duties of head priest. This particular role is called *rinban*.
11 Dessi (2013: 72) notes that in 2011 the Orange County Buddhist Church was offering "a meditation service consisting of 'sitting meditation, walking meditation, sutra chanting, and a short dharma message' three times a week". This was explained by one of the ministers, Marvin Harada, now Bishop of the BCA in terms of meditation being a practice that settled the mind, making participants more receptive to hearing the dharma, following the rationale for including meditation in Shin services arrived at by the BCA in 2005, as explained above (Harada 2005: 1, cited in Dessi 2013: 72).
12 In the United States (including Hawai'i) and Canada, the Golden Chain is one of the most popular readings in dharma schools, and is also widely used in services, but it is almost unknown outside North America and Hawaii. It refers to "Lord Buddha's golden chain of love" and was written by Ernest and Dorothy Hunt in the 1920s (Kikuchi 2011: 4–5). Ernest and Dorothy Hunt were ordained as Jōdo Shinshū priests in Hawaii in 1924, but later left Jōdo Shinshū – Ernest Hunt subsequently became ordained in Sōtō Zen. They were very influential in the development of distinctive forms of service in Jōdo Shinshū in North America and Hawaii.
13 Thich Nhat Hanh (1926–2022), was a Vietnamese Thien (Zen) monk famous for his activism during the Vietnam War and for popularising mindfulness through his many books, talks and activities in the context of the Plum Village Sangha, which he also founded.

14 Bonbu (凡夫) literally "ordinary person" is a term often used by Shinran to refer to himself and to human beings in general in their unenlightened, "ordinary" state.
15 *Nishu jinshin*, literally "two types of deep mind/heart" is a term that comes from the writings of Chinese master Shandao and which is often used in Jōdo Shinshū contexts to explain *shinjin*. The two types are: (1) a deep awareness of oneself as an ordinary, karma-bound person without a chance of escaping the cycle of samsara and (2) a deep awareness of the vows of Amida, which unfailingly embrace such a person, bringing them to the realization of full awakening, or great nirvana.
16 As noted above, the OCBC has been offering meditation sessions for some years. Dessi (2013: 72) notes that in the mid-1980s it had already doubled its membership.
17 In the BCA system, to be a fully qualified resident minister, a person should receive *tokudo* ordination first, then study towards the *kyōshi* certification and, after a year of serving a temple, receive appointment as *kaikyōshi*.
18 Although a very similar text focusing on loving kindness or *metta* (*ji* 慈) is part of the *Agama* section of the Taishō canon (*taishōzō* 大正蔵), and therefore also part of the Sino-Japanese Buddhist tradition, the Pali version is far more familiar to a western audience and was the inspiration for Donlin.
19 Śantideva (7th–8th C.E.) was an Indian Mahayana monk famous for his poetic work *Bodhicharyāvatāra*, describing the stages and practices of the Bodhisattva path. It is from this text that Donlin extracted the aspiration used at the Metta Gatherings. The relevant passage can be found in the translation by Batchelor (1979: 24).
20 Ekōku (回向句). This verse for dedicating merit, composed by Shandao, is by the far the most commonly used at the end of Jōdo Shinshū services. More generally, *ekō* is a verse chanted at the end of most Buddhist services across denominations in order to dedicate the merit generated by chanting the sutra. In Jōdo Shinshū, however, there is no idea that the practitioner is generating merits and, yet, the *ekō* verse is still chanted at the end of every service. Various re-interpretations of the significance of this verse have been offered within the tradition, a common one is that the *ekō* is recited to remind the practitioners that the Buddha dedicates merit to them. So, as with the *nenbutsu*, even though the practitioner vocalises it, the text chanted is meant to be the voice of the Buddha.
21 See Chapters 3 and 8.
22 Wilson (2012: 29–30) notes that there is a great deal of variation within the United States in the access people have to local Buddhist groups, and has argued persuasively for a more regionally nuanced analysis of American Buddhism. In this context, he contrasts the situation on the West Coast, with its wide range of Buddhist denominations, with the South of the United States, where choice is far more restricted – however he also argues that the positive valuation of hybridity can be found in Buddhist groups throughout the United States.
23 Matsue (2014: 231–2) estimates around 130 Japanese families were linked to the temple at this time.
24 The *yoma* is a somewhat ambiguous space within the temple, not strictly part of the *naijin*, but often used exclusively by priests, as noted in chapter 5.
25 The Chinese pronunciation of the *nenbutsu*.

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7 Mindfulness of the Buddha, saying the Name

Introduction

In line with the previous discussion on mindfulness and meditation, and their role in Jōdo Shinshū contexts, the issue of how the *nenbutsu* might be practised, if it could be said to be a practice at all, is at the heart of some significant ritual innovations across the Americas, from the North West of the United States to the Argentinian capital of Buenos Aires. These ritual developments have both an experimental and a meditative quality, which sets them apart from the established ritual forms of the Honganji-ha school, and have taken the central practice of Jōdo Shinshū, the *nenbutsu* (literally mindfulness of the Buddha, but commonly interpreted in this context as "recitation of the Buddha's name") as their focus.

Before exploring the complicated texture and history of the *nenbutsu* as a (non-) practice in the Honganji-ha school, it is important to acknowledge the long trajectory of "mindfulness of Buddha" as a practice common to almost all forms of Buddhism. The Theravada tradition is no exception to this rule, as one of its *suttas*, which has received a great deal of attention in modern times, the *Satipatthana*, clearly instantiates.[1] The *Satipatthana* (lit. "establishing mindfulness") has been the focus of the mindfulness movement and the contemporary interest in *vipassana* meditation. Although these modern iterations of mindfulness and meditation have largely focused on *anapanasati* (mindfulness of breathing), the Pali text also includes a section dealing with "mindfulness of Buddha" (*buddhanusati*), which might appear too devotional or religious for a Buddhist modernist sensibility and which is often overlooked in contemporary mindfulness contexts (McMahan 2008: 183–214). However, the logic of the Theravada practice of *buddhanusati* is not fundamentally different from the rationale of Mahayana traditions, including Pure Land ones. If a person wishes to become Buddha, dwelling on the qualities of the Buddha provides an opportunity to internalise and actualise the attributes of awakening. For this reason, choosing the Buddha as an object of meditation is favoured as one of the most appropriate foci and is highly praised as leading "to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding" (*Anguttara Nikāya 1.296*).[2]

In Mahayana traditions, the practice of mindfulness of Buddha (Sanskrit *buddhanusmriti*; Chinese 念佛 *nianfo*; Japanese 念仏 *nenbutsu*) is strongly, though by

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no means exclusively, associated with the Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Life, which in Sanskrit is called either Amitābha (Immeasurable Light) or Amitāyus (Immeasurable Life), and which in Japanese is referred to by the single name of "Amida". Since the Mahayana cosmovision is populated by countless Buddhas, each with their own sphere of influence or pure land, many different practices exist in order to connect to or be mindful of these different figures. However, even from its origins in India, Amida seems to have been a popular choice to practice *buddhanusmriti* in order to gain access to Sukhāvatī (lit. "Supreme Bliss"), the pure land connected to this particular Buddha (Amstutz 1997: 1–2). In China, the link between *buddhanusmriti* or *nianfo* and Amida becomes even stronger and it is in China where a lot of theorisation and systematisation occurs, and where the practice becomes the hallmark of what later will be called Pure Land Buddhism.[3] Among the Chinese proponents of *nianfo*, Shandao is of crucial importance for the later development of the Pure Land *nenbutsu* in Japan. Shandao not only enshrined the vocal *nenbutsu* as the central practice and definitive means for birth in the Pure Land, but also reinterpreted the character 念 (Jp. nen; Ch. *nian*) to include recitation.[4] Shandao's interpretive tradition, characterised by exclusive practice and a focus on vocalisation, is the dominant strain of Pure Land Buddhism transmitted to Japan and became the foundation of Hōnen's teaching[5] and, by extension, that of his disciple Shinran.

Although the Chinese tradition prior to Shandao had given more value to the meditative or visualised *nenbutsu* (観念, *kannen*), associated with the more skilled and technical practice of monks, over the vocal one (称名, *shōmyō*, i.e., saying the name), connected to the easier and less specialised practice of lay people, Shandao argues for the centrality of vocalisation, which also includes a mental element. As Shinran puts it, when explaining Shandao: "Know that 'thinking' [念] and 'voicing' [声] have the same meaning; no voicing exists separate from thinking, and no thinking separate from voicing" (CWS 1997: 468). From this perspective, it is not that the meditative *nenbutsu* is rejected or abandoned, but it is seen as implicit in the voicing of the Buddha's name. Hence, a modern Shinshū scholar, Arai Toshikazu, has spoken about *nenbutsu*, understood as vocalisation, as "the ultimate form of meditation" (Arai 2019).[6]

Furthermore, although in the writings of Shinran it becomes apparent that saying the name is a key practice, the focus is not on the "saying" or the recitative performance of the practitioner, but on "hearing", a sensorial metaphor for fully appreciating and entrusting to the significance of the name. The crucial importance of "hearing" is derived from the "Passage on the Fulfilment of the Vows" in the *Larger Sutra,* that in an English translation that reflects Shinran's interpretation reads:

> All sentient beings, as they hear the Name, realize even one thought-moment of shinjin and joy, which is directed to them from Amida's sincere mind, and aspiring to be born in that land, they then attain birth and dwell in the stage of nonretrogression.
>
> (CWS 1997: 80)

He further explains that to "*Hear the Name* is to hear the Name that embodies the Primal Vow. 'Hear' means to hear the Primal Vow and be free of doubt. Further, it indicates shinjin" (CWS 1997: 474). Therefore, *shinjin*, arguably the cornerstone of Shinran's teaching, is intimately connected with the name of the Buddha and its ritual recitation, because without saying there is no hearing, and yet the point is not mere recitation. This is, however, a complicated and subtle point as the following discussion on the emergence of Shinshū orthodoxy and its relationship with the *nenbutsu* explores.

The Nenbutsu and Shinshū orthodoxy

A common perception, largely reinforced by sectarian self-image within Jōdo Shinshū, is that Hōnen's Jōdoshū focuses on the practice of saying the name, whereas Shinran's Jōdo Shinshū focuses on *shinjin* or the entrusting heart.[7] This differentiation has been linked with, on the Shinshū side, a tendency to de-emphasise, gradually and over the centuries, the practice of saying the name and to concentrate on *shinjin*. Although in Shinran's writings there are many instances that point at the deep interconnection between *shinjin* and *nenbutsu*, and seem to encourage assiduous recitation,[8] the process of separating faith and practice, and subordinating practice to faith, seems to have been intertwined with early attempts at the institutionalisation of Honganji, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Of particular significance in this process, specifically for the Honganji-ha, is the Edo period *sangōwakuran* dispute, described in Chapter 2, which continues to reverberate to the present.[9] As a result of this collectively traumatic event, Honganji-ha orthodoxy was further formalised and institutionalised. The new orthodoxy emerging out of the *sangōwakuran*, with its emphasis on *shinjin* as an internal event, can be seen as a contributing factor in the perceived decline in *nenbutsu* recitation, even in the ways not proscribed by former iterations of Shinshū orthodoxy. However, this decline or de-emphasis, depending on the observer's perspective, is by no means a linear, or an uncontested hegemonic process. Even today, the vocal *nenbutsu* can be heard being loudly uttered in temples both in Japan and overseas, especially in the various prefectures of western Honshū and Kyūshū with a strong Shinshū following (e.g., Hiroshima, Shimane, Yamaguchi, Kagoshima, Kumamoto, or Nagasaki). At the main temple in Kyōto, too, a group of older men, who regularly attend the morning services at 6am, can often be heard uttering the *nenbutsu* in a loud, extemporaneous and repetitive manner.

But it is also undeniable that such instances are exceptions to the rule and that it is not the norm to hear the *nenbutsu* being assiduously and audibly recited in most Jōdo Shinshū gatherings in Japan, the Americas or Europe. The contemporary orthodox view, lucidly expressed by Ducor, a senior Swiss priest with significant academic stature within the Honganji system, asserts that "Shinran had thought to himself that nothing was missing except the nembutsu, understood as the recitation of the name of the Buddha Amida. But seventeen years later, he realized that faith of nembutsu alone was enough for him" (Ducor 2021: 134–5). According to Ducor's presentation, which is in line with current orthodoxy, *nenbutsu* contains a dual aspect of vocalisation and faith, the latter being more central than the former.

If the "faith of the nembutsu alone [is] enough", vocalisation is relegated to a secondary place, somehow separate from the "faith" or *shinjin* that is the core of the *nenbutsu*, as Ducor explains by drawing on the original meaning of the character 念 (*nen*), which refers to mindfulness, a mental process.

This doctrinal tension yields different ritual performances that are inextricably connected to particular understandings of doctrine. Some of the ritual innovations discussed in this chapter are an explicit reaction to a perceived decline in vocal *nenbutsu*, which is regarded, by those priests who advocate a more active approach to *nenbutsu* practice, as a matter of lamentation.[10] In response to this, new ritual formats have been created to revive the practice of vocal *nenbutsu*. Factors such as the interest in meditation in Buddhist contexts outside Japan and the expectation that every Buddhist tradition ought to be associated with a given practice (or set of practices) are also in the background that has informed the way these *nenbutsu* retreats have developed, as discussed in the following sections.

Betsuji Nenbutsu in Jōdo Shinshū

The rhetoric of lamentation has been part and parcel of Jōdo Shinshū since Shinran's times. For instance, Shinran opens the collection entitled *Shōzōmatsu Wasan* 正像末和讃 (Musical Poems or Hymns of the Dharma Ages) with the following verse:

> It is now more than two thousand years
> Since the passing of Śākyamuni Tathagata.
> The right and semblance ages have already closed;
> So lament, disciples of later times!
>
> (CWS 1997: 399)

Whether the object of lamentation is the self,[11] the degenerate age far removed from the Buddha's lifetime or the state of the teachings,[12] the lamenting mode is intertwined with virtually every Shinshū attempt at reform. A narrative of restoration, of return to a source the tradition has deviated from, is as present in orthodox circles as in heterodox or innovative ones. Much in the way that Shinran lamented the state of the Buddhist teaching in his time, centuries after Śākyamuni's demise, Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists throughout the centuries have also lamented the decay of their teachings as time elapses from Shinran's lifetime.

Texts like the *Tannishō* 歎異抄 (Passages Lamenting Deviations) or Kakunyo's *Gaijashō* 改邪鈔 (Excerpts Correcting Wrong [Views]), supposedly written shortly after Shinran's passing, already adopt the lamenting mode and look back with nostalgia at the time when Shinran was alive. For instance, the *Tannishō* opens with this poignant statement that sets the tone for establishing an incipient orthodoxy: "As I humbly reflect on the past [when the late Master was alive] and the present in my foolish mind, I cannot but lament the divergences from the true shinjin" (CWS 1997: 661). Given the pervasiveness of the rhetoric of lamentation,

it is not surprising that it features so prominently as a legitimising narrative in ritual innovation, transformation and experimentation.

A contemporary example where that lamentation is engaged in order to counteract the current orthodoxy is that of intensive *nenbutsu* retreats or *betsuji nenbutsu* 別時念仏 (literally, *nenbutsu* at a separate time). As discussed in Chapter 2, the practice of intensive repetition of the *nenbutsu* at particular times, set apart from everyday life, has long been subject to criticism in Jōdo Shinshū, with Kakunyo, condemning in the *Gaijashō* the practice of *nenbutsu* retreats, customarily performed at the Spring and Autumn equinoxes (*ohigan*) (Dobbins 2002: 94–95). The practice of nenbutsu retreats is also implicitly criticised in a letter from Shinran's widow, Eshinni, to her daughter Kakushinni, commenting on her son's decision to do a *nenbutsu* retreat (Dobbins 2004: 41).

These critiques might be seen as grounded in a strict interpretation of any form of intensive, deliberate practice as *jiriki* or self-power. However, in the way that these critiques of certain forms of *nenbutsu* recitation have developed over time, there is a ritual, performative and identitarian dimension that should not be overlooked. Neither Shinran nor the Shinshū institution(s), in their early forms, were against extensive recitation of *nenbutsu*, which has been historically regarded as a sign of devotion. The taboo against *nenbutsu* retreats seems to have developed more around specific ritual formats rather than as a critique of the practice. In other words, it is not so much the fact that the *nenbutsu* is recited constantly that is criticised, but the fact that this recitation happens separately from daily life, in a deliberate and specially dedicated time and place.[13] This might be said to strip the practice of its spontaneous quality, a historically central religious anxiety for Honganji, especially since *sangōwakuran*. And in addition, by problematising intensive recitation of the *nenbutsu* and *nenbutsu* retreats, the Honganji school is also carving a ritual sectarian identity for itself that sets it apart from the other Pure Land traditions. Linked to this unique sectarian identity is of course the claim that the Honganji school preserves and practises Shinran's (and by implication Hōnen's) true message.

Hence, the revival of *nenbutsu* through *nenbutsu* retreats poses a challenge to the established ritual and doctrinal identity of the school on various fronts. On the one hand it emphasises a more active approach to vocalisation, which sits awkwardly with the inward focus of the current orthodox position, which privileges *shinjin* as separate from verbal practice. These contemporary *nenbutsu* retreats also introduce a ritual format that, despite having a very long history in East Asian Buddhism, has been absent from the Honganji-ha for the last few centuries. In order to bring about such innovation, a typically, though by no means exclusively, Shinshū strategy of legitimation is engaged, that of lamentation at the decay of the teaching. For those who favour vocalisation as central, its gradual disappearance from the ritual lives of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists is not only a matter of lamentation but also something that should be remedied by vigorously re-introducing the practice in an intensive and extensive manner.

Furthermore, this new ritual format addresses, in some cases explicitly, the expectation, among many western Buddhist converts, that every form of Buddhism is defined by its practice. The orthodox focus on *shinjin* has, at times, led to the formulation that there is "no practice" in Jōdo Shinshū, a provocative statement

that is meant to interrogate the category of "practice". Even in its most orthodox settings, sutra chanting is performed regularly and has a key role in the ritual lives of Shinshū temples, communities and individuals. Also, the demanding and detailed training for ordination complicates any simplistic or literalistic reading of the "no practice" narrative. However, in a western context, where it is not unusual for newcomers to Buddhism to greet each other with questions such as "what is your practice?" or "how is your practice going?", the alleged absence of practice, and the emphasis on *shinjin*, translated as "faith", can often generate confusion or suspicion. Given this context, the ritual performance of intensive *nenbutsu* looks to many like a "practice", because of its repetitive, "meditative" quality, and, crucially, the fact that it is separate from daily life.

Although these ritual performances are rare and an exception rather than a rule in global Jōdo Shinshū, they are an interesting example of the ways in which questions of tradition, authenticity, and the rhetoric of lamentation are entangled in ritual innovation – and further inflected in particular local contexts. In 2018, Galvan-Alvarez, one of the authors of this book, had the opportunity to take part in two *nenbutsu* retreats and also to interview the priest who organised a third one in 2008. What follows is an ethnographic account of the two retreats where participant observation was carried out and a brief discussion of the interviews conducted in relation to the 2008 event. We first turn to the All-Night *Nenbutsu* held at Pasadena Buddhist Temple in June 2018, hosted by Rev. Gregory Gibbs, and which echoed a yearly event previously conducted by the same minister at Oregon Buddhist Temple, where he was resident minister for over a decade.

All-Night *Nenbutsu* at Pasadena

Some of the ministers advocating *nenbutsu* retreats also yearn for a time when the *nenbutsu* could be heard "spontaneously" at all times and places, particularly at the temple. This ritual innovation or re-appropriation is often linked to a doctrinal interpretation of Shinran that focuses on the importance of vocal recitation. One of the first intensive *nenbutsu* retreats to take place in the United States was designed by Gibbs, referred to in Chapter 5, who served at Oregon Buddhist Temple for over ten years in the first two decades of the twenty-first century and who was subsequently assigned to Pasadena Buddhist Temple in the L.A. metropolitan area. Gibbs is an Irish-American man in his 60s, who studied in Japan and married a Japanese woman from a temple family in Kyūshū. Among his inspirations features, especially, Dennis Hirota's understanding of *nenbutsu* as "true language". Gibbs himself glosses this view as taking the *nenbutsu* to be a "sacramental speech act" (Gibbs 2011: 80). In conversation Gibbs mentioned how Jōdo Shinshū currently seems to have side-lined the *nenbutsu*, even though it is Shinran's only prescribed way of hearing the vow and realising *shinjin*. While in Oregon he developed a "culture of saying the *nenbutsu*", which he is now trying to foster in Pasadena. Part of these efforts involved a yearly, 12-hour all-night *nenbutsu* retreat, often done around Bodhi day (December 8th) to mark Śākyamuni's enlightenment after sitting all night in contemplation under the Bodhi tree.

Galvan-Alvarez joined the first retreat that Gibbs organised at Pasadena Buddhist Temple. It started at 8pm and went on until 8am the following day, with a 15-minute break every hour. The participants chanted *nenbutsu* in various forms, mostly Sino-Japanese but also Sanskrit and English. Each participant was encouraged to find their own chosen form and experiment with it, rather than try to follow Gibbs in unison. They were also encouraged to say the *nenbutsu* standing, walking, sitting and lying down (which was appreciated in the small hours of the night and which the pews of Pasadena Buddhist Temple enabled). Around ten people congregated at 8pm, most of them long-standing temple members and even including the president of the BCA at the time, Rick Stambul, also based in the L.A area. As the evening went on the congregation was reduced to Gibb's wife and son, a layman who had flown in from Arizona (David Belcheff) and Galvan-Alvarez. After Gibbs' family retired around midnight, only Gibbs, Belcheff, and Galvan-Alvarez stayed at the *hondō* saying *nenbutsu* for 45-minute sessions for the rest of the night. Gibbs explained that in Oregon he would always be by himself for most of the late-night hours. since most attendees would only join at the beginning and end of the retreat. Some of Pasadena's long-standing members joined in the early evening; some mentioned to Galvan-Alvarez later, that they attended out of devotion to their *sensei* though they did not fully understand the purpose of the practice. Others who attended left after the first session, seemingly uncomfortable with a format that was not familiar to them.

Gibbs initiated the retreat by asking participants to join him in walking around the Buddha, as discussed at more length in Chapter 5, crossing the line between the inner altar area, or *naijin*, and the outer seating area, or *gejin*, while *kimyō jinjippō mugekō nyorai* (帰命尽十方無碍光如来) was recited. This form of *nenbutsu* was used by both Shinran and Rennyo, but the latter was forced to abandon it under pressure from the Tendai school. Inviting both lay and ordained into the *naijin* while saying an unusual *nenbutsu*, marginalised because of its subversive overtones[14] had historical resonances with the dissident roots of the Jōdo Shinshū tradition. This was a ritual performance that looked simultaneously towards the past and towards the future. The *nenbutsu* retreat re-imagined the past from the present and hoped for a future return to the rebellious origins of the tradition and to its, partly forgotten, connection to vocalisation. Gibbs doctrinal understanding, however shaped by current ideas, longs to critically revise some aspects of the larger Pure Land tradition that Honganji has historically neglected or de-emphasised, especially in the last two centuries. For instance, Gibbs' assertion that awakening to *honganriki* (本願力, the power of the original vow) takes place in the context of *nenbutsu* recitation, echoes the work of Hirota and Shigaraki (2013) and conjures a pre-*sangōwakuran* understanding of Shinshū doctrine. In fact, the *sangōwakuran* incident came up in conversations with Gibbs as the turning point when Nishi Honganji started looking suspiciously at outward expression and practice as quasi synonyms of *jiriki* or self-power. Gibbs looked back at a past when the *nenbutsu* was regarded simultaneously as a practice and as the presence of the sacred. This is what the all-night *nenbutsu* aimed to do: offering a context to hear the origin and fulfilment of the vow and awaken to its power.

Whereas the format is undoubtedly innovative, from the original choice of Bodhi Day to the 12 hours with 15-minute breaks to the free flowing, cacophonous recitation of *nenbutsu* in different forms, languages, paces and pitches, the aim seems to be to return to the origins of the tradition. As a long-standing ritual that deviates from the ritual norm of both Honganji and the BCA, the all-night *nenbutsu* seems to require extra rationalisation as an event that belongs in a BCA temple. Whether in response to such concerns or not, Gibbs mentioned that the 15-minute breaks were introduced not only for practical reasons but to avoid any "superstitious" belief around the constant (*fudan*不断,) nature of the practice. The atmosphere was very free and relaxed, and people could come and go as they wish, avoiding any sense of deliberate self-effort. Gibbs's stamina at diligently continuing the practice was remarkable; later he explained that he always recites *nenbutsu* at a natural volume and pace, so he never gets tired. Though this might be a technique he has developed after years of extensive recitation, it also seems aligned with the "natural" and "spontaneous" quality of Honganji-ha's normative *nenbutsu*. In these ways, this practice that is in every regard intensive and extensive, becomes somehow "casual", simultaneously mimicking and transgressing the normative *nenbutsu* of the Honganji-ha school.

Nenbutsu Marathon

An isolated counterpoint which preceded the All-Night *Nenbutsu*, and also has roots in the American North-West, is the Walking Meditation Marathon, a one-off *nenbutsu* retreat which took place at Idaho-Oregon Buddhist Temple in 2008, as part of the worldwide celebrations for Shinran's 750th memorial. The resident minister at the time, Rev. Dennis Fujimoto, who at the time of writing was assigned to the Buddhist Temple of Alameda, is part of what might be called a Japanese-American temple family.[15] His father, the late Rev. Hōgen Fujimoto, was born in America but spent his time between Japan and the United States and, among other accomplishments, contributed to establishing English language services at Tsukiji Honganji in Tokyo, served at a number of BCA temples, and was also a pioneer of Buddhist prison chaplaincy in the United States. Dennis Fujimoto's elder brother, the Rev. Kenneth Fujimoto, served as *Rinban* (head minister) of San José Betsuin for many years and is currently retired. Dennis Fujimoto (henceforward Fujimoto), became a Buddhist minister after a professional career as a sculptor; he is also an accomplished marathon runner. The latter passion is significant, since he designed the walking *nenbutsu* retreat as a 26.2 hour long "marathon" which involved the constant recitation of the Buddha's name while walking in a meditative way. The participants committed to various shifts and Fujimoto filled any gaps. The *nenbutsu* was always recited while walking around the *hondō*, in the four-syllable form of "na-man-da-bu" one syllable per step. The choice of making the practice 26.2 hours long had to do with Fujimoto's prior experience as a marathon runner (a marathon is run over 26.2 miles). Unlike the All-Night *Nenbutsu*, which symbolically evoked Śākyamuni's 12 final hours of spiritual struggle before becoming Buddha, the Walking Meditation Marathon was originally inspired by a personal narrative. It transpired in conversations that took place in 2018 between Galvan-Alvarez and

Fujimoto that this *nenbutsu* innovation was not based on any overt doctrinal stance but rather on individual inspiration. The context is also significant, as the rural, conservative hinterlands of Eastern Oregon/Western Idaho have little in common with the cosmopolitan San Francisco or L.A. metropolitan areas. Therefore, the intended audience, and its demographic make-up, differ significantly from that of the other *nenbutsu* retreats analysed in this chapter.

In 2008, according to Fujimoto, the Idaho-Oregon Buddhist Temple was a dwindling community, largely dominated by Japanese-Americans whose livelihood was in some form or another connected to agriculture. The minister's aim was to "deepen people's understanding of the *nenbutsu*". Fujimoto also compiled a series of testimonies, both positive and negative, from the participants. Although none of the authors attended the event in 2008, Galvan-Alvarez had a chance to talk at length with Fujimoto about this *nenbutsu* marathon and the reflective work the minister did after the event. Echoing a concern heard many times while conducting fieldwork in the United States, Fujimoto mentioned that many traditional members do not regard their association with the temple as having much religious significance, but simply as a matter of tradition, family duty or ethnic identity. For this reason, some temple members found it "awkward" to do something that deviated from the usual temple routine. However, according to Fujimoto, most participants enjoyed and learned from the experience, in some cases leading to a more frequent recitation of the *nenbutsu* in their daily life. The event also attracted two unusual kinds of guests to this rural temple: non-*nikkei* (largely Caucasians) and Japanese-American Methodists. The former seemed to have been drawn to the proactive nature of the practice and to the fact that it was labelled as meditation, and the latter joined in the event to celebrate with other members of the local Japanese community and to learn about the culture of their ancestors.

Some participants did their shift of walking *nenbutsu* as a memorial/funerary practice, keeping a deceased relative in mind. This was one of the rationalisations that Fujimoto offered for the practice in an introductory leaflet, the other two being to dwell on the theme of Shinran's 750th memorial ("May Peace and Tranquility Prevail Throughout the World" – in Japanese, 世の中安穏なれ [*yo no naka annon nare*]),[16] and to learn about the life of the founder. However, the funerary dimension seems to have been the most popular narrative and interpretive lens among lay practitioners. In a later conversation, Fujimoto remarked that part of his ministry involves utilising funerary rituals to encourage the bereaved to honour the deceased as recognisable aspects of the infinite, which in turn enables them to experience their connection to the infinite, to Amida. In his view, by honouring the dead, people can begin to feel a sense of connection and awakening.

These framing narratives, and particularly the funeral one, are ways of domesticating the otherness of the practice by interpreting it through the usual lens of what would/should normally take place in the temple: remembering the ancestors. The marathon also coincided with the temple's Spring *ohigan* service, an occasion linked, in Japan, to visiting ancestral graves and the timing mentioned in Kakunyo's condemnation of intensive *nenbutsu* retreats. The meditative recitation of the *nenbutsu* was punctuated by five services, taking place every six hours throughout

the long-day event. In contrast to the innovative nature of the walking *nenbutsu*, the five services followed the structure of formal ceremonies at the head temple in Kyoto, with a brief, *shōmyō* introductory piece, some longer chanting, for example of the *Shōshinge*, *Ōjō raisan*, or *Amida kyō*), *nenbutsu* (and *wasan* in the case of *Shōshinge*), and *ekō*.

The Walking Meditation Marathon constitutes a unique combination of normative and innovative elements in terms of its relationship to established temple ritual and, indeed, the *nenbutsu*. In the leaflet presented to the participants, and used to advertise the event beyond the community, the practice is presented as rooted in the Buddhist tradition by being linked to the ancient ritual of circumambulating the Buddha's relics and to the practice that Shinran is thought to have engaged in during his time at Mount Hiei, the circumambulation of a statue of Amida Buddha for 90 continuous days and nights while reciting the *nenbutsu* (*jōgyō zanmai* 常行三昧).[17] However, the walking *nenbutsu* marathon is reinterpreted as a means to "educate about the life of our founder Shinran Shonin, the efforts and struggles he endured, and through this to gain insight into the Jodo Shinshu teachings" (Fujimoto 2008: 4), rather than as a merit-making activity or a method for attaining samadhi, which are arguably the normative goals commonly associated with the circumambulation of sacred objects and *jōgyō zanmai*, respectively. The marathon aims to deepen the scope of a memorial service, by partially emulating the "effort and struggle" of the deceased, in this case, the founder Shinran. This innovative memorial does not stop at revering the ancestral figure, but tries to understand him, even emulate him. Fujimoto also encouraged participants to find their own ways of making sense of the practice. Fujimoto's semi-ethnographic collection of testimonies from participants in the marathon includes a significant number of normative feelings of gratitude, along with thoughts about departed loved ones; but this compilation also contains expressions of physical discomfort, reflections on time passing either slower or faster than usual, and mini confessions that follow a clear pattern of meditative epiphany: struggling with the practice, eventually letting go and finding peace.

It is difficult to draw conclusions from a one-off event that took place more than a decade before the time of writing, however the Walking Meditation Marathon offers a small insight into the production, appeal and response to innovative practices in American Jōdo Shinshū. The practice incorporates a number of normative and conventional elements and rationalisations. Although the practice itself is unconventional, its suggested aim(s) fall(s) within Honganji orthodoxy. Also, the emphasis on emulating/understanding the founder rather than simply revering and expressing gratitude to him introduces a subtle but significant reformulation of the conventional purpose of memorials, and in particular of the most important Jōdo Shinshū memorial service, *hōonkō*. Furthermore, the strategic use of the term "meditation" seems to have drawn in non-Japanese Americans, as Fujimoto expected. The collection of comments gathered afterwards seem to suggest that the practice largely achieved what it set out to do, although every individual would unavoidably make sense of the event in different ways.

Fūraibō and the million mantras

Analogous dynamics and conversations can also be appreciated in what is likely the largest intensive *nenbutsu* practice in the Jōdo Shinshū world today: the *millón de mantras* (Spanish for "*a million mantras*") which happens every year at the restaurant-dōjō of Fūraibō (風来坊) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Though popularly known as "*el millón de mantras*" (the million mantras) and advertised as "mantra meditation",[18] this event is a contemporary, diasporic iteration of a very ancient Japanese practice that predates both Shinran and Hōnen: *hyakumanben nenbutsu* 百万遍念仏,literally, a million *nenbutsu*. The practice of uninterruptedly reciting the *nenbutsu* until completing a million repetitions seems to have originated in the early days of Pure Land Buddhism in China. It was introduced to Japan in the Heian era (平安時代 794–1185) and it has survived largely through the Chion-in 知恩院 school of Jōdoshū, though, currently, it is very rarely performed in its entirety. It is now difficult to find either in Japan or in the Japanese diaspora a recitation session that actually accomplishes what the ritual's name spells: a million repetitions of *nenbutsu*.

In order to understand how this uniquely demanding practice came to be revitalised in Buenos Aires, it is worth taking a closer look at Rev. Gustavo Aoki, a product of the relatively small Japanese-Argentinian community, already described in Chapter 3. A second-generation Japanese-Argentinian from the Argentinian hinterlands, Aoki grew up neither exclusively Buddhist nor Catholic, but with influences from both, and became fully ordained in Japan as part of a seven-year training period. Those years not only enabled Aoki to learn Honganji-ha's doctrines and rituals in great detail, but also to meet and learn from other traditions in a non-sectarian spirit that would animate his later ministerial career. On his long way back to Argentina, Aoki travelled all over Asia and Europe. During his travels he had the opportunity of observing many different Buddhist cultures and developed the view that Buddhist practice was in decline all over the world. After settling back in Buenos Aires, he became the resident minister at the Honpa Hongwanji temple in Buenos Aires, popularly known as Sarandí, the street where it is located, where he served for seven years. This relatively small temple is part of the Honganji-ha South American District and is under direct supervision from the seat of the district, the Betsuin in São Paulo. The Sarandí temple largely caters to the Japanese community and in Aoki's (and some of his students') view it is neither open to innovation nor to reaching beyond that community. Frustrated with this situation, Aoki left the temple and opened his own restaurant-*dōjō*, Fūraibō, in a prime location in downtown Buenos Aires, only a block away from the Presidential Palace (i.e., *Casa Rosada*) and Plaza de Mayo.

Fūraibō has been offering Japanese cuisine, but also talks, courses and Buddhist events, for about 15 years at the time of writing. The main dining room has a Buddhist altar with a small *naijin*, marked by a few tatami mats that sit on the (marginally lower) wooden floor. Various ceremonies are conducted at this altar, mostly when the restaurant is closed or empty. When customers are dining, rituals take place in a small back room that hosts a large *butsudan* (domestic Buddhist altar); the room remains invisible but audible to the customers. The walls are full of framed calligraphies (most of them *myōgō*, or calligraphy of one of the forms of the *nenbutsu)* and Buddhist art,

with some of the smaller dining rooms arranged for customers to sit on tatami rather than chairs. The overall atmosphere of Fūraibō invites visitors to experience Japanese culture, from its food to its religion, and the establishment markets itself in this way. After Aoki left Sarandí some of the members who had made a connection with him also left and contributed to create the Fūraibō community. Although Aoki remains affiliated as a Honganji-ha priest or minister, he is not under the direct supervision of the Betsuin in São Paulo, as Fūraibō is not part of the South American District, arguably the most conservative and least ethnically diverse in the Jōdo Shinshū diaspora. This position of relative freedom has enabled Aoki to experiment with different practices and approaches and to reimagine Jōdo Shinshū from the margins.

Central to Aoki's understanding is the importance of practice, i.e., the verbal recitation, or, in his own words, "intonation" of *nenbutsu*. In his view, the current understanding of both Nishi and Higashi Honganji overemphasises *shinjin* in an intellectual way and offers no practical way or room for experience. The essential teaching of Shinran and the seven masters was to say the *nenbutsu* and that is the focus of Aoki's religious life. In Aoki's view, since *shinjin* has nothing to do with the practitioner (as it is the expression of *tariki*) it should not be a goal or a source of concern, just saying the *nenbutsu* is enough. Although *sangōwakuran* was never mentioned, it is difficult not to think of this historical event when witnessing the very active, loud and practice-based approach at work in Fūraibō. Aoki also highlighted the importance of *shugyō* 修行 (training with a strong element of self-discipline, or ascetic practice) emphasising the soteriological value of intense, devoted practice in a way that echoes other Japanese Buddhist schools, such as Tendai 天台 or Shingon 真言. Aware of the uniqueness of his position, whenever he encouraged discipline, he would humorously remark to Galvan-Alvarez that such an approach is not very Jōdo Shinshū but neither is he. Unlike the majority of Honganji clergy, Aoki has learned from Shingon, Zen and Jōdoshū teachers apart from his training as a Jōdo Shinshū minister, and celebrates rather than hides this fact.

The practice of doing *hyakumanben* developed somewhat organically and spontaneously as the Fūraibō community grew. Every Thursday Aoki offered a session called "*noche de mantras*" (mantra night) where the *nenbutsu* would be chanted in unison, in a loud and powerful voice accompanied by Japanese drums (*taiko* 太鼓). Those evening sessions started stretching into the night, gradually edging towards 12 hours of uninterrupted recitation. Eventually, Aoki tried to replicate at Fūraibō a *hyakumanben* session he had witnessed at Chion-in in the late 80s. Although he attached no magical significance to the number of repetitions, a million *nenbutsu* doubtlessly enabled practitioners to engage with the name of the Buddha in an extensive and intensive fashion and, therefore, could be said to accomplish the aim of "revitalising the *nenbutsu*". In line with the nostalgic lamentation mode of other ministers mentioned above, Aoki also commented that only a 100 years ago, in some parts of Japan (and the diaspora) the *nenbutsu* could be heard everywhere and, in fact, priests would have to tell the congregation to keep quiet and listen to *dharma* talks. Now the situation is the opposite, so the *nenbutsu* ought to be reintroduced in a vigorous way, which is precisely what *hyakumanben* achieves.

However, Aoki's project to revitalise the *nenbutsu* is not only limited to intensive recitation sessions, it also involves using the *nenbutsu* emphatically in daily

conversation as a way of expressing appreciation, joy, humour, apology or greeting. In his own words, practice is good in itself, and we should say the *nenbutsu* in any circumstance, whether happy, angry, sad or otherwise. Study and theory can only be fruitful after a regular and steady practice has been established first. Outside the Thursday evening sessions and the yearly *millón de mantras* event (interestingly always taking place around the Austral Autumn *ohigan*, i.e., March; again, the time linked to Kakunyo's prohibition), the *nenbutsu* is often heard at Fūraibō, in the normative, casual, daily life way typical of Honganji-ha. It is part of almost every conversation, and it mingles with the smells of food and incense that always pervade the restaurant-*dōjō*.

The *hyakumanben* retreat consisted of the communal, unison, uninterrupted recitation of *nenbutsu* until the million repetitions was achieved. It went on without breaks for about 14/15 days, 24 hours a day. The 30 odd participants, whether lay or ordained committed to 2-hour or shorter shifts with varying frequency and regularity. The quorum for keeping the practice going was 2 people: one to act as *dōshi* 導師[19] playing *taiko* and loudly leading the recitation, and another keeping the count with a 500-bead *nenju* and abacus. Daytime sessions, especially in the evening, were well attended with as many as 10 or 15 people crammed into the small back room where the practice was carried out; their voices could often be heard by customers during business hours. Late night sessions typically involved just two people, with the *dōshi* chanting in an increasingly lower, sleepy voice and the counter staff silently doing their duties.

The restaurant was open from midday to midnight and the atmosphere changed significantly in that stretch of time. This inevitably attracted curiosity from customers, and it was difficult to avoid the sense that the practitioners were, in a sense, performing for them, creating a soundscape that would add to their "Japanese dining experience". Participants were also encouraged to keep the place extra tidy and clean in those 12 hours and not to linger or socialise in the areas where customers were dining. On the other hand, the 12 non-business hours had a much more intimate feeling, with participants hanging out in the kitchen and all over the main dining room, engaging in conversation and sharing food, which was generously cooked and provided for them 24/7. Inquiring about the customer's experience from the participants, Galvan-Alvarez was told that some people deliberately go to the restaurant at the time of the *hyakumanben* because they enjoy the sound of rhythmic recitation in the background. Others come for the first time and are put off by the background voices and never come back. Yet others are curious enough to walk into the small back room and check where the sound is coming from.

While Galvan-Alvarez was in the small room, some were even inspired to sit quietly and take in the atmosphere before they left the restaurant or while waiting for their food. In conversation with the participants, a story from a previous retreat emerged, which also highlights the open, somewhat "casual" quality of the practice. Although the restaurant is closed after midnight, the premises stay open 24/7 to enable those taking part to come and go at any point of the day or the night. One night, a drunken reveller, who had perhaps lost his way in Buenos Aires downtown, stumbled upon Fūraibō at around 3 am and decided to come in. He was impressed by the atmosphere and briefly joined the recitation before wandering off again. The open, drop in, nature of the event, together with the fact that practitioners are encouraged by Aoki to "find their own voice", tune (if they are so inspired) and pace highlights

a free, "casual" approach to the practice. Although everybody tried at different times to experiment with different ways of saying *nenbutsu* (Galvan-Alvarez, for instance, when being *dōshi* attempted recitation to a 4/4 reggae beat and a 3/4 waltz beat), the most creative voice was doubtlessly that of the other minister, Sumiyori Shindō.

Hailing from a temple family in Hyōgo, Sumiyori Shindō has lived in Brazil for over 20 years. Like Aoki, he is not affiliated with the Betsuin in São Paulo, which has enabled him to break free from the institutional and ritual restrictions of belonging to a hierarchical structure. Sumiyori is also a singer and a table tennis teacher. The first skill is crucial in understanding his unique approach to *nenbutsu*. Whereas most participants, including Aoki, chanted in a flat tone to a simple, often 4/4, beat of their choice, Sumiyori did his entire two-hour shift as a cyclical repetition of an extremely elaborate rhythmic pattern that combined Brazilian and Japanese drumming. He also sang the *nenbutsu* to the beat but always in the same memorised melodic pattern. The melody was upbeat and playful, incorporating onomatopoeic animal sounds (e.g., "woof", "meow", etc.) and occasionally naming the people present in the room in order to elicit a call and response pattern in the recitation of the *nenbutsu*. At one point a debate emerged between two lay participants concerning whether they should include "woof" and "meow" as *nenbutsu* repetitions towards the final count of one million. A seasoned Fūraibō attendee argued that they should be counted as *nenbutsu* utterances, since in Sumiyori's view "meow" is a cat's *nenbutsu* and so he sees and recites it as a form of *nenbutsu*.

The playfulness and relative freedom of the format contrasts with the daunting demand to keep recitation going uninterrupted for almost a fortnight. People would nap and eat at Fūraibō and make themselves available to take over the practice when others were in need of sleep or food breaks. The playing of taiko and loud, continued chanting generated fatigue and the constant pressure to keep the practice going also made it psychologically demanding, requiring constant negotiation within the group (e.g., shift swaps, last minute substitutions, etc.). Sleep and eating patterns were also greatly disrupted for those participants who stayed around Fūraibō, and certainly for the two priests who very seldom left the place. In this way, the *betsuji* quality of this event seems unquestionable, as a time (and space) set apart from daily life where the constant, focused and dedicated recitation of the *nenbutsu* becomes the centre.

Further, before commencing the retreat participants were casually invited to shave their heads. Very few did, except for the two priests, a Japanese-Argentinian lay woman and Galvan-Alvarez. The modification of the ordinary body through the removal of hair, further marked the beginning of the retreat as a rite of passage, as already discussed in Chapter 4. Most practitioners, whether monastic or lay, wore a black *samue* (working clothes consisting of loose trousers and a top worn by monks and others in Japan), while at Fūraibō, though this was by no means a requirement and some, a minority, led and participated in sessions in their daily clothes. Although the *hyakumanben* was clearly demarcated as being outside ordinary life, the outside world never stopped irrupting into the ritual space, through the presence of customers and the constant comings and goings of participants (for work, looking after children, rest at home, for example).

Although the extensive and intensive nature of the practice could be at times overwhelming, the atmosphere in the adjacent room(s) was relaxed and convivial.

A massage chair had been placed there and people would eat, chat, unwind, and nap. A practice like the *hyakumanben* requires a huge collective effort and it is undoubtedly helpful to build a community with strong bonds of solidarity. This room was an ideal location for deep hanging out and many interesting conversations took place in it. From these informal chats Galvan-Alvarez could appreciate the personal understandings and experiences of those who visit Fūraibō (Aoki refused to call his group a "congregation" as there is no formal membership). A noteworthy detail is that not all participants at the *hyakumanben* are Jōdo Shinshū, or even Buddhist followers. In line with Aoki's "practice first" approach, people are invited and encouraged to chant without having to commit to the religious tradition or studying its doctrines. After people have been practising for a while they might decide to go further and study under Aoki's guidance and some go on to take part in a ceremony of refuge (*kikyōshiki* 帰敬式 or *kieshiki* 帰依式),[20] which is routinely performed at the Betsuin in São Paulo.

Even though there is no formal hierarchy or strict differentiation between those who have chosen to commit themselves as Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists and those who simply enjoy *nenbutsu* recitation or are learning about Buddhism, some broad features characterise each loosely defined group. The differences largely lie in the ways they made sense of the *hyakumanben*. Some newcomers emphasised the purification aspect, expressing that chanting made them feel cleansed and that the "mantra" (i.e., the *nenbutsu*) worked on them cathartically. Some also were concerned about the number of repetitions and the speed of the chanting; expressing anxiety over whether the group would hit the millionth repetition on the expected day. Neither Aoki, Sumiyori nor most of the most experienced practitioners thought much about the number or the length of time it took. Among this latter group, Shinshū rationalisations of the *hyakumanben* were more common and they would normally resort to a self-reflective focus on *jiriki* versus *tariki*, or saying the name versus listening to the name when making sense of the practice.

The uniqueness of Fūraibō reflects Aoki's doctrinal approach which recognises the importance of practising first and only later studying and, eventually, realising *shinjin*. In this respect, he explained that it was important to perform rituals and practices without stripping them of their original meaning, even if it involves merit-transference (*ekō*) or a *jiriki* outlook. It is only later, after having practised in a *jiriki* way for a while, that we come to realise the Shinshū view of *tariki*. It would be impossible to begin with *shinjin* as, in Aoki's view, there is no agent in *shinjin* and so this is not something that is in the practitioner's control in any way. On the other hand, practice is something that everybody can engage in and it provides a context for the practitioner's study and spiritual maturation.

The creolised and unorthodox nature of Fūraibō and its unusual structure as an informal community make it a unique space of difference within the Shinshū world. In this space the Shinshū (and pre-Shinshū) past is explored and reinvented, while also offering an alternative imagination of the tradition for the future. This diasporic community can also be said to be trying to experience Shinran's journey (through *nenbutsu* to *shinjin*, through *jiriki* to *tariki*, through strenuous practices to a relaxation of monastic discipline) rather than taking at face value and accepting as dogma Shinran's final realisation. Significantly, this experiential and experimental approach comes from a double exile; it has blossomed in the diaspora rather than in the mother

country and it has developed outside the institutional structures of the tradition, without the trappings of ritual standardisation, membership and layers of hierarchy. Moreover, Aoki's missionary aim to revitalise the recitation of *nenbutsu* goes beyond the doubly marginal space that is Fūraibō. In his frequent trips to Japan, Aoki and his students, together with Sumiyori and other sympathetic Japanese priests, go around Jōdo Shinshū temples chanting the loud, sometimes danced, *nenbutsu* that can be heard at Fūraibō. In this way, the margins talk back to the centre in order to bring *back* an ancient way of practice that the centre is perceived to have forgotten. In this imaginary, the exilic space becomes the repository of a tradition now rarely practised in the home country and it aims to reform the centre from the margins.

Another defining characteristic of Fūraibō is the fact that attendees come from many different ethnic backgrounds and that ethnic Japanese, or *Nikkei*, are not an overwhelming majority as in most American temples Galvan-Alvarez visited. There is a small group of *Nikkei*, mostly *issei* and *nisei* (first and second generation) women, for whom Aoki does services in the traditional way and gives talks in Japanese. However, the larger group attends talks in Spanish and is reflective of Argentina's ethnic diversity, including people from European, African, other Asian, and indigenous backgrounds. Both the *Nikkei* and the non-*Nikkei* groups took part together in the *hyakumanben* but people from the ethnic Japanese group rarely hung out in the social spaces before or after taking part in the practice. Further, although Fūraibō's attendees cannot all be said to be middle class in economic terms, they are by and large educated and creative professionals. Alternative medicine, often combining elements of traditional Sino-Japanese medicine and holistic therapies, was also a practice shared by most participants. Many conversations took place while sipping salted water and eating black garlic, which were widely available and thought to have great health benefits. In the same vein, when physical exhaustion manifested as pain, Aoki generously treated Galvan-Alvarez with acupuncture. The somewhat austere, health-oriented diet that kept the participants going throughout the retreat was suspended after its completion.

After the last long night of chanting, the ritual ended in the early hours of the morning as the millionth repetition was reached. Then all participants went to the main room where the main Buddhist altar is to chant together. The last few hours, leading up to the millionth repetition were particularly intense, as most of the 30 odd people who had taken part in the ritual congregated in the small room and continued chanting in unison with heightened emotion from midnight to dawn. Some, like Sumiyori, managed to dance in the little space left while ecstatically chanting *nenbutsu*. After the practice was over the retreat's demanding regime dissolved into a convivial "pizza party" breakfast, washed down with beer and wine. However, the sound of the *nenbutsu* did not cease after the end of the retreat. After a couple of days of rest, Sumiyori, together with a few other participants went on the streets and underground transport system of Buenos Aires singing and dancing the *nenbutsu*, letting the practice be heard outside the retreat setting.

The ambiguity of Fūraibō as a simultaneous repository of the Japanese past (where the *nenbutsu* can still be heard and practices like the *hyakumanben* are still performed) and the Argentinian present (where concerts by local musicians and

pizza parties take place) makes it a very particular location, which can be seen as both hybrid and traditional. This unique setting is also the locus where the Jōdo Shinshū tradition, and in particular the Honganji-ha school, is being re-imagined, re-interpreted, and re-ritualised. With a strong focus on the *nenbutsu* as a practice, Fūraibō represents a space of difference where past and future, Japanese and Argentinian culture are entangled in a dynamic and creative process of re-definition.

Conclusion

The three case studies discussed in this chapter offer a small glimpse into the great variety of ritual forms, correlating to various doctrinal understandings, taken by the central ritual act of the Jōdo Shinshū tradition: the saying of the Buddha's name. Although the understanding of the *nenbutsu* as a simple expression of gratitude that might not be often vocalised or might not be vocalised at all, remains hegemonic in the Jōdo Shinshū world, it is by no means uncontested. Ritual offers a unique lens for understanding the interplay between practice and doctrine, as it provides an embodied, concrete expression at the intersection between orthopraxy and orthodoxy – and their unavoidably interdependent counterparts: heteropraxy and heterodoxy. Responding as much to internal historical debates about the relationship between *shinjin* and *nenbutsu* as to contexts where Buddhism is expected to provide forms of practice that are somewhat meditative and outside daily life, contemporary *nenbutsu* retreats demonstrate the vitality, capacity for adaptation and contestation of the Jōdo Shinshū tradition in the twenty-first century. Although never devoid of controversy and opposition, these new forms of ritual practice are creatively reimagining the present and future of the Honganji-ha school by critically and selectively engaging with its past. Similar dynamics can be appreciated in the role of music in ritual contexts, which is the focus of the next chapter.

Notes

1 A modern (1998) English translation of the Pali *Satipatthana Sutta* by Soma Thera can be found at https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/soma/wayof.html.
2 A translation and commentary of the relevant section from the *Anguttara Nikāya* discussing mindfulness of Buddha can be found at https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/study/recollections.html#summary.
3 As explained above, *nenbutsu* or mindfulness of Buddha is a practice common to all forms of Buddhism, particularly, Mahayana ones. Consequently, it is not a practice exclusively associated with the Pure Land orientation of Mahayana. Of particular significance is the role of mindfulness of Buddha and other akin visualisation and recitation practices in Tantric Buddhism, which are often connected with birth in a Pure Land, and not infrequently focused on Amida, as explored at length by, among many others, Inagaki (1994), Sanford (2006), and Proffitt (2023).
4 Shandao's magnum opus, the Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra 観無量寿経疏, where he formulates his understanding of the *nenbutsu*, has been recently translated in full into English by Johnson (2021) as *The Land Of Pure Bliss: Sukhavati*.
5 The textual influence of Shandao in Hōnen is clear throughout Hōnen's major work *Senjakuhongannenbutsushu* 選択本願念仏集. Further, it seems that Hōnen talked about his teaching as "the nembutsu of Shan Tao" (Sanford 2006: 161).

6 The issue of *nenbutsu* vis-à-vis meditation, and the complex nature of the latter, has already been addressed in Chapter 6. For further discussion on the subject see Dake (2005) and Grumbach (2005).
7 See Chapter 1.
8 For instance in the *Shōzōmatsu wasan* Shinran states that "Those who deeply entrust themselves / To Amida's Vow of great compassion / Should all say Namu-amida-butsu constantly / Whether they are waking or sleeping" (CWS 1997: 411). Also in a letter to one of his disciples, Shinran makes the point that "there is no nembutsu separate from shinjin, nor is the one moment of shinjin separate from the one moment of nembutsu" and, further, "there is no shinjin separate from nembutsu [and] there can be no nembutsu separate from shinjin" (CWS 1997: 538).
9 See, e.g., Tanaka (1997: 87–89), Shigaraki (2013: 76–80).
10 An interesting example of this common trend can be found in Shigaraki's comparison of the state of the vocal *nenbutsu* in Japan and in the United States. Coming from the Hiroshima area and from a family who advocated assiduous and loud recitation he laments: "When I was a child [..] all of the members would say the nembutsu as they listened to the minister's sermon. [..]Today, in Japan, however, that custom has gradually disappeared and the voices of the nembutsu can no longer be heard. Personally speaking, I would like to be able to hear those voices one more time! Those voices were heard in America as well [..] While I was giving my talk [at Seattle Buddhist Temple], something happened that surprised me greatly. As I spoke, the entire hall started welling up with the nembutsu. [..] It gave me great joy to know that, even though the temple members were third and fourth generation Japanese-Americans and the Japanese language was gradually being forgotten, the nembutsu was still alive in this way. That happened twenty years ago. I often wonder what has become of that nembutsu now" (2013: 54–55).
11 A classical canonical example of the lamentation of the self, as a product of the degenerate times, is Shinran's *Gutoku Hitan Jukkai* 愚禿悲歎述懐, translated in the *Collected Works* as "Gutoku's Hymns of Lament and Reflection" (CWS 1997: 421–4).
12 *Mappō* (末法), literally "End of Dharma" refers to the penultimate age in the Buddhist cosmological cycle of time. This is an era far removed from the passing away of a Buddha and the time when that Buddha's teaching starts to decay leading to its eventual disappearance. *Mappō* features prominently in Shinran's oeuvre and provides a significant framework to lament his own subjectivity, as a product of the degenerate times, the decay of the teachings and the Buddhist community (sangha). This lamenting mode also enables an often oblique and occasionally direct critique of social and political affairs. A well-known example of the latter can be found in the postscript to *Kyōgyōshinshō* (CWS 1997: 289–90), where Shinran openly criticises the Imperial House and other political authorities for the unfair treatment of Hōnen's movement.
13 The constant and intensive recitation of *nenbutsu* has been a feature of devout Jōdo Shinshū followers throughout Honganji's history, as exemplified by some of the stories of the *myōkōnin* 妙好人, literally "rare good people", a term derived from the Sanskrit *pundarika*, lotus flower, symbolising enlightenment, and generally used in Japan for *nenbutsu* followers with little formal education (Unno 1998:104). But this *nenbutsu*, however constant, also had a "casual" quality as it was often recited as the *nenbussha* 念仏者 (i.e., person of the *nenbutsu*) went about their daily activities, not in a place and time set apart from their ordinary circumstances.
14 The compound *muge* (無碍), meaning "unhindered", and present in the form of *nenbutsu* described above has a complicated political history. At the time of Rennyo, the sense of "unhindered", originally referring to the light of the Buddha, which penetrates unhindered by beings' evil karma throughout the ten directions, was also interpreted to be unhindered or undeterred by the law. The tenure of Rennyo as head priest (1457–1489) witnessed the rise of the *ikkō ikki* in the context of the turbulent *Sengoku jidai* (戦国時代), as explained by Solomon (1997: 83–176), Dobbins (2002: 132–56), and Tsang (2007: 44–115).

15 "Japanese-American temple families" is a term of our invention to describe families where a few relatives have entered the priesthood professionally. However, Japanese-American temple families operate very differently from traditional Japanese temple families, in so far as American temples cannot be inherited and ministers are assigned by the BCA headquarters to different locations, in consultation with the temple board of members, which is predominantly lay, and which legally employs the minister and pays their salary. Also, most Japanese-American temple families were not temple families in Japan before migration, though there are a couple of significant exceptions both in the United States and Canada.

16 For special anniversaries and other solemn occasions, the Honganji-ha, and all other Buddhist schools of Japan, select a phrase from their teachings that aims to capture the spirit of that particular occasion or celebration. In the context of the 750th memorial service for Shinran, which was marked in Kyōto in 2011 but around the world in the months and years prior, the Honganji-ha used this sentiment, which is a direct quotation from a letter written by Shinran (CWS 1997: 560).

17 The practitioner is on their own in a small hall with a toilet next to it. The practitioner eats three times a day but cannot sit or lay down for the duration of the practice. This ascetic discipline was performed at Mount Hiei, the headquarters of the Tendai school and it is assumed that Shinran engaged in it during his 20 years of training at the mountain monastery, though he never wrote about it. The theory that he engaged in this practice is derived from a reference in the letters written by his wife Eshinni to their daughter Kakushini (Dobbins 2004: 135–6).

18 It is a trademark of Japanese Pure Land schools, including Jōdo Shinshū ones, to strongly emphasise that the *nenbutsu* is not a mantra, but just the name of Amida, which contains all the merits and qualities of the Buddha's enlightenment. Recitation of the name is therefore interpreted as the calling voice of the Buddha and it might be uttered in a number of different ways without any weight given to the correct pronunciation of its syllables, unlike in the case of a mantra. When Galvan-Alvarez asked Aoki about the use of the term mantra to refer to the *nenbutsu*, the latter simply replied by resorting to skilful means: whereas for most people in Buenos Aires *nenbutsu-zanmai* 念仏三昧 would mean very little, the term "mantra-meditation" would sound familiar and would be readily understood.

19 The term *dōshi* technically refers to the officiating priest at a formal ceremony, who sits at the *raiban*, a raised seating platform in front of the main object of reverence. Only exceptionally formal ceremonies include a priest performing the duties of *dōshi*. However, it is not uncommon outside Japan to refer to the *chōshō* 調声, or chanting leader at any normal function, as *dōshi*. At Fūraibō the chanting leader of a given *nenbutsu* chanting session was referred to as *dōshi* and in accordance with their local custom, we will be referring to the respective chanting leaders of these sessions as *dōshi* in this chapter.

20 These are two forms of ceremonies of refuge where the lay aspirants receive a dharma name (法名, *hōmyō*) from either the *monshu* of Honganji (*kikyōshiki*) or his representative, or from the regional superintendent (bishop) of their district (*kieshiki*).

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8 Soundscapes of the Pure Land?

Music, identity, and adapting to the times in globalising Jōdo Shinshū

Introduction

In this chapter, we focus on ritual music in Jōdo Shinshū, in particular vocal music (chanting and singing). We argue that ritual music has been an important symbolic resource in the creation, transformation, and performance of localised identities in Jōdo Shinshū, in Japan, the United States and Hawai'i, and Europe, in the context of broader discourses of globalisation and modernisation. We begin this chapter by considering some of the recent scholarship on "soundscapes", especially in ritual, followed by a brief overview of the importance of music and vocalisation within Buddhism. We then examine the transformations of ritual music in Jōdo Shinshū (Honganji-ha) since the late nineteenth century, in Japan, the United States and Hawai'i, and Europe, including twenty-first century innovations. Finally, we consider what we can learn from this about the role of music in the creation of distinctive local identities within Jōdo Shinshū, and the interactions between ritual music and broader currents of globalisation.

Soundscapes of ritual

There has been a growing interest in the last few decades in exploring not only the visual – often privileged in Euro-American societies (Hackett 2016: 317) – but also other senses including smell, touch, and hearing (see, e.g., Classen 1993, Howes 2004, 2006, Howes and Classen 2013, Cox et al. 2016, Le Breton 2017). Focusing on hearing, some decades ago Schafer (1994 [1977]) argued for the importance of a consideration of "soundscapes", or the landscape of sound that human beings inhabit, and the ways in which we both respond to and participate in the creation of these soundscapes. Since then, a substantial body of literature on sound has emerged (see, e.g., Pinch and Bijsterveld 2011, Sterne 2012, Guillebaud 2017, Bull 2018, Steingo and Sykes 2019, Schulze 2020). In the context of Japan, Schafer's work has been taken up by Torigoe (1997), Yoshimura (1990), and Kojima and Fujii (1994), while more recent works include Hankins and Stevens (2013: 2), who examine "sonic practice", defined as "a means of approaching the active, embodied practices involved in making sound meaningful".

In religious studies, sound in religious ritual has been discussed by Hackett (2016) and in Beck (2006); and in Japanese religious ritual by Ouchi (2005, 2009,

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2016, 2021). As both Hackett and Ouchi point out, sound events in religious ritual may take a wide range of forms, encompassing various types of vocalisation and the use of musical instruments, but also the use of silence and other sounds associated with bodily movements, such as the clapping of hands. Beck explores links between music, especially vocal music and recitation, and religion. He notes the ubiquity of music in religious ritual, and the widespread practice of recitation or chanting of sacred texts – there is an important link between music and text found across all the major religions.

Hackett, Ouchi and Beck all also suggest a link between aesthetics and ritual performance. Ouchi argues that "there is no clear division between religious rituals and performing arts enacted for aesthetic or sensory pleasure. Aesthetic pleasure is, in fact, indispensable in many cases for activating ritual efficacy" (Ouchi 2021: 209). Michaels (2010: 21) draws our attention to the relationship of music to the body – he argues that not only is ritual music often associated with bodily movements, but it also has an effect on the body, as "the listeners get drawn in to the ritual music". He also argues that "ritual music transports into another time and another world, and is thus regarded as sounds from that world … It is not something in the ritual or during the ritual, but part of the overall power of the ritual" (Michaels 2010: 21).

Despite the ubiquity of ritual music across religious traditions noted by Beck, in the case of Buddhism, the use of music has not been unproblematic. Śākyamuni Buddha is said to have warned of the danger of using music to communicate the teachings, because the practitioner risks becoming too focused on the qualities of the music or voice rather than on the content of the chant (Williams 2006: 173). The ten precepts commonly observed by novice monks include the instruction to "refrain from dancing, singing, music, going to see entertainments, wearing garlands, using perfumes, and beautifying the body with cosmetics" (Uposatha Sutta, cited in Nelson 2013: 164). And the eight precepts recommended for lay people on special days, include the same warning against "music" as "entertainment".

However, sutra chanting has been practised since the early years of Buddhism, and Nelson (2013: 164–5) also notes the existence of several stories about Śākyamuni Buddha which refer to music, using it as an analogy to explain aspects of Buddhist teachings. Harvey (1990: 175) explains that chanting was a way of helping to memorise and convey the Buddha's teachings in the context of a society where writing was little used, and "a learned person was 'much heard' rather than 'well read'". Williams (2006: 186) further notes that chanting continues to be an important way of recalling the Buddha's teachings today throughout all schools of Buddhism and links the performance of chanting to the control of breathing, and entering into a "meditative state",[1] and merging, through group chanting, into the wider Sangha.

Within Mahayana Buddhism, music became recognised as a form of offering to the Buddhas from the first-century CE (Nelson 2008: 38). Both instrumental music (which later came to be known in Japan as *gagaku* 雅楽)[2] and vocal music (later known as *shōmyō* 声明 – literally, "bright voice")[3] associated with the chanting of sacred texts were transmitted from China to Japan, along with Buddhist teachings, from the sixth-century CE.[4] By the Heian period (794–1185 CE), Nelson

(2008: 42) notes that music was considered "an indispensable part of ritual, since together they were thought to be two of the pillars of a properly ordered society and well-conducted government". Nelson also notes here the importance of the Chinese notion of *liyue*, rendered in Japanese as *reigaku* 礼楽, literally, ritual and music, a concept that had been introduced to Japan by the end of the sixth century. In the eighth and ninth centuries, chant schools were established, and repertoires of chanting were compiled that still exist today within Kegon, Tendai, and Shingon Buddhism (Hill 1982: 28).[5] And Ouchi notes that in mediaeval Japan the voice was seen as the main vehicle for performing Buddhist practices (*koe butsuji wo nasu* 声仏事を成す). According to Ouchi this emphasis on the voice can be traced back to the *Vīmalakīrti-nirdeśa sutra*, which states that "in this world, Śakyamuni Buddha's teachings are conveyed verbally, not through other sensory sign systems (smells, flavors, light, figures, etc.) as happens in other Buddhist worlds" (Ouchi 2021: 211). The use of the voice in ritual also relates to the triad of body, speech and mind (*shinkui* in Japanese) referred to in the introduction, known as the "three mysteries" in esoteric Buddhism.[6]

Although Jōdo Shinshū teaching rejects the idea of engaging in particular practices in order to achieve awakening, *shinkui* is also of relevance to Jōdo Shinshū – in the academy side of the *sangōwakuran* debate (see Chapter 2), body, speech, and mind play a crucial role in expressing *shinjin*. Contemporary debates surrounding the vocalisation of the *nenbutsu*, as discussed in Chapter 7, are also relevant here.[7] The linking of music and Amida's Pure Land can also be seen in the sacred texts of Jōdo Shinshū, including the Amida Sutra and the Larger Sutra and in works by the Pure Land master T'an Luan. These texts are referenced in Shinran's Jōdo Wasan (CWS 1997: 320–37), particularly in the first half of the collection, which is a translation of T'an Luan's poem "*Gathas* in Praise of Amida Buddha" (讃阿弥陀仏偈, *Sanamidabutsuge*). In the Amida Sutra, there are several evocative descriptions of the music that can be heard in Amida's Pure Land emanating from the birds and the jewelled trees, which are said to have the effect of making those hearing them mindful of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.[8] These descriptions are echoed in T'an Luan's "*Gathas*", mentioned above, and which describe Amida Buddha as "the music of purity" (*The Pure Land Writings* 2018: 176). And Nelson (2008: 43), writes that elaborate ceremonies dedicated to Amida Buddha in the Heian period became "in effect a representation on earth of the wondrous music of the Western Paradise". In Buddhist art, too, dating back to the Heian period, there are many images of Amida Buddha descending to welcome those at the point of death to the Pure Land, which depict Amida as accompanied by Bodhisattvas on clouds playing musical instruments. The statues and wall paintings at Byōdōin 平等院 temple near Kyoto, dating back to the early eleventh century, are a good example of this.

Ritual music in contemporary Jōdo Shinshū

Ritual music continues to play an important role in Jōdo Shinshū. As described in Chapter 4, learning to chant is a central part of ordination training for new priests, and vocal music is a central component of Jōdo Shinshū ritual. However, the forms

of music used, both vocal and instrumental, have undergone marked changes, both within Japan and in Europe and the Americas, since the nineteenth century. In the remainder of this chapter, we discuss some of the contemporary forms of ritual music in Jōdo Shinshū, and the ways in which these have changed, beginning with a description of a service held at the main temple in Kyoto for the spring equinox in 2022.

Ohigan at the head temple in Kyoto 2022

It is morning service at Nishi Hongwanji to mark the beginning of *ohigan* お彼岸, a period of observations held at the autumn and spring equinoxes at temples and by individuals throughout Japan when the dead are remembered. In the Amida hall the golden pillars reflect the light of large temple lanterns and flickering candles. In the *chūgejin*, between the inner altar area and the main seating area, a row of *gagaku* musician-priests are seated. They begin to play, while from outside, there is a call, *kanshō* (喚鐘 – literally, summoning bell), summoning the priest who will strike the calling bell (placed outside the main hall) marking the beginning of service, followed by the response, "*hai*" (yes). From inside the hall, we hear the sound of a bell being struck: first single repeated loud strikes, then a crescendo of rapidly repeated strikes, building and then descending in volume. The smell of incense pervades the hall, where 50 or so people are gathered, mostly sitting in the formal *seiza* style on the expanse of tatami mats in the *gejin* (outer seating area), with a few older people sitting on chairs placed at the rear of the hall.[9]

The priest leading the service enters, preceded by the *monshu*, who is also attending, but is not leading the service on this occasion. More priests process in on either side of the *naijin*. All are attired in formal coloured robes (*shikie* 色衣) and *gojō gesa*, varying depending on their roles in the service. As the music continues, the priest leading the service takes a special seat in front of the central statue of Amida Buddha, performing a ritual known as *tōraiban* 登礼盤. The musicians stop playing, and the priest leading then begins to chant. Unfamiliar to those brought up with Western music, this is the type of chanting now commonly referred to as *shōmyō*: it has notes that soar and dip, sometimes with sliding transitions between them, slight rises and stops, in patterns that are impossible to fully capture with Western musical notation. Solo lines are followed by the other priests joining in, again in the same style of chant. This introductory section is followed by a melodic chanting of the *nenbutsu* (*namo amidanbu*), and then sutra chanting by all the priests together, this time on a single note, in the style referred to as *dokyō*. A further short series of melodic chants follow, then once more *gagaku* music, as the lead priest descends from his special seat, in another ritual called *gōraiban* 降礼盤, and takes a seat at the side of the *naijin*. Finally, all the priests process out. For the most part, the lay followers attending the service remain silent, except for the beginning and end of the service where they are invited to say the *nenbutsu* all together, and bow. Some also call out the *nenbutsu* intermittently throughout the service – spontaneous uttering of the *nenbutsu* is welcomed. A few have brought service books and join in with the one-note sutra chanting, but most simply listen.

This is a very unusual service in many ways – it is performed at the head temple, for an important bi-annual event, and has elements that may not be possible for smaller temples, such as the performance of *gagaku* music, included only for special observances at Hongwanji and some other major temples. Some of the features of this service are also seen in services at ordinary local temples though – these often begin with some *shōmyō* style chanting, by the priest or priests, followed by the monotone chanting of the sutras (*dokyō*) (again predominantly performed by priests). Local temple services may also include a Buddhist song set to Western style music to conclude the service, with lay participants joining in. This type of song is also included in some of the services at the main temple and is discussed in the following sections.

Before turning to the use of Western style music in Honganji-ha services though, it is worth reflecting on some of the other features of large-scale rituals performed at the head temple, in particular *gagaku* and *shōmyō*, as they highlight one of the constraints that informs ritual performance – the necessity of training and the availability of suitably skilled practitioners. As noted in Chapter 4, basic chanting is an important aspect of priests' training in the initial ordination programme (*tokudo*) and is also a key element of the more advanced *kyōshi* training, which is required in order to become a temple minister. Both include training in the more commonly performed *sahō* (ritual performance), including some of the simpler *shōmyō* chanting. But to follow more advanced training in *shōmyō* requires enrolling in a course at the Ritual and Liturgy training department *Gonshiki Shidōsho* (勤式指導所) after completing *kyōshi* training. Courses last either 6 months or one year, and during this time aspirants study *shōmyō*, other forms of *sahō* not included in *tokudo* or *kyōshi* training, and one musical instrument used in *gagaku* – all the *gagaku* performers in temple rituals in Jōdo Shinshū are ordained priests. Those who successfully complete the course receive a licence to perform advanced forms of *sahō*. The first 6 months of the course covers a relatively basic level, but to enrol on the second, more advanced, stage to complete the full year's training is a selective process dependent on passing a practical examination. Ministers who perform special services at the head temple, such as that described above, must have completed the one-year *gonshiki* course, and then need further training to learn how to perform together.

Services such as the *ohigan* service described above can thus be considered as skilled ritual performances, in which processes of training, codification, and the establishment of prescribed forms are all important. This also relates to questions of authority, in so far as authority may be partly constituted by control over approved forms of ritual. In the case of Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha, adaptations in the practice and codification of *shōmyō* in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also show the influence of concerns relating to modernisation and adapting ritual to the times.

Shōmyō in Jōdo Shinshū

Shōmyō within Jōdo Shinshū can be traced back to the time of Shinran, when monthly memorial services were performed for Hōnen by his disciples, featuring the chanting of Shan-tao's *Ōjōraisan* as well as the *nenbutsu* (Ducor 1994: 41–2).

Following Shinran's death, monthly memorial services were instituted for Shinran, and were further developed, with the addition of new *shōmyō* chants, by his descendants. The 8th *monshu*, Rennyo (1415–1499), simplified and standardised the daily liturgy, with the aim of making it more accessible to ordinary followers (Ducor 1994: 42–4). The daily chanting of the *Ōjōraisan* at the head temple was replaced with Shinran's composition, the *Shōshinge*,[10] combined with *nenbutsu* and *wasan*, a practice that continues today (although the range of melodies to which the *Shōshinge* is chanted has been considerably reduced and simplified since the 1930s) (Ducor 1994: 45–6).

After Rennyo, further changes in liturgical practice were introduced by successive *monshu*. The most significant of these occurred between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1887, the 21st *monshu*, Myōnyo, 明如 (1850–1903), published a collection of *shōmyō* using a musical notation system known as *bokufu* 墨譜). This collection incorporated many melodies from Tendai *shōmyō*, unified the liturgical practices of the Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha, and established an officially recognised form of *shōmyō* and ritual. This enabled the transmission of *shōmyō* to priests in local temples and contributed to a certain level of standardisation. Later, revisions and simplifications were made, leading to the publication of multiple liturgical books. The most significant modifications and simplifications of *shōmyō* in recent years within the Honganji-ha were introduced by the 23rd *monshu*, Shōnyo 勝如(1911–2002), beginning in the 1930s (Takeda 1982: 210). The purpose of these changes was to simplify musical notation and chanting styles, making it easier for participants in services to chant together. The simplified version of *shōmyō* could be more readily rendered in Western musical notation. At the same time, the structure of services was modified, and the length of *nenbutsu* chanting was shortened and simplified.[11]

The guiding principle behind these modifications was to adapt Honganji-ha's ritual practices to a new era (*jidai ni awaseru* 時代に合わせる), and to make *shōmyō* and ritual practices more accessible to both monks and lay followers. From the Meiji period onward, changes in the educational system led to Japanese schools teaching only Western-style music and Western musical notation. The Tendai *shōmyō*, traditionally used in Jōdo Shinshū liturgy, became increasingly unfamiliar to the new generation and was difficult to transcribe into Western notation. During major events at the head temple, such as *hōonkō*, several hundred priests may participate, sometimes accompanied by groups of parishioners. In such cases, it is considered important that all participants, regardless of their level of vocal training, are able to chant together. Standardisation, and simplification, also therefore serve a practical purpose in helping to ensure that all priests follow a unified liturgical practice during major events.

On the other hand, although the modernised version of Jōdo Shinshū *shōmyō* could be somewhat represented in Western musical notation, some priests who favour classical Tendai *shōmyō* criticised these adaptations. A Jōdo Shinshū *shōmyō* instructor, in a conversation with one of the authors, described *shōmyō* as "an encounter with the sacred" (*sei naru mono to no deai* 聖なるものとの出会い) or even as "music that leads one to nirvana" (*nehan ni michibiku ongaku* 涅槃に導く音楽).

This teacher expressed concerns about the Westernisation of *shōmyō* due to the adoption of the Western musical scale, stating that much of the subtlety and beauty of the older forms had been lost.

At stake here is the importance of the aesthetic dimension of ritual music. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, scholars of ritual music have argued that its aesthetic and emotional qualities are intrinsic to ritual performance and the process of ritual communication (Beck 2006; Hackett 2016). Further, ritual music encompasses both those playing instruments, or, in the case of *shōmyō*, those who chant, and those who silently listen. In the words of the *shōmyō* instructor cited above, this creates "an inclusive experience that transcends mere vocalization".[12] The importance of listening as an aspect of ritual can also be seen in the ways that Western-style music has been incorporated into Jōdo Shinshū services in Japan, discussed in the next section.

Bukkyō Ongaku 仏教音楽 or "Buddhist Music": Western music in a Japanese ritual context

Another important change to ritual music in Jōdo Shinshū in Japan since the late nineteenth century has been the introduction of a type of music referred to as *bukkyō ongaku*, or Buddhist music – in this case meaning Western music used in Buddhist services or events (Asuka 2008). The use of the word "*ongaku*" or music is interesting here, as previous forms of liturgical chanting, including both *shōmyō* and *dokyō*, were not conventionally considered in the same category as music – with music being viewed as secular (Reehl 2021: 759). Buddhist music began to be composed in Japan from late Meiji, partly in response to changes in the education system in Japan, in which the musical curriculum now focused on Western style music (Fukumoto 2006: 212). With the increasing popularity of Western music as entertainment, it gradually became the main musical language understood by most Japanese people. Alongside this, as for the modifications in *shōmyō* discussed above, there seems to have been a demand for Buddhist music which was "appropriate to the times" (*jidai ni sōō*時代に相応) (Shimamura 1936, cited in Fukumoto 2006: 210).

The earliest *bukkyō ongaku* compositions in Jōdo Shinshū in Japan date back to the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.[13] The Honganji-ha school issued a publication including 26 songs with Western melodies in 1912. And the first full scale ritual including Western style music was performed by a group of 500 children affiliated with the Nishi Hongwanji Osaka Betsuin in 1917, accompanied by violin and organ. In the late 1940s, Kyoto women's university and Sōai university established specialist music courses, and used *bukkyō ongaku* in services held at the university. Many of the women studying at these universities were daughters of temples, and took what they learned back to their temples – this contributed to the spread of *bukkyō ongaku* (Fukumoto Yasuyuki personal communication).

From its inception, especially in its choral forms, *bukkyō ongaku* has thus been closely linked to Jōdo Shinshū universities, schools, and also the Honganji-ha women's association. It spans both choral and solo pieces, including Buddhist songs

(in Japanese, *sanbutsuka* 讃佛歌, songs in praise of the Buddha), or *bukkyōsanka* 仏教讃歌(Buddhist songs of praise), some of which may be used for congregational singing. These Buddhist songs contrast with *shōmyō* in that they allow a range of people to actively participate – not just trained priests.[14] With a few exceptions, such as the song known as *Ondokusan* 恩徳讃, discussed in the following sections, they also contrast with sutra chanting in that they are written in contemporary Japanese, and are therefore much easier to follow for lay participants than the sutras, which are written in a form of Sino-Japanese which is not readily understandable to non-specialists.[15] However, not all types of *bukkyō ongaku* are designed for congregational participation – there are also compositions which are designed for choral performances, which the audience is expected to listen to rather than to participate in.

In 1963, a *bukkyō ongaku* service was held at the head temple of Honganji-ha to celebrate the *gotan'e* or anniversary of Shinran's birth, and currently some special services, including one of the annual services for the *gotan'e,* continue to be performed at the head temple to the western musical settings of *bukkyō ongaku*. These services are distinctive not only in the form of music used, but because the participants are mainly students at high schools, colleges, and universities affiliated with Honganji-ha. For the *bukkyō ongaku* service to mark the *gotan'e* in May 2024, for example, the *Goeidō* (founder's hall) was crowded with around 1,200 students, who had been brought there by their schools – the anniversary of Shinran's birth is a holiday for Honganji-ha linked schools. The majority were seated on the tatami mats, with a small number of the students making up a choral group at the back of the hall. The service featured musical settings of pieces which feature in the regular services, including the *Jūseige* 重誓偈, an extract from the *Larger Sutra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life* 大無量寿経, but sung by the choral group in a western musical setting that was far more complex than the regular one note sutra chanting. As for regular services, the majority of those present simply listened. Some sections were also chanted solo by the presiding priest, who was seated in the *naijin*, but again using western style settings. The only part of the service for which everyone joined in was a Buddhist song at the end of the service, written to commemorate the birth of the founder, *Shūsō gōtan'e* 宗相降誕会.

This service contrasted sharply with the more usual temple services in the style of vocalisation, and in the way that it placed the choral group of students at the centre of the musical performance. Nevertheless, it shared with other Japanese temple services the quality of a performance – but with a choral group of students, rather than a group of ordained priests, taking the main vocal roles. Fukumoto (2006: 200), notes that it has been a characteristic of *bukkyō ongaku* since its beginnings that the sutras sung in *bukkyō ongaku* events are sung by choral groups, and are "something to listen to", not "something to sing" (*utaumono dewa naku, kiku mono*「歌うもの」ではなく「聴くもの」). Many *bukkyō ongaku* events take the form of a concert, with a clear distinction between performer and audience. Even where *bukkyō ongaku* is used for a special service, as in the example described above, collective singing in such a service is very limited – in the 2024 *gotan'e* at the head temple, it was limited to one song at the end.[16] In this sense, this type of service is

very different from the congregational style of singing Buddhist songs to a western musical setting that developed in the United States and Hawai'i, which is described in the following sections.[17]

Although for this *bukkyō ongaku* service the Buddhist song chosen was a special one to mark the birth of the founder, Shinran, the Buddhist song which is probably most often heard in temple services both in Japan and in the United States and Hawai'i, and South America is the *Ondokusan* 恩徳讃. The *Ondokusan* is an interesting example of the complexity of global flows of ritual music within Jōdo Shinshū, and is related to the development of distinctive forms of services and of ritual music in Jōdo Shinshū in the United States and Hawai'i. The words are taken from a *wasan*, or song poem, written by Shinran, which in turn is based on a writing by Shandao. Although usually the *wasan* are chanted to a prescribed melody, and follow the chanting of the *Shōshinge*, in 1918 the *wasan* that is now referred to as the *Ondokusan* was set to Western style music by a Japanese priest Sawa Yasuo 澤康雄(1888–1932), who at that time was in Hawai'i,[18] strongly encouraged by the Bishop of Hawai'i, Imamura Yemyo (see Chapter 3). Imamura felt that western style Buddhist music should be introduced into Jōdo Shinshū in Hawai'i as part of a programme of modernisation and propagation – according to Umitani (2018: 8), Imamura was influenced by the use of music in Christian churches in emphasising the potential for music as a means of propagation. The *Ondokusan* has subsequently been set to various musical arrangements and is commonly featured in service books in both Japan and North America and Hawai'i, and South America. In Japan it is sung in the original Japanese. Outside Japan, it is also generally sung in Japanese, but English language versions also exist.

Jōdo Shinshū ritual music in the United States and Hawai'i

The composition of the *Ondokusan*, and the publication of the associated service book, took place in a context where Jōdo Shinshū communities in the United States and Hawai'i had been recently established, and faced new challenges concerning ritual. Ama (2011: 91), notes that the format of services in the BMNA (Buddhist Mission of North America) was not standardised until the 1930s. It also seems that the form of services shifted as migrants began to have families, and special family services for children were introduced. A further factor for the early ministers dispatched from Japan, was the need to strike a balance between supporting the Japanese migrant community in the context of racial discrimination, and pressures to "fit in", and attempting to spread the teachings among locally resident Euro-Americans with an interest in Buddhism.

These factors fostered an environment open to new rituals, especially Buddhist songs that could be sung by the entire congregation without special training – unlike specialised chanting such as *shōmyō*. An important influence here, discussed in some detail by Tanabe (1998) and Kikuchi (2011) was the Vade Mecum, a handbook of English language songs and services written by two Euro-American ordained Jōdo Shinshū priests, the English-born Ernest Hunt and his wife Dorothy,

together with Raymond Zorn, and first published by the International Buddhist Institute of Hawai'i, under the auspices of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i (HHMH) in 1924 (Tanabe 1998: 223). This became the primary handbook for services in North America for some years and has continued to influence the production of subsequent service books.

According to Kikuchi (2011: 2), the services in the Vade Mecum are similar to Christian Protestant liturgies. They include alternating Buddhist songs – whose musical settings resemble Christian hymns – and readings from scriptures, accompanied by a dharma talk, paralleling the Christian sermon. The Buddhist songs were initially referred to as "hymns" in the service books, but from the 5th edition of the Vade Mecum in 1932 they are referred to as "*gathas*", the term by which they are known in the United States and Hawai'i today.[19] Both Theravadin and Christian influences can be observed in the lyrics of many newly composed songs (Tanabe 1998, Kikuchi 2011). Services also included excerpts from the *Dhammapada* (Tanabe 1998: 223), and the 5th edition of the Vade Mecum includes the *tisarana* (threefold refuge in Pali, the canonical language of the Theravada tradition) (Kikuchi 2011: 3). This reflected the Hunts' wish to promote a non-sectarian form of Buddhism (Tanabe 1998, Kikuchi 2011: 222).[20]

By the late 1930s, the typical format of Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) services included some Japanese style chanting; readings from texts; a dharma talk that might be in English or Japanese; and some singing of hymns/*gathas* (sometimes in English, sometimes in Japanese) accompanied by Western-style music on a piano, or sometimes a pipe organ. However, as has been noted elsewhere (Tanabe 1998: 224–5), these changes cannot be readily summarised as "Westernisation", rather, we see here the development of a distinctive form of service that became closely associated with the emerging identity of Japanese-American Jōdo Shinshū followers.

This form of service was also exported to Japan in the period of the Occupation, where a weekly Sunday service on the American model was introduced at Tsukiji Hongwanji in Tokyo in 1949, conducted half in English and half in Japanese. This was primarily aimed to meet the needs of Buddhists serving within the Occupation (mainly second-generation Japanese Americans (*nisei*)), although it also aimed to attract local Japanese (especially young people) with an interest both in Buddhism and in learning English. At the same time, the International Buddhist Association was founded to support the activities of this new group and to promote Buddhism. Originally intended to be non-sectarian, it became clear that this was a very difficult position to maintain, in view of the practical requirements of organising services, and finding a place to hold them, and the Association became Shin Buddhist (the majority of those interested were Jōdo Shinshū followers), and became based at Tsukiji Hongwanji (International Buddhist Association 1952), where they also offered English language conversation classes before the services. English language services on the American model are still performed monthly at Tsukiji Hongwanji today, now on the last Saturday of the month. The participants currently include visitors to Japan and foreign residents, some of whom have a North American Jōdo Shinshū background (including both ethnic Japanese and others), and local Japanese

with an interest in listening to dharma talks in English (some say they find the English language dharma talks more straightforward) and participating in English language services (Yamamoto 2010). However, this remains the only place where this type of service is performed in Japan.

One important characteristic of the new forms of service that emerged in North America was congregational singing. As noted above, although Western style Buddhist music had been introduced in Japan from the late nineteenth century, it tended to be confined to specific contexts, often outside temples, and associated with choral performances. Congregational singing in temples in Japan in this period (and still now) was far more limited than in North America. But in the United States and Hawai'i, the culture of *gathas* flourished, and became an integral part of Jōdo Shinshū services.[21] Older Japanese-Americans recalling their childhood in Jōdo Shinshū temples in the 1970s remark that sutra chanting in temples at that time was kept as short as possible, and the *gathas* were more familiar to them growing up than the short extracts of sutras known as the *Jūseige* and *Sanbutsuge* 讃仏偈 which are commonly chanted in Jōdo Shinshū temples throughout the world (including North America) at the time of writing. The *gathas* may therefore evoke feelings of familiarity, affection and nostalgia, especially among older Japanese-Americans, and, although not unique to America – indeed a number of *gathas* in contemporary use in the United States and Hawai'i were composed in Japan – they have become a distinctive aspect of North American Jōdo Shinshū.

Another point to note here is the interaction between the way that ritual space is constructed and the performance of the service, including the *gathas*. As noted in Chapter 5, Jōdo Shinshū temples in North America and Hawai'i are often constructed along the model of a church, with pews on either side of a central aisle. Unlike temples in Japan, where lay attendees may be seated either on the floor, or sometimes on chairs at the back of the temple, and remain seated throughout the service, temples in North America and Hawai'i have adopted a similar pattern to many Protestant Christian churches, with attendees rising to sing the *gathas*, but remaining seated for other parts of the service.[22] This was remarked on with some surprise by one minister sent to North America from Japan, for whom this practice contributed to her feeling that the service followed a Christian-like model. It also highlights the way in which ritual music is embodied and is closely related to ritual space.

While the *gathas* retain an important place in contemporary North American services, alongside sutra chanting, Mitchell (2014: 362–3) notes that in twenty-first century America precisely what is sung as a *gatha*, and what sort of music accompanies the singing may be quite variable, stretching from the *Ondokusan* to re-workings of contemporary popular music, and featuring a range of musical instruments. Mitchell (2014: 363–4) suggests that rather than trying to interpret this with reference to a fixed body of texts or compositions,

> *gātha* are properly understood as the location within the Dharma Service where the sangha sings. Whether this singing is an explicitly and self-consciously 'Buddhist' song done in any particular style is secondary.

Mitchell goes on to suggest that *gathas* are best viewed through the lens of performance. He argues that they are a space for creativity in that their precise content is not prescribed (unlike for the sutra chanting). But at the same time, he suggests that the dimension of collective performance is significant from a Jōdo Shinshū perspective as an act of offering (analogous to, for example, offering incense) and a "statement of faith" (Mitchell 2014: 367). While these insights are important, we would also argue that the *gathas*, in the various forms they have taken over the past 100 years, are a ritual innovation which serve as a symbol of a distinctive North American Jōdo Shinshū identity. The flexibility and change in the content of *gathas*, noted by Mitchell, as well as in North American services more widely, is indicative of the ways in which this identity has shifted over time. In the early twentieth century, a context of discrimination against a largely ethnic Japanese migrant membership and pressure to assimilate and adopt localised, Christian-influenced forms, combined with modernist Buddhist currents favouring generic Theravada-based content and a move to adopting western-style music and a congregational form of service. In more recent years, as the membership base has shifted to a mix of third and fourth-generation Japanese-Americans and non-ethnic Japanese, the style of services has changed again. There is now greater emphasis on chanting of the sutras, and, as Mitchell notes, the singing performed under the heading of "*gatha*", has also become more varied. But services in the United States and Hawai'i remain distinctive in comparison with both those in Japan and in Europe, to which we now turn.

Jōdo Shinshū ritual music in Europe

As described above, in Chapters 3 and 5, Jōdo Shinshū in Europe differs significantly from both Jōdo Shinshū in Japan, and in the United States, in its history, membership, and current organisation and infrastructure. To recap: the history of Jōdo Shinshū groups in Europe dates only from the 1950s, and, as far as the Honganji-ha school is concerned, the membership is almost entirely local, with few Japanese members or priests.

As noted above in Chapter 5, Ekōji is the only purpose-built temple used by Honganji-ha in Europe, despite the temple itself not being affiliated with Honganji-ha. Although it is used for services throughout the year, some of which are attended by followers from throughout Europe, for most European followers the spatial context provided by Ekōji is an exception that contrasts sharply with the more usual settings for services provided by adapted private houses. This influences the sonic dimensions of services too. For example, the framing of the service by the striking of the *kanshō* calling bell is not possible except at Ekōji.

In practical terms, the structure of services is largely determined by local priests. Official service books with English language translations are available from Honganji-ha, and these have also been translated into other European languages, mainly by local priests. And when priests complete the *tokudo* and *kyōshi* training, they are provided with Japanese language service books and are trained in the correct chanting and performance of the various elements of regular temple services, as described in Chapter 4. This includes an element of basic *shōmyō* melodic style

chanting in the *kyōshi* training programme. During the *tokudo* ordination training, candidates are also given a training session in the *bukkyō ongaku* style of service, but the emphasis of the training is on performing the regular style of Japanese temple service. None of the local European born priests have completed the *gonshiki* training required to perform *gagaku*.

In their daily practice, individual priests have considerable autonomy over which ritual elements to combine in particular services, within the limitations of the training they have undertaken. Depending on the priest's preference, this might include some *shōmyō* style chanting, sometimes as an introductory piece, or it might be restricted to the single note *dokyō* style chanting of the sutras, while for special occasions such as *hōonkō* the somewhat longer *Shōshinge* may be chanted, together with some of the *wasan* composed by Shinran. Drawing on a pattern established in the United States and Hawai'i, the *tisarana* refuges in Pali may also be included at the beginning of the service. However, the *gathas* set to western style music that have become a standard part of services in North America, and some of which have also become popular in Japan, are notable for their absence in Europe, as is the western musical style of *bukkyō ongaku* encountered in Japan. It is worth asking why.

Looking at Europe as a whole, although the majority of the Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha priests speak English, not all the lay followers do. In this context, Buddhist songs written in English in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have little appeal for non-English speaking followers – efforts to translate texts into local languages are focused on the canonical texts such as the sutras chanted in services listed above. These translations are generally provided to be read, either individually, or sometimes aloud during services, so that those participating can understand the meaning of what is being chanted. English language translations are also provided in the standard service books produced by Honganji-ha. The chanting itself is done in Sino-Japanese, to the standard Japanese musical settings (not the more recent *bukkyō ongaku* westernised musical settings).

It can be argued that retaining a standardised chanting format is desirable in that it enables all members of the sangha across different language groups to engage in the same ritual practice, especially given the diversity of languages in Europe. But another important factor concerns the differences between the European and the North American contexts, which go beyond issues of language. In the United States and Hawai'i, Christianity retains a strong social presence, and levels of church attendance have remained high throughout the period in which Jōdo Shinshū has been established there. At the same time, there was considerable anti-Japanese discrimination in the early part of the twentieth century, leading to pressures to adapt to a predominantly Christian environment. The influence of particular individuals, especially the Hunts, who came from a Christian background, also contributed to the shaping of services in North America in the early twentieth century. And the rise in popularity of Western-style Buddhist music in Japan was also an influence within the Japanese diasporic community in North America and Hawai'i.

In Europe, none of these factors are present. Levels of church attendance throughout Europe are far lower than in the United States, and the majority of

Jōdo Shinshū followers in Europe are converts. For them, as argued elsewhere (Matsunaga 2019: 249–50), the concern is not to adapt to a Christian context, but to align themselves with the wider European Buddhist community. This helps to explain why there is little general enthusiasm for ritual forms, including music, which appear to echo Christian church services. Interestingly, the one innovation from the Hunts' reworking of Buddhist services in Hawai'i which is often found in European Jōdo Shinshū services is the chanting of the *tisarana* in Pali – several European priests have said that they feel that this is helpful in making a link with the broader Buddhist community.

The United Kingdom is an interesting case to consider here as, despite sharing a common language with North America and Hawai'i, the UK Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha sangha has followed the general European pattern of services focused on Japanese style chanting, and have not adopted either *gatha* or *bukkyō ongaku* style musical settings. This is probably in part due to the personal preferences of the priests in the United Kingdom. But another important point is that most of those approaching Pure Land Buddhist groups (including Jōdo Shinshū) for the first time in the United Kingdom, as in Europe more broadly, have previously participated in other forms of Buddhism. This shapes their expectations of what is authentically Buddhist – as noted above in Chapter 7, one major element of this for many is silent seated meditation, but another familiar element is chanting, especially in the form of mantras or sutra recitation. Hymn-like musical settings, on the other hand, evoke Christianity, which, for some, is the religion that they have left, and towards which they may even feel negatively (although this is not always the case).

Talking to lay followers of Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha in the United Kingdom, there was a generally positive reaction to retaining the forms used in Japan, and little interest in adopting American forms. One UK participant commented that "the music attaches you to the tradition, preserving the musicology of it is important – it gives you the sense that you're participating in something larger than you" and that learning new musical forms can act as a sort of initiation. Others have said that the atmosphere created by chanting is important, and that this can be experienced without simultaneously being preoccupied by meaning – as long as a translation is made available. Another participant in a UK group said that the chanting provided a way of re-focusing away from everyday preoccupations, and that even if she did not join in herself, she found it calming, and a good preparation for the discussions that followed the service.[23]

There have, however, been a few attempts at local European adaptations in the use of ritual music by Honganji-ha groups. A notable example is that of Switzerland. The late Reverend Jean Éracle, a former Roman Catholic priest, who headed the Jōdo Shinshū Swiss sangha from 1970 until his death in 2005, introduced a French-language liturgy, with a musical setting based on a simplified version of Gregorian plainchant. The intention was for this to be utilised by French speakers alongside the Japanese language service, aligning with Éracle's strong aspiration to foster the development of a localised European form of Jōdo Shinshū. However, this was vigorously opposed by at least one other European priest, who commented

"A Japanese chant done in Gregorian makes no sense. It is impossible to mix these things" and went on to say that he felt that this move was a consequence of Éracle's background as a Roman Catholic priest.[24] It seemed that part of his objection was that this new liturgy was no longer recognisable as a Honganji-ha service. More significant, perhaps, was the reaction of the Swiss sangha, the majority of whom preferred the Sino-Japanese chanting – some commented that it simply "sounds better", and were happy to enjoy the atmosphere created even if they could not directly follow the meaning of the words.[25] Translations were in any case provided separately which enabled followers to engage with the meaning of the text. Following Éracle's death in 2005, this form of liturgy was discontinued, and the Swiss sangha reverted to the conventional chanting forms most used in Europe.

Conclusion: adapting to the times and twenty-first century innovations

The changes in ritual music across Jōdo Shinshū temples in Japan, North America, and Europe since the late nineteenth century present a complex picture. This includes a concern to adapt to changing times and changing local contexts, but this is not a simple case of practice becoming Westernised as Jōdo Shinshū has moved outside Japan. Rather, influences from Western music have been felt within Japan too, and have often been identified with modernisation, and "adapting to the times" (*jidai ni awaseru*). Indeed, there is more Western style music evident in Jōdo Shinshū in Japan than in Europe, both within temples (for example, the singing of the *Ondokusan*) and in the *bukkyō ongaku* events held in Jōdo Shinshū linked universities and schools. Ritual music in Jōdo Shinshū in Europe has followed quite a different trajectory to North America in this respect. Adaptation to the local context for North America has involved the adoption of a distinctive body of Buddhist songs, or *gathas* (some of which were written by Japanese composers), which have become an integral part of regular services. But for Europe, a concern to situate Jōdo Shinshū within local understandings of Buddhist practice has led to a preference for forms of service derived from Japan, with the addition of elements such as the Pali refuges, as described above. This also relates to a concern to counter perceptions that Jōdo Shinshū is a Christianised form of Buddhism, which were a particular concern in Europe in the latter part of the twentieth century, as discussed in Chapter 3.

As Jōdo Shinshū has moved into the twenty-first century, innovations in ritual music continue. For the United States, Mitchell (2014: 363) has described the "repurposing of popular music in a ritual setting" in temple services. And in Japan too, some temple priests have experimented with introducing new forms of music, including hip-hop, and techno, as described in the introduction to this volume.[26] Another recent innovation in Jōdo Shinshū, as also seen in other religious organisations, has been the rise of internet-based ritual, initially driven by the restrictions on face-to-face interactions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. We turn to this topic in the next chapter.

Notes

1 Harich-Schneider (1962: 221), writing on *shōmyō* chanting, discussed in more detail below, also suggests that this can be viewed as a form of meditation.
2 The term *gagaku* was rarely used to describe this type of music before the nineteenth century. Today this term is often translated as "court music" – however, as Nelson (2016: 35) points out, a form of *gagaku* has been closely associated with Japanese Buddhist chanting since its introduction to Japan. Currently, *gagaku* continues to be performed at major rituals at some larger temples across a range of Buddhist schools, although the contemporary form of *gagaku* has seen many transformations over the centuries.
3 *Shōmyō* came to be used to refer to chanting in Japanese Buddhist ritual from the twelfth century (Nelson 2016: 37), but was performed in Japan before then under the name of *bonbai* 梵唄, literally "Sanskrit hymn". The term *shōmyō* originates from a translation of the Sanskrit *śabda-vidya*, referring to a branch of study in ancient India, which included the study of Sanskrit grammar, as well as instrumental and vocal music (Tsunetani 1978: 6). Although this term can be used as a general term for all Buddhist chanting, it is now commonly used in Japan for a type of melodic chanting contrasted with the one-note chanting used for sutras called *dokyō* 読経 – literally, reading the sutras.
4 *Gagaku* was first introduced in services and ceremonies in Jōdo Shinshū at the time of the 12th *monshu/shūshu*, Junnyo 准如 (1577–1630), and featured as part of the services for Shinran's 400th memorial in 1661 (JSIO:252) (At that time the term used was *shūshu* (宗主), but the current term is *monshu* (門主)).
5 The two major schools of the melodic style of *shōmyō* chanting in contemporary Japan are Tendai and Shingon. Both originated from musical forms brought from China in the early part of the ninth century.
6 See also Ouchi (2010) on vocalisation and attaining Buddhahood in the present body through the practice of the three mysteries in esoteric Buddhist traditions. As Nelson (2016: 39) notes, one consequence of this view of ritual practice is "an extremely positive evaluation of vocal music" within esoteric Buddhism.
7 The vocalisation of the *nenbutsu* has a long history that pre-dates the establishment of Jōdo Shinshū – Ennin 円仁 (794–864), the foundational figure in the development of *shōmyō* chanting in the Tendai school, from which Jōdo Shinshū *shōmyō* is derived, is said to have brought the *Goe nenbutsu* 五会念仏, a melodic form of *nenbutsu*, from China in the ninth-century CE.
8 See especially Section 3 of the *Amida Sutra* – for an English translation see *The Three Pure Land Sutras Volume 1*: 5–6.
9 This service was observed towards the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, so there were far fewer people attending than is usually the case.
10 See Chapter 4 for more detail on the *Shōshinge*.
11 For example, by substituting repetitions of the familiar "*namo amidanbu*" for a more varied and complex pattern taking refuge (*namo*) in the buddhas of the ten directions, Śākyamuni Buddha, Kannon 観音, Seishi勢至, and others.
12 A recent development highlighting the performance aspect of *shōmyō* and the importance of listening is its staging outside the temple context. For instance, Japan's National Theatre in Tokyo has hosted performances of *shōmyō* by Tendai, Shingon, and the Ōtani-ha branch of Jōdo Shinshū (but not the simplified version now used in Honganji-ha). And Nelson notes that *shōmyō* has not only served as a form of "cultural export" representing Japanese tradition, but has also been perceived as a form of "healing" or "therapy", citing the example of a performance of *shōmyō* in Italy in the early 2000s where audience members are reported to have been moved to tears (Nelson 2013: 165).
13 Fukumoto (2006: 208) notes, that many of the first Buddhist songs composed in this period used melodies derived from *gagaku*, and the pentatonic or 47 tone scales rather than Western music minor and major scales, but subsequently the use of Western music

for Buddhist songs became the norm, and *bukkyō ongaku* is now understood as referring to Western style music.

14 This point is made in the *tokudo* ordination training for new priests held in 2019, which included one session on conducting services held in the *bukkyō ongaku* western musical style.

15 The sutras chanted in Buddhist services in Japan are written in Chinese, but chanted with Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese characters (this is what we term "Sino Japanese" here) – hence they are not readily understandable to non-specialists even in Japan. Translations into contemporary Japanese are available, but are not generally used for chanting. Since World War II, however, chanting in contemporary Japanese has been introduced for some services. For example, in Ryukoku University, a university affiliated with Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha, some of the morning services feature settings to contemporary Japanese and a *bukkyō ongaku* melody.

16 Collective singing of one Buddhist song set to western music at the end of the service is also now frequently seen in regular services in Japan, where the remainder of the service is a combination of *shōmyō* and *dokyō* style chanting.

17 Some concert style Buddhist choral events have been introduced in the United States and Hawai'i, but this type of choral singing is not used for services in the Americas.

18 Another setting of the *Ondokusan* to Western style music was composed in 1952 by Shimizu Osamu 清水修, who was born in an Ōtani-ha temple in Osaka. This is the setting which is now usually sung.

19 For a more detailed analysis of the use of this term in American Jōdo Shinshū see Mitchell 2014: 359–60).

20 Hunt's promotion of what he saw as a universal basic Buddhism, combined with his apparent lack of understanding of the doctrinal specifics of Jōdo Shinshū, seems to have led to his dismissal from the Hawai'ian mission's English department, following the sudden death of Bishop Imamura, a friend and supporter of Hunt's, and Imamura's replacement by Bishop Kuchiba, who was unsympathetic to Hunt's approach (Ama 2011: 73). Hunt eventually left Jōdo Shinshū entirely and became ordained as a Sōtō Zen priest. His influence on Jōdo Shinshū in Hawai'i and in North America more generally was long lasting, however – in addition to the Vade Mecum, the Hunts also helped to develop the Hawai'ian Jōdo Shinshū Sunday School programme. Through this programme, the Hunts helped to form the understanding of Buddhism of many second generation Japanese Americans born in Hawai'i. And the Vade Mecum itself has had a formative influence on contemporary North American Shin Buddhist services.

21 See Tanabe (1998) and Mitchell (2014) for more on the history of the *gathas* in North America.

22 Rising to sing the hymns, while remaining seated for other parts of the service is common in many, though not all, Protestant churches, and also in Roman Catholic ritual.

23 Haywood's (2023) study of chanting and ritual practice at another Jōdo Shinshū group in the United Kingdom, the Three Wheels temple in London, described in Chapter 3, notes that chanting there also follows forms taken from Japan – something that appears to have met with a largely positive response from those who Haywood interviewed.

24 We note, though, that the UK based Sōtō Zen group, the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, uses settings of Buddhist chants to plainchant in their liturgy, in a very similar way to Éracle. This was an innovation from their founder, Reverend Jiyu Kennett, and their website comments that: "traditional plainchant [is] a form which expresses the spirit of Zen and is well suited to western trainees". (https://throssel.org.uk/daily-scriptures/ accessed 8th May 2024).

25 One Swiss member commented "*on se laisse bercer par l'ambiance*" – which translated as "one lets oneself be cradled/embraced by the atmosphere".

26 In addition to Reverend Asakura Gyosen, discussed in the introduction, other examples include a Ta2mi, a Jōdo Shinshū priest in Japan who is also a successful hip-hop

musician and whose music features in the film KanZeOn, and VOWZ band (坊主バンド), formed in 2010 by some Honganji-ha Jōdo Shinshū priests. For more on the recent emergence of contemporary ritual music in Japan (see Reehl 2023). Other Japanese bands that have set Jōdo Shinshū chants to contemporary musical settings include Tariki Echo.

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9 Online transformations during the Covid era

Introduction

At the beginning of December 2020, the United Kingdom was under strict lockdown measures in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Funerals could only be attended by a few people, and travelling within the country was technically banned. On October 20th of the same year Jim Pym, a significant figure in the history of British Pure Land Buddhism, with close links to Jōdo Shinshū, had passed away. Pym had been active since the mid-1970s in both Quaker and Jōdo Shinshū circles and provided a link between Inagaki Hisao and Jack Austin (see Chapter 3), who started the first Jōdo Shinshū group in the United Kingdom, and the current generation of Jōdo Shinshū priests.[1] Although originally from the South of England, Pym spent his last years in Scotland, where he played a key role in the Quaker community. The first week of December marked 49 days since Pym's passing, a significant juncture in the memorial cycle across most Buddhist traditions and one shared by all Japanese Buddhist schools (Kodani and Hamada 1995: 50–51). Most of Pym's fellow Buddhists and Christians had not had a chance to attend his funeral given the restrictions. Furthermore, most of his Buddhist friends and acquaintances lived in different locations across both England and Scotland. The possibility of gathering them all in one place was both impractical and, at the time, illegal.

Consequently, it was decided to gather virtually for a memorial, through the video call application Zoom. Two of the authors of this book, Louella Matsunaga and Enrique Galvan-Alvarez were involved in the organisation of this online gathering. Both the ritual programme and the attendees reflected Pym's double affiliation: half of them were Quakers and the other half Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists. Buddhist chanting in Sino-Japanese and Buddhist readings and recitations in English were punctuated by silent periods where participants could speak when they felt moved to, following the Quaker ritual custom. After the ceremony concluded, many attendees stayed on in silence, not sure when it would be appropriate to exit the virtual meeting, or perhaps unwilling to move away from the space where Pym was memorialised. The Quaker participants, much more used to remaining silent, left gradually, one at a time. On the other hand, the Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists stayed until the end, a bit puzzled about how and when the meeting would conclude. In a Japanese Buddhist context, a ritual is normally closed in a solemn and clear-cut

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manner, with all participants leaving the ritual space at once. One of the Buddhist attendees voiced a telling thought: "If we had been able to meet in person, we could have continued chatting about Jim while we walked down the road towards a pub". This comment instantiated the novelty and awkwardness of online interaction, which would become an important part of Jōdo Shinshū ritual life during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

This episode illustrates some of the dynamics and tensions that emerged from the pandemic and the restrictions imposed to control its spread. This chapter combines ethnographic material from the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe, where both Galvan-Alvarez and Matsunaga were active as ordained priests in the reimagination of Shinshū ritual in a virtual context, with online research and interviews conducted on adaptations made to regular services in Japan and the United States. The effects of the pandemic varied in different locations, but themes that run through all these online ritual adaptations include dynamics of cohesion/fragmentation, togetherness/separateness, as well as a reshaping of power relations and protocols, and conversations sparked by the reimagination of ritual as a virtual performance.

Whereas for temple communities in the United States, who were accustomed to in-person weekly services, switching to live-streamed services felt like a definite move towards separateness, the situation in Europe, and in particular in the United Kingdom, was more ambiguous. The British sangha is spread out all over Britain and Northern Ireland, which means that, before the pandemic, it was rare for a significant number of members to gather in one place (Matsunaga 2022: 3–4). Consequently, the introduction of virtual services and meetings provided the opportunity of connecting with other Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists in the country, and also beyond, as Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists from other countries could also join from their homes, time differences allowing. In this way, although the global pandemic and the virtualisation of ritual practice doubtlessly isolated individuals, in some cases, it paradoxically also connected them. For instance, before 2020, a Sunday service at San Francisco Buddhist Church could only be joined if one were in San Francisco that Sunday, but during the pandemic people from all over the world could either join a live stream in real time or watch it afterwards. And the British sangha, who might have only come together once a year or every few years before, started meeting on a weekly basis from the spring of 2020.

The virtualisation of ritual life, with its potential for new forms of connection and disconnection can be said to have redrawn the sense of belonging of Jōdo Shinshū communities and individuals, who were simultaneously confined in their homes and suddenly able to access and participate in the ritual life of other temples and sanghas. In some cases, this contributed to creating transnational communities like *Jinenkō* 自然講, further discussed in the following sections, a Spanish-speaking virtual sangha with members in nine Spanish-speaking countries, which conducts all of its activities through online platforms.[2] But it also led individual members from various parts of the world to become regular attendees at, for instance, the meetings and services of the British sangha. In this way, the pandemic, and the virtual rituals associated with it, can be said to have further

globalised Jōdo Shinshū, strengthening the transnational flows that connected Japan, Europe and the Americas, and speeding up the pace of their exchanges, in so far as video call and live streaming technologies allowed participation, however limited, in ritual performances from other parts of the globe in real time. Furthermore, virtual adaptations brought an unprecedented and intriguing focus on ritual performance, particularly in the European context where the adaptation was most drastic given the absence of temples, which could provide a familiar background to a virtual service.

In order to explore the virtualisation of ritual we draw on reflections on the ritual body and its role in power relations (see, e.g., Bell 1990, 1992: 94–117) already explored in Chapter 4, as well as discussions on the multilayered and variegated textures of online communities and the problematics of its study, when approached from the researchers' computers (Hine 2000). Given the short space of time that has elapsed between the pandemic and the time of writing, analytical materials relating to "virtual ritual" during the pandemic have only very recently started to appear.[3] As has been documented in these early studies, the pandemic created a situation that forced many communities and ritual performances to be virtualised and reimagined. Virtual space emerges here not as an alternative to the "real" world, but as the only possibility of social interaction in the years 2020–2021.

The online research presented here is largely based on the experiences of two of the authors, who were active agents as priests in this process of virtualisation, and who reflect on them as participant observers taking into consideration that "autoethnography is a research method in which the personal experience ('auto') of the researcher is systematically analysed ('graphy') in order to understand the cultural experience ('ethno') under analysis" (Gleig and Artinger 2021: 22). From this standpoint we are also committed to "an emergent strand of online ethnography that focuses on the embodied experience of the online researcher as an important source of insight in its own right [given that] [a]utoethnographers are often full participants in the situations that they recount" (Hine 2017: 9). Further, we draw on the extensive literature written on the senses as a lens to understand human experience (Classen 1993, Howes 2004, 2006, Howes and Classen 2013, Hackett 2016, Cox, Irving and Wright 2016, LeBreton 2017). In this way, the body and the senses, already crucial in Jōdo Shinshū ritual, acquire an added significance in virtual spaces, shaping the methodology and experience of the researchers.

Empty temples, domestic, and global rituals

The beginning of the pandemic in early 2020 brought restrictive measures all over the world, however, measures were different in different countries and, sometimes, even among regions within a single country. Consequently, the virtual adaptations of ritual that developed in various areas of the Jōdo Shinshū world responded as much to local sensitivities as to the legal specificities of each context. It would be impossible, and beyond the scope of this chapter, to provide a comprehensive account of every ritual performance that was made available virtually throughout the various global regions where the Honganji-ha school is present. Nevertheless,

some general trends can be observed in Japan and the United States, which constitute our first focus of study.

Some of the common global trends in terms of restrictive legislation involved encouraging, or demanding, that people stay at their homes avoiding crowded public spaces, places of work and worship. This meant that if a Jōdo Shinshū practitioner wanted to perform a ritual and make it available online, whether in real time or by uploading a recording of it, the ritual would most likely be performed from their home. However, it is worth remembering at this point that many Japanese temple families live at or adjacent to the temples they run, and that these temples would not have been open to parishioners (檀家 *danka*). From the early days of the pandemic, various Japanese temples would upload either recordings or live streams (that were originally shared live and that might have allowed viewer participation in real time through comments) to YouTube.[4] The majority of these performances follow a common etiquette, involving the temple priest leading the ritual from the temple, sometimes on his own and occasionally accompanied by members of his family. It is not uncommon to see the ritual practitioner wearing a face mask, even when they are, seemingly on their own. A camera or a laptop would be placed in the *gejin* (outer seating area) looking towards the *naijin* (inner altar area), imitating the view of somebody who would attend the service while sitting right in the middle of the hall, in front of the *gohonzon* (sacred image), often a standing statue of Amida Buddha. The priest might perform the ritual either from the *naijin* or *gejin* depending on the nature of the service and the solemnity of the occasion.[5]

The wearing of masks here seems to have become a significant part of the ritual. The wearing of face masks in a Japanese context can be seen to be a way of signalling politeness and care for others,[6] as well as, in this context, ritually complying with the ethos of concern and self-containment issued by the pandemic. Although wearing a face mask makes the sound of chanting muffled, it remained an aspect of Buddhist ritual in Japan for some time after the pandemic. It is not uncommon, even at the time of writing, to see priests at the *naijin* in the head temple, Nishi Hongwanji, wearing masks while chanting.[7] However, if a priest is giving a dharma talk, it is also not uncommon for the speaker to walk towards their speaking spot wearing a mask and ceremonially remove it before starting the talk, putting it back on after they conclude. This small ritual gesture, along with the other established ritual gestures that precede and follow a dharma talk (e.g., putting the hands together in *gasshō*, saying the *nenbutsu*, placing the ceremonial fan (*chūkei*) in their robes or putting it down if there is a stand or table in front of them) is another example of an innovation brought by the pandemic.[8]

As regulations became less strict, the head temple started broadcasting important services, particularly *hōonkō,* from the head temple, as early as January 2021. These first ritual performances involved no public but only the celebrants, who were all wearing masks. In later years, since the restrictive measures lasted until April 2023 in Japan, a very limited number of participants would be allowed in the *gejin*, all wearing face masks and sitting at a significant distance from each other. Two of the authors of this book, Matsunaga and Galvan-Alvarez recall watching some of these *hōonkō* services together with another scholar living in

Japan, each of them joining from their homes through a Zoom call in which the shared screen displayed the live stream from Nishi Hongwanji.[9] The paradox of this gathering of three people, is that regardless of their relative proximity to the locale of the ritual performance (i.e., Kyoto) none of them could join it in real life. The virtualisation of the *hōonkō* services did not only allow individuals from all over the world to watch them, but also, as this small online gathering of three instantiates, allowed for people to watch them *together*, even if they could not be physically in the same place. This virtual ritual had therefore an equalising quality, regardless of where the viewer might be in the world, they would access the ritual in the same way.

In many virtual rituals in the United States, however, the home was favoured as the locus for online rituals during the time of the pandemic. This might be due to the fact that not all temple priests in the United States live at the temple or adjacent to it, and that the temple might be thought more as a "place of work". The fact, that in the United States, priests are employed by their temples or churches, rather than inheriting them as in Japan, contributes to shaping this perception. In contrast with the formality of Japanese ritual performances, which are all filmed at a distance from the *gejin*, while the ritual takes place in the *naijin* or *chūgejin*,[10] in the United States, the ritual performers in these cases were closer to the cameras and in a much more informal setting. The chosen spot in the home for performing services would be the home Buddhist altar (*butsudan*) and the closeness of the ritual actor to the camera elicits a sense of proximity and approachability. Furthermore, the use of face masks for virtual performances was significantly less common in the United States, again, closing the distance, visually and aurally between audience and performers. We can therefore speak of a distinctly American sensibility in terms of the virtualisation of ritual during the pandemic.[11]

Nevertheless, some US virtual rituals during the Covid-19 pandemic took place in empty temples, following the Japanese model. Also, at least in the early days of the pandemic, the use of Zoom was favoured over YouTube live stream, creating a more participative atmosphere since many faces could be seen "joining" the services (if the participants had their cameras switched on) as opposed to mere names or anonymous numbers of viewers. It is worth noting that at the services broadcast from Hongwanji through YouTube live streams, comments are always disabled, which decreases the participatory quality of the ritual and anonymises viewers. On the other hand, services performed over Zoom offer the participants the possibility of joining in by dressing for the occasion, being shown to be chanting along (even if they are muted), and displaying their bodily responses to the ritual. A screenshot taken in January of 2021 captures both Galvan-Alvarez and Matsunaga, wearing *fuhō* and *wagesa* along with many other lay and clerical members after having joined a *hōonkō* service hosted by a large American temple. Two of the celebrating priests appear together at the *hondō*, or main temple hall, and the rest of attendees are shown wearing either their priestly robes or the lay *monto shikishō*. This image reproduces in a virtual setting yet another ritual, that, although secular in origin, is pervasive in Buddhist social life in Japanese contexts: the commemorative group picture after an important event.

An interesting example of an American creation of Jōdo Shinshū online ritual involves a performance that was already innovative before its virtualisation. The "LGBTQ+ Pride Service" is performed annually at San Francisco Buddhist Church in the month of June.[12] In 2020, this service was pre-recorded and uploaded onto BCSF's YouTube channel and followed a classic BCA format, including various readings, recitations, talks and announcements. As in the real world, these were assigned to different members of the ministerial team, who pre-recorded them separately in order to have them edited into a single video. This virtual service begins with Rev. Elaine Donlin ringing the *kanshō* (temple bell) at the Buddhist Church of San Francisco. As soon as she finishes the image fades to Donlin again, but now in her home with her Buddhist altar in the background along with many rainbow flags and decorations. She is wearing *fuhō* and *wagesa* in both scenes, but at her home she is wearing a rainbow *wagesa*, especially designed to signal and celebrate the inclusivity of LGBTQ+ people in the Honganji-ha. The service also features Rev. Keisuke Lee-Miyaki, who chants a sutra extract known as the *Sanbutsuge* in English metered translation. Moreover, Lee-Miyaki appears wearing a rainbow *wagesa* and drag make-up and accompanies the chanting of the sutra with theatrical hand and facial gestures, much in the style of a drag performance. His bodily enactment of the sutra, accompanied with gestures that contribute to embody its contents in a playful way, renders the performance warmer and less solemn, potentially making it more accessible to the intended audience. This was the first time that Lee-Miyaki had performed the sutra in this way, but it was not the last. Following a trend across contemporary religious denominations of doing ritual performances in drag, Lee-Miyaki's innovation cannot be entirely separated from the virtual medium. As he pointed out in conversation with Galvan-Alvarez, online chanting only allows for one voice, and it can be a limiting experience, as participants cannot hear each other's voices and could become bored. In response to this limitation, Lee-Miyaki set out to explore the kinetic dimension of chanting, by exploring the meaning of the sutra through bodily gestures. In this way, the audience is engaged not only through hearing but also through visual cues consisting of hand gestures and facial expressions, which are an integral part of drag performances.[13]

All speakers at the "LGBTQ+ Pride Service" recorded their talks from their homes, with most displaying either their home altar or another sacred image in the background. However, two of them appear against a white background where a rainbow-coloured *sagarifuji no mon* 下がり藤の紋 (i.e., Honganji crest consisting of hanging down wisteria) is inscribed. The use of background images, particularly photographs of the main temple hall, would also become popular during the pandemic, being used by some priests in the United States when speaking from their homes, especially for the purpose of dharma talks. This choice adds a further layer of virtuality to the performance, as the speaker, or more rarely the celebrant, appears to be at a place where they are not. Further, the temple space is further removed from the viewers, remaining a still image, a mere backdrop to a priest who is not there either. The quality of these background images, and their interface with the speaker make it obvious that the speaker is not physically at the temple

so they do not fulfil the purpose of simulation, but, perhaps, they could be seen as a way of evoking or longing for a place that cannot be accessed. While concealing the immediate surroundings of the speaker, these background images also arguably remove the place depicted from the viewer, as it becomes a place where neither the speaker nor the listener are present.

Another significant element brought about by the deterritorialisation of ritual in a US context relates to the custom of inviting guest speakers for Sunday services. In normal circumstances, the speaker would travel to the host temple and physically meet the congregation. But in the context of the pandemic, the speaker could be delivering the dharma talk from their home. So, not only could the service be viewed from anywhere in the world, whether in real time or as an uploaded recording, but also a guest speaker could speak to the congregation from another part of the globe. Such a possibility further globalises the flows of ritual that have been the focus of this study, painting a picture of dynamic interconnectivity across the various regions of the Jōdo Shinshū world.

Although differences in camera etiquette and approaches to virtualisation were noticeable between Japan and the United States, similar dynamics of deterritorialisation, togetherness and separateness run through all of them, as they do in the European and South American contexts. It is worth noting that both Japanese and American temples have continued broadcasting and uploading recordings of their ritual life online since the end of the pandemic and the lifting of all exceptional measures, though not with the same frequency and with the added feature of real-life audiences and congregations. This continuity confirms that the online transformations of the pandemic were not simply exceptional measures for exceptional times, but have shaped new ways of doing, watching and approaching ritual and community in a global Jōdo Shinshū context, as the case studies from Europe, to which we now turn, vividly illustrate.

The European and British contexts: cohesion, fragmentation and belonging

As previously discussed in Chapter 4, two of the authors of this book, Matsunaga and Galvan-Alvarez, along with two other members from the United Kingdom, were ordained in the summer of 2019. This was an unprecedented step for the British Jōdo Shinshū community, a relatively small sangha that now involved 5 ordained members and about 20 lay members scattered across England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, as described by Matsunaga elsewhere (Matsunaga 2019: 3–4). Only nine months after our ordination, the United Kingdom, like the rest of the world, was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Although, before 2020, members from the community might only meet once a year or once every two years, the context of the pandemic brought about the introduction of weekly online meetings, which contributed to creating a new sense of cohesion and unity.

For the new British priests, the onset of the pandemic overlapped with the beginning of their ministry, prompting them to address these two new challenges

simultaneously. For instance, Galvan-Alvarez and another of the new priests had scheduled a retreat in April 2020 in order to share the Jōdo Shinshū teachings in a residential setting. However, this event had to be cancelled after restrictive measures were issued by the government in late March. Instead, both priests decided to convey the contents of the planned retreat through fortnightly one hour-long Zoom sessions. These sessions have continued till the time of writing and have developed a more ritual focus since, which reflects many of the virtual adaptations discussed in detail in the following sections. These virtual gatherings have largely survived because of the geographically dispersed nature of the community. Online gatherings have proved the most efficient way to study and discuss doctrine, but also to perform rituals for an audience that transcends a given city or region. Furthermore, to this day, British followers of the Honganji-ha are not formally constituted as a single organisation, and associate freely, both along the lines of affinity and geography, in a rhizomatic and fluid fashion. These porous boundaries became further permeable and transnational with the virtualisation of ritual; in the early months of the pandemic "British" sangha gatherings included participants not only from the United Kingdom but also the United States, Brazil, Sweden, and Germany.

Although the virtualisation of ritual, and by extension community life articulated through ritual, can be said to be further casualised, with participants being able to log in and out from their homes, it also became, paradoxically, more closed, in so far as most meetings were not openly publicised and participants joined through invitation. A physical temple or meeting house allows for people to wander and drop in, whereas a mailing list allows for much more agency in terms of limiting and selecting access. Privacy concerns in the early stages of the pandemic, where almost every public human interaction was transferred to virtual spaces, generated an attitude of concern and mailing lists were a matter of frequent conversation and negotiation. Consequently, the ritual life of the UK sangha became more global while simultaneously acquiring a private dimension. In this case, it was not geography, architecture or membership that defined the boundaries of the group, but the semi-horizontal, consensus-based decisions made about invitations and mailing lists by its participants. The unique boundaries of this volitive community reflect and are enabled by the peculiarity of the virtual context.

Out of that context, another global Jōdo Shinshū sangha emerged, also defined by language and affinity rather than geography or the other established forms of belonging mentioned above. In 2021, Galvan-Alvarez started meeting online with Spanish speakers with an interest in Jōdo Shinshū. These meetings were relatively small in their early stages, but have since led to the formation of a virtual community, Jinenkō, with approximately 50 members in various parts of the world. At the time of writing, Jinenkō includes participants from Spain, Portugal, Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, and Japan. Although the focus of this community has been to make available Jōdo Shinshū texts in Spanish, ritual has also played a key role in articulating the life of the community. For instance, one of the yearly activities of the Jinenkō sangha is to chant the three collections of *wasan* written by Shinran towards the end of his life. The cycle of 330 *wasan*,

chanted in groups of 6 per day, together with the *Shōshinge*, spans 53 days and it is completed several times a year at the head temple and many other Honganji-ha temples across Japan. Jinenkō's virtual mimicking of the ritual usually involves 3–4 months to complete the cycle, depending on the availability of participants across different time zones. The meetings always begin with the ritual performance (i.e., chanting) of the text(s), followed by a brief talk by Galvan-Alvarez about the *wasan* chanted that day and an hour-long discussion. In this way, doctrine (the content of the texts chanted) and ritual are seen to be interconnected and are explored through each other.[14] Some of the technical aspects of performing ritual online in the context of Jinenkō are rooted in Galvan-Alvarez's involvement in the early adaptations of Shinshū ritual in the United Kingdom, which are further discussed in the following sections.

Another way in which the pandemic altered the ritual life of European Jōdo Shinshū was through the renewed significance of funerals and memorials. One major aspect of the training of priests is the correct performance of funerary rites. Although this is more associated with the role of priests in the context of Japan and the Japanese diaspora in the Americas, rather than in regions like Europe, where most ordained and lay members are non-Japanese converts, the pandemic also triggered a surge of interest and activity connected with funerary and memorial rites in the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe. Despite the absence of a significant ethnic Japanese community in the continent, several people who lost loved ones during the pandemic turned to the new priests for funerary rites. During the first year of the pandemic Galvan-Alvarez alone performed a dozen funerals and memorials, the vast majority of them online. This represented an innovation, not only because of the online context, but because funerary rites had never been a big part of the life of the British sangha. Furthermore, many of the people who requested these rites were not members of the community and in some cases, did not identify as Buddhist at all, but felt comfortable or had enough affinity with Buddhism to have a Buddhist funeral or memorial for a loved one. Although Galvan-Alvarez always followed the Honganji-ha funerary format, he introduced and framed the ritual differently depending on the audience.

The growing secularisation of the United Kingdom as one of the least religious societies in the world (Woodhead 2016: 245), and a lingering positive bias towards Buddhism as a religion that is fundamentally different from the other major confessions present in the country, largely due to its non-theism and ambivalent attitude towards the supernatural, contributed to this demand for Buddhist funerary rites. The adaptation of funerary rites to an online setting produced further unique dynamics in terms of closeness and distance, both physical and sensorial and emotional, which are explored in more detail in the following sections.[15]

The pandemic as challenge: adaptations and controversies

On April 8th 2020, only two weeks after lockdown measures were implemented in the United Kingdom, Matsunaga, Galvan-Alvarez, and another of the newly ordained priests gathered online in order to celebrate *hana matsuri*, the "flower

festival" that marks the birth of Śākyamuni Buddha.[16] To honour the occasion, the three priests decided to chant the *Shōshinge* to the *gyōfu* melody and *wasan*, and joined the meeting already wearing their robes (*fuhō* and *wagesa*) and placing themselves in such a way that their home altars could be seen in the background. In this first instance, they tried to chant the texts in unison, with their microphones unmuted, trying to replicate how it would be done in real life. However, they opted for facing the screen (and each other) rather than the Buddha image in their respective locations, as it would have been normally done in a non-virtual setting. The acoustic results were disastrous, because Zoom does not allow for more than one voice to be captured at a time, and when three people try to chant in unison innumerable delays, echoes and reverbs are produced. This generated a cacophony of voices that did not resemble at all the soundscape generated by chanting together in unison face to face. Although the meeting was welcomed by the three isolated participants, and they appreciated the possibility of chanting together, the sound quality was extremely poor, which led them to start rethinking how rituals might be done online.

The voice and virtual soundscapes

This initial disappointing experience led to multiple conversations about how to perform rituals in the new virtual setting, especially since many members expressed their desire to meet frequently at a time when social interaction outside their homes was forbidden. The first consideration was the aural experience; it had become apparent that it was impossible to chant as a group with open microphones. Therefore, only one person could unmute their microphone to chant, although the rest of the participants might join while their microphones were muted. That person played the role of chanting leader or *chōshōnin* (調声人, literally, "the person who sets the tone with their voice"), hoping or imagining that the rest of the participants would be joining in the chant from their home though their voices could not be heard. This situation generated a radically different ritual soundscape, where only one voice is heard and where each member of the congregation can only harmonise with the leader and not with the rest of the group. Further, some of the ornate vocal phrases of *shōmyō* such as melodic slides, or the sound of the bell or *kin* that is struck at the beginning and ending of each section of the ritual are not captured accurately by the sound technology of applications like Zoom, generating distortions, cuts or silences. So the virtualisation of Buddhist chanting does not only affect aesthetic quality of the vocal music but also produces a radically different aural experience.

Although the participants, isolated in their homes and scattered across the country (or the world), could feel a sense of connection and cohesion by joining their voices with those of other attendees, this cohesion could not be physically materialised, that is, it could not be actually heard. In turn, this brought about a tension or dissonance between connection and disconnection, the collective and the individual, which had no precedent in preexisting ritual practice. The combination of the pandemic's restrictions and the new communication technologies

widely used throughout its duration, shaped a peculiar space where the community is simultaneously connected, in terms of time and (virtual) space, and disconnected, with each member isolated in a limited and confined (physical) space. The collective becomes somewhat abstract and imaginary, once it is virtualised and the materiality of its interactions is cancelled. A case in point is the tangible expression of unison chanting, which can be said to be the ritual, concrete manifestation of the group's unity.

For a form of Buddhism that relies so heavily on vocal practice often performed as a group, these absences and fragmentations severely alter the experience of ritual performance, which led to a number of conversations and controversies around the convenience or legitimacy of virtual ritual. At least one of the European priests, who ran a local group in his hometown, expressed his opposition to adapting ritual to an online context, after having tried to actively adjust and participate in it. From his point of view, the virtual ritual did not manage to fulfil its purpose, and the online context did not allow celebrants or participants to express the decorum and solemnity that the correct performance of the ritual requires. This was partly because of the distortions introduced by the shift from physical space to virtual space. This meant that the ritual was experienced entirely through a small screen, and this in turn had implications for perceptions of, for example, the positioning of the ritual performers and sacred objects. Another important factor was that the sound quality was imperfect and the voices of the participants could not be heard. In this priest's opinion, this compromised the ritual's validity and authenticity, because it did not produce the desired or expected effects: it did not elicit feelings of reverence and gratitude. This opposition, though largely based on the religious sensibility of this particular priest, contains an important aesthetic dimension, which further confounds the boundaries between ritual and doctrine, form and content and ethics and aesthetics. At a later point, this priest invested in the installation of an audio-visual system, which enabled a higher quality of sound and visual imaging for online services, overcoming many of the shortcomings of the early online rituals that he had objected to. Acknowledging the advantages of online gatherings, since the end of the pandemic, he has continued to hold both rituals and study sessions online for those not able to attend in person.

In contrast, another priest from the United Kingdom expressed her positive views about online ritual, even with the technological problems initially experienced. In her case, as one of the many members who did not have other fellow Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists in her city or region at the time, virtual ritual provided a sense of community and an opportunity to practise chanting. Although she acknowledged the obvious limitations of the virtual medium and their inherent fragmentation, she also recognised that having ritual as part of the meetings inspired her and helped her feel connected to the rest of the sangha. In her view, the positive, cohesive aspects of this adaptation outweighed the negative aspects of fragmentation. The possibility of performing ritual as a group helped her feel part of the community. Moreover, these online rituals help to create a narrative that articulates the community, even if it does so in a remote, deterritorialised and virtual fashion. The comments of this priest, who favoured online ritual as a way of crafting a narrative

to create community echo Hine's words about the unique social formations of the online world:

> The technology of CMC [computer mediated communication] appears to lead to a widely varying array of different kinds of social organization, and community is only one metaphor for understanding online social formations. Recently authors have suggested narrative as an alternative framework for understanding online social phenomena, with virtual community just one of many different kinds of narrative.
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> (2000: 20)

Although the opposing narratives discussed above about the authenticity and validity of online ritual reflect, at the surface level, differing personal sensibilities and circumstances, they can also be seen as reflecting a deeper tension between different ways of understanding ritual practice and practice as a whole in the Honganji-ha tradition. For the priest opposed to ritual adaptation the performance ought to be something special, solemn and that is better not done if it is not done correctly. On the other hand, for the priest who favours the virtual context, assiduous and daily practice, however imperfect, retains value and ritual is better done imperfectly than not done at all.

Funerary rites and technology: new private and public spaces

Another significant context where ideas of decorum and etiquette had to be adapted and re-imagined was funerary rites, both funerals and memorials. In the limited pre-pandemic experience Galvan-Alvarez had in terms of performing funerary rites, both in Japan and the United Kingdom, he could observe the interaction between celebrant and audience in this ritual practice. In the United Kingdom, where there are no Jōdo Shinshū temples, the funeral or memorial would normally take place in a common room in a flat or house, where a Buddhist altar had been set up.[17] The celebrant would typically sit on the floor in *seiza*,[18] or occasionally use a chair, facing the altar and turning his back to the bereaved. It was uncommon for the participants to join in the chanting, especially in Japan, where the audience prefers to listen to the priest's performance and focus their thoughts on the deceased. The situation was not dissimilar in the United Kingdom, especially when the bereaved were not followers of Jōdo Shinshū and were unfamiliar with its ritual practices. While the celebrant chanted, he could hear the attendees sobbing and crying, but he would never make eye contact or interact with them as he was focused on performing the ritual. Although this might convey a sense of coldness and lack of empathy on the part of the celebrant, Galvan-Alvarez also discovered that by facing the altar and never turning towards the bereaved, the latter could inhabit an intimate, private space. This space allows the attendees to explore and express their feelings of sadness and loss without being under the priest's gaze, who, after all, is an authority figure and not necessarily someone close to the deceased, and therefore, someone who might not share in the same feelings of bereavement. The visual and aural

space informed by this custom isolates the priest from the attendees, who can cry without feeling watched and simply listen to the chanting without having to worry about having to join in.

Reproducing this serene and intimate feeling in a platform like Zoom was a challenge, since the proximity to the celebrant and the altar memorialising the deceased combined with the privacy created by the chanting and the absence of eye contact cannot be quite emulated through a screen. Galvan-Alvarez opted for turning his back to the camera and letting the altar take centre stage, while his head and shoulders appeared towards the side of the frame.[19] Participants sometimes switched off their cameras and microphones, but could not share the physical and aural space in the same way. As eye contact does not happen in the same way through video call technologies, its absence does not have the same effect. Although Galvan-Alvarez was able to observe that some of the participants were crying while watching the ritual online, the sound of their crying could not be heard and the very fact that he could see their faces on screen disrupted the private and intimate space that the sitting arrangement aims to create in a domestic funerary ritual. There have been no major controversies regarding the practice of doing funerals and memorials online, but the challenges of the medium are apparent. As the vast majority of funerary rites have been celebrated by a single priest and not by a group of priests, there has been little need to discuss this and cooperatively come up with a format. But despite its shortcomings, the bereaved were very touched by the fact they could honour their deceased loved ones, however remotely, at a time when face to face meetings were severely limited or altogether forbidden.

Uniquely virtual rituals

In contrast to the issues and controversies analysed above, an example of a less choreographed ritual practice that fits very well with the digital medium, and which has been received with both gratitude and enthusiasm by many participants is what Donlin, from the Buddhist Church of San Francisco, has dubbed "beehive *nenbutsu*". Every Jōdo Shinshū service begins and concludes with all celebrants and participants putting their hands together in *gasshō* and briefly saying the *nenbutsu* for a few seconds, each at their own pace, pitch and volume, trying to avoid unison chanting. This ritual generates cacophony and dissonance, creating a rich and chaotic soundscape that precedes and follows the solemn and harmonious chanting of the sutra, which is always done in unison, and it is significantly longer than these brief moments of "spontaneous *nenbutsu*". The sound of multiple voices chanting at once in disparate ways resembles that of a beehive, and because of its deliberate cacophonous and dissonant nature, it is not affected in the same way when performed through a platform like Zoom. Most videocall technologies do not allow for more than one voice to be heard at the same time, which makes unison chanting virtually impossible. However, although the synchronic quality of this "beehive *nenbutsu*" cannot be captured online, the chaotic and dissonant quality is retained, as the software catches, diachronically and in turns, the voices of the different

participants. The echoes, delays and reverberations brought about by unmuting all microphones at once mimic the aural experience of the "beehive", while allowing everyone to hear everyone else's voice in isolation for a few seconds. Although a few voices might be heard at once, the software tends to focus on one voice at a time, generating a soundscape that rotates, jumping from one voice to another and yielding a rich and chaotic aural experience, much like the pre-virtual, face to face, form of the ritual.

Furthermore, when this initial or final *nenbutsu*, characterised by its spontaneity, is performed in the real world, it is hard to hear clearly the voice of each person, especially in a large temple setting with lots of participants. In contrast, through a video call, the pace, timbre and tone of each individual voice can be appreciated clearly, as the software focuses on a different voice every few seconds. Even if we could argue that this online version does not manage to capture the collective dimension of hearing multiple voices chanting synchronically in a cacophonous way, it was readily accepted by the community, which largely considers it acceptable and close enough to the original. Unlike the rhythmic, unison and structured chanting of the sutras, which is badly affected in a virtual context, the "beehive *nenbutsu*" is aided by the peculiarities of video call applications, which allow it to retain its spontaneous and chaotic quality.

Sight and the problem of where to look

The adaptation of ritual to a virtual setting is not only affected in terms of its aural experience, even if this was the aspect most often discussed. Sight is also important, since part of the service involves looking at the Buddha image or the relevant *gohonzon*, or at least being aware of them and keeping them in the field of vision of the practitioner. The spatial fragmentation that is inherent in virtual ritual offers two main options in order to meet this ritual requirement: a) the participants may look at their screens if the chanting leader has directed their camera towards a Buddha image or b) each individual focuses on their home altar, taking their eyes away from the screen and looking elsewhere in the room where they are joining the meeting. After having participated in several discussions on this matter there appeared to be no consensus on how to resolve this issue, which has also generated a certain degree of debate and confusion.

For instance, some lay members with less experience or newcomers who came to the meetings on a more casual basis might not have a Buddha image in their homes and, therefore, tended to focus more on the screen. By doing this the ritual was fully virtualised but some reported that the Buddha image could not be perceived clearly, which contributed to the awkwardness of the experience. This, in turn, generated some debates about whether the celebrant should be seen on camera, since they would necessarily have to turn their back to the audience in order to face the altar. By being in the frame, the body of the celebrant might at times stand in the way of the Buddha, preventing the participants from focusing on the sacred object. The same European priest who expressed their reservations about the overall validity of online ritual also said that the shoulders or the head of the celebrant

should not be seen, since they distract the viewers from the Buddha image, which is already hard to see, often a mere golden dot in the distance. This situation, in this priest's view, prevented the participants from appreciating the Buddha image, which was regarded as an essential part of the ritual. The suggested solution was to use high-resolution cameras and focus them on the altar area.

As a counterbalance to this view, when ritual performances are live-streamed from the head temple in Kyoto, the celebrant turns their back to the camera, and their shoulders and head can be clearly seen, though they do not block the Buddha image. Also, in a traditional Jōdo Shinshū temple the face of Amida Buddha, who is always depicted standing, is never seen clearly by anyone in attendance, because a small embroidery ornament called *keman* is expressly hung to block the view, as explained in Chapter 5. This is a common feature in Japanese sacred spaces, where the central object is often partially or completely hidden from view. This aspect of Japanese ritual and religious culture often surprises and slightly confuses foreigners, especially westerners accustomed to being able to see the main sacred object in, for example, Christian churches. However, in most Japanese Jōdo Shinshū contexts all that is seen is parts of the golden body of the Buddha, but very rarely the face or the totality of the image. In the context of the conversation about the visual experience of online ritual, the European priest mentioned above further remarked that the aesthetic experience at a traditional Shinshū temple is much more edifying than that of seeing a humble domestic altar, situated in a living room or bedroom, through a low-resolution laptop camera. It is worth restating that when services are broadcast from the head temple they use state of the art cameras and the angle shifts throughout the performance, generating a visual experience which would be impossible to reproduce through a video call and which also drastically departs from the experience of a person sitting in a physical temple, who can only see from one angle.

Another difficulty concerning the visual aspects of the rituals was access to the texts that were being chanted, as well as the ritual gestures associated with the opening and closing of the service book, already described in Chapter 4. The sutra book, or service book, does not serve a purely practical function; in other words, it is not just for reading. Priests are expected to know by heart the most commonly chanted liturgical texts and an important part of their training involves being tested on their, memorised, performance of the texts. Nevertheless, books are almost always present in the ritual performance, although the celebrants might not be actually reading, but simply resting their eyes on the Buddha image. The book is yet another object of reverence, which the celebrant and the participants pay homage to before and after the ritual, as they open and close it. But, of course, since the book is always present, if someone, whether priest or lay, is unsure about how the text goes they can always read from it.

It is common at most temples and gathering places to have a number of service books available for the attendees, both for people who might attend for the first time but also for regular members, who in this way, do not have to carry their own books. This cannot be translated to a virtual context and, since not all online participants had service books at home or were familiar with the texts, some

creative solutions had to be engineered. One solution was to make the text available electronically ahead of the virtual gathering, so that participants could either print it out or read it from their screens. Another was to share a PowerPoint with the transliteration of a sutra in Latin script. However, if the text is long and does not fit in one slide, the celebrant would need to ask one of the participants to turn the slide. Otherwise, the celebrant would need to turn around and operate their computer, which would distract them from the performance. Some chanting leaders also opted to read from the PowerPoint, which prevented them from facing the altar or, if they were facing the altar, this could not be seen by the participants. Furthermore, with the use of PowerPoint, the view of the Buddha image is again partially compromised.

At Jinenkō's early gatherings, through 2021 and 2022, Galvan-Alvarez typically asked a regular attendee to be the host and manage the PowerPoint while he performed the ritual as it would have been done in the real world, facing the altar and handling the service book. Since then, however, Jinenkō's members have put together a service book that can be accessed electronically; some have printed it so they can raise it to their foreheads before opening it in the prescribed ritual movement,[20] but others just read from their screens. As these conversations, debates and considerations illustrate, sight is probably one of the hardest senses to integrate in a virtual ritual format. It is also as important to ritual practitioners as the vocal and aural aspects, as the controversies reported in this section instantiate. However, whereas sight and hearing can be somehow incorporated into a virtual medium, the rest of the senses, to which our attention now turns, present even a bigger challenge.

Attire and the absent senses

There are two more senses that play an important role in Shinshū ritual, although they often appear less obvious: smell and touch. Taste does not really feature in any ritual performance, though the mouth is engaged in recitation. Smell is primarily represented through the offering of incense, that in a temple or any other physical sacred space, can be smelled by those present, even if not everybody performs the ritual of offering it. Those participants who performed the whole ritual from home, in front of their home altars, also reported that they burned incense and, even if the smell experienced by each of them might have been different, insofar as they used various kinds of incense, they can be said to have engaged in the olfactive dimension of the ritual. However, not all participants had a home altar, and there was no way of knowing if people were burning incense when their cameras were switched off. Some conversations in 2023 revolved around whether it would be appropriate to encourage everyone to offer incense in their homes while the chanting leader started the ritual performance, so nobody missed this aspect of the service.

Regarding touch, it is worth remembering that the unspoken, though by no means compulsory or enforced, etiquette of taking part in a ritual service involves carrying *nenju*, or mindfulness beads, which fulfil the purpose of engaging the sense of touch and also expressing reverence. Another form of expressing this

sense of devotion or reverence is to wear certain forms of Buddhist attire, such as *monto shikishō* 門徒式章(shorter *wagesa*-like stoles that mimic the *wagesa* worn by clergy – see Chapter 5) for lay people and robes (generally *fuhō-wagesa* unless the occasion is particularly solemn) for priests. As discussed already in Chapter 4 these clothes heighten bodily awareness and unavoidably condition the way one moves and holds themselves. For instance, both the *shikishō* and the *wagesa* may move out of their supposed place (on the collar of a shirt or a robe) if the person slouches or moves carelessly. In this way, these forms of attire engage the tactile and kinaesthetic aspects of the ritual, by simultaneously bringing awareness of the body and encouraging certain postures and movements which are integral to ritual practice.

Attire, however, is not just a device to enhance certain forms of mindful attention, but also a marker of status, as previously discussed. From this standpoint, it is worth considering the ways in which these dynamics were played out in a virtual setting. Although attire never became a central topic of discussion, various trends emerged during the years of intense virtual social interaction. In the first few months of the pandemic all ordained priests tended to wear their informal robes for the services and keep them on afterwards for the discussion which followed. Nonetheless, as the pandemic went on the unspoken etiquette that developed was that only the person leading the service, the only audible chanting voice, would don their robes, whereas most of the priests would tend to wear their ordinary clothes, simply carrying *nenju* in their left hand, though there were exceptions to this rule. Those lay people who had them, would often wear *shikishō* during the ritual but then remove it for the study and discussion session following the service. In face-to-face contexts, priests may remove or change robes at certain points, for example, during discussions following the service. In fact, there are always short breaks after services to allow the ordained members to change clothes and fold away their robes. In the online setting, priests normally remained robed until the end of the virtual meeting, because having to go away to change would disrupt the flow of the gathering, or did not wear any robes throughout. Since priests are not supposed to wear *shikishō* which represents the lay status they have left behind, sometimes a curious virtual image would emerge: lay people wearing their *shikishō* were more visibly, ritually performing their Buddhist identity than non-officiating priests. This would not happen in the real world, where priests would be invited to wear their robes and to sit closer to the altar area on most occasions. In this way, the online medium also affected symbolic status through the unique social formations that emerge from the virtual world. This relates to the issue of how power and authority are modified through online ritual, to which we now turn.

Power, ritual, and virtuality

On a screen with multiple images that appear in a different order to each participant, there is no difference in proximity or distance to an altar. Except in the background of some of the participants' images, there is no altar. The online ritual scape does not allow for the spatial hierarchies of a physical temple. There is no *naijin* or

gejin in a Zoom room, no centre or periphery, no relative distance to the locus of the sacred and, therefore, no boundaries that can be crossed and no controversies about who can enter what space. The virtual scape generates a sense of visual horizontality in so far as the participants appear in their vignette-like screens without a fixed or predetermined order, as if they were sat in a circle. In terms of chanting, on the one hand, the fact that only a single voice, that of the chanting leader, is audible during the service, can be said to reinforce the authority and centrality of that person. But on the other hand, the role of chanting leader has rotated among most of the ordained participants, and it has also occasionally been taken by lay people, which would be rarer, if not entirely impossible in a physical temple. In this way, the virtual medium seems to have encouraged lay participation and more fluid and rotating structures when it comes to performing rituals, although it is worth mentioning that none of these elements were entirely absent from the ritual life of Shinshū temples and communities before the pandemic.

Moreover, the virtual context has triggered a parallel process of democratisation in the crafting, imagining and performance of rituals. Whereas in the real world, priests are regarded as ritual experts, because of their training in Japan and their status, granted by the authorities of the school in Kyoto, in the virtual world both lay and priests together had to face the challenge of having to creatively adapt ritual to a virtual medium. In this process lay voices took a more active role and were heard more than they normally would have in a real-world setting. Ritual, which is often perceived to be invested with a conservative ethos, its repeated gestures carrying down a sense of gravitas handed down through time, had to inhabit a completely unfamiliar and uncharted territory. In the case described here, at least, the birth of virtual ritual was not accomplished from the top down, but instead developed in more organic, rhizomatic ways, through trial and error and as a conversation among priests, but also lay members. Although most of the voices reported in this chapter were from ordained priests, their opinions and views are often informed by comments they receive from lay followers. Overall, the rich tapestry of virtual ritual, with its contestations, controversies and fragmentary connections are the result of many conversations that cross the divide between priest and lay, a hierarchical divide that is already relativised in a Jōdo Shinshū context.

Conclusions

Virtual ritual constitutes the latest ritual innovation in the Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha. Largely animated by the unexpected occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the adaption of Shinshū ritual to an online setting brings together some of the salient threads of this book, such as the sensorial dimension of ritual, the power dynamics enacted through its performance and the global character of its routes and trajectories of transformation. Furthermore, the forced virtualisation of social life, and, by extension, of ritual life during the period 2020–2022/2023 brought a new reflective focus on ritual, its importance, meaning and texture among ritual practitioners themselves. Under the new circumstances, even an established ritual, such as chanting the *Shōshinge* and *wasan*, became innovative, insofar as it had to be

adapted to a new setting, which in turn involved a new sensorial experience. In a way, this stripped ritual of its mechanical, repetitive quality, heightening an awareness which led to many fruitful discussions and reflections.

In a virtual medium, the importance of the senses was highlighted, partly because some of them (e.g., smell, touch) could not be integrated in an online ritual, and partly because the ones which could be engaged (e.g., sight and hearing) had to be recast in a context where their role was reimagined and, in a sense, reinvented. Beyond eliciting a sense of longing for face-to-face ritual performances, this creative process of adaptation made its agents consider the purpose of ritual, generating a spectrum of opinions and attitudes, ranging from outright opposition to appreciating online ritual as a welcome opportunity.

In the same vein, the power relations inscribed in ritual performances were either reimagined, turned upside down or dissolved, depending on their specific virtual context. Spatial hierarchies that signal power, such as the *naijin/gejin* divide, were completely absent in online settings and so a new set of relations, and a new sense of community, was forged through their absence or reimagined recasting to the virtual world. Again, as in the case of the senses, the forced virtualisation of ritual life, generated discussions about power, hierarchy and community, opening the possibility of reflecting, critiquing and rearranging said relations. In this respect, the virtual setting contains a number of paradoxes, simultaneously bringing people together across time and geography, but also isolating them in front of their screens. Analogously, although some power relations are dismantled by the new medium (e.g., spatial hierarchies), new ones emerge (e.g., the single voice of the chanting leader vis-a-vis a muted congregation).

Similar paradoxes pervade the globalising aspect of virtual ritual, as a medium which enables people from all over the world to connect, mimic and borrow from each other, while at the same time remaining removed, cut off, absent, "muted" or "switched off" in front of the camera. The texture of this new and distinctive sense of community, with a strong transnational flavour and consensus-based modus operandi might inform the future developments of ritual, community and power in Jōdo Shinshū contexts. In the same way that some of the online adaptations forcefully ushered by the pandemic have survived this period, it is not impossible to imagine that some of the exceptional experiences of the recent past will continue to inform the changing ritual life of Jōdo Shinshū, in general, and the Honganji-ha in particular. The inherent tensions of cohesion and disunion, centralisation and decentralisation observed in online rituals echo broader transformations of Jōdo Shinshū ritual in the context of globalisation in the last 150 years, as we discuss further in the conclusion.

Notes

1 His book introducing Pure Land Buddhism, "You Don't Have to Sit on the Floor" was significant as an early non-academic work by a non-Japanese speaker in the United Kingdom (Pym 2001), and, although he identified with Pure Land Buddhism in general, rather than espousing an exclusive affiliation with Jōdo Shinshū, he was regarded by two of the older Jōdo Shinshū priests currently active in the United Kingdom as their teacher.

2 Jinenkō's website: https://jodoshinshu.org.

3 An example of recently published research on British ritual innovation in the time of Covid is Stuerzenhofecker et al. (2021), which also includes a case study of a British Jōdo Shinshū temple during the pandemic (Kolata 2021). The temple concerned is not identified in the case study, but it does not belong to Honganji-ha Jōdo Shinshū. Other examples include Kapoor et al. (2022) on Indian religious rituals during Covid; Chen et al. (2022) writing on China, and Cornejo-Valle and Martin-Andino (2023) on ritual adaptations to Covid in Spain.
4 To watch a few of these performances from 2020, see "Shōshinge Gyōfu", "Shōshinge Otsutome", and "Techno Hōyō" in Website References.
5 See Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of the layout of temples, including the *naijin* and *gejin*.
6 Face masks have long been worn in Japan, for example, when suffering from a cold, to avoid infecting others – this pre-dates the pandemic but became ubiquitous during that time.
7 This recording from the *kyōsan hōyō* (慶讃法要), a memorial service which roughly coincided with the lifting of the last restrictive measures in Spring 2023, shows the *monshu* and all celebrants chanting wearing face masks: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVbMzVMn8O4.
8 An example of this ritual performance involving the removing of the mask before commencing the Dharma talk can be observed in this short video also from the *kyōsan hōyo* (see Kyōsan Hōyo Dharma Talk): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwSEchLPVOY.
9 At the time of writing Nishi Hongwanji live streams its services on a regular basis through its YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/@user-ds1jl2ej4t.
10 An intermediate zone between the main part of the *gejin* and the *naijin*. For details, see Chapter 5.
11 For a few examples see "Shōtsuki Hōyō, Tri-State Denver Buddhist Temple", "Sunday Service, Sacramento Buddhist Church", and "Online Shōshinge Service, Buddhist Church of San Francisco" in Website References.
12 The whole service can be watched via YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28WEzJKKatg&t=3s.
13 Lee-Miyaki has discussed his experience publicly along with other religious practitioners who have performed ritual services in drag: https://religionnews.com/2024/06/20/drag-worship-where-queer-faith-and-performance-collide/.
14 The division of doctrine and ritual is indeed a contingent and largely artificial one, as already argued in Chapters 6 and 7. For a more detailed exploration of this issue and its ethnocentric implications see Beck (2006); and for another East Asian example of the porosity of the doctrine/ritual divide see Zito (1993).
15 The data analysed in the remainder of this chapter was gathered in virtual contexts in which Matsunaga and Galvan-Alvarez were either ritual performers or active agents in the adaptation of the rituals. Their double role as clergy and researchers was known by the members of the congregations or by those people who requested their services, and who acted as informants for this research. Their complex positionality allows these two authors to look at virtual ritual both from the outside, as researchers, and the inside, as ritual performers and innovators, yielding a uniquely layered perspective. Nevertheless, the fact that both Galvan-Alvarez and Matsunaga are perceived to be authority figures within the communities they study and that they often wear robes in this context, and are addressed as "reverend" or "*sensei*" (先生) also limits their perspective and ability to gather information, since some lay members may engage in self-censorship, sharing only those impressions they deem to be appropriate or correct.
16 See introduction for more on the history of the *hana matsuri*.
17 In Japan, it is also common for memorials to take place in the home, in front of the Buddhist altar, however funerals might take place in a variety of locations, including temples or a hired funerary venue where the priests attend.

18 See Chapter 4.
19 If the celebrant turns their back to the camera there are additional problems, such as not being able to notice if the connection drops or if there are new attendees trying to access the virtual room. As explained in more detail below, a solution found was to make one of the attendees the virtual host so that the celebrant can focus entirely on the ritual performance and allow it to flow without interruptions.
20 This ritual gesture, *itadaku*, is an expression of reverence to the text and has already been described in Chapter 4.

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Shōshinge Otsutome 2020: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHEPTTd6y50
Shotsuki Hōyo, Tri-State Denver Buddhist Temple 2020: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sb0qwMSzRv0&t=849s
Sunday Service, Sacramento Buddhist Church, 2020: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnlokNjWZfM
Techno Hōyō 2020: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zx7IL0DG0PU&t=775s

10 Conclusion

Globalisation and ritual

We began this book by arguing that ritual is a valuable lens through which to analyse the globalisation of religion. In this concluding chapter, we first review the ways in which an examination of ritual transformations in Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha casts light on the processes of globalisation, and then reverse our perspective to ask: in what ways can a study of global change and transformations illuminate our understanding of ritual?

Ritual as a lens to explore globalisation

As Jōdo Shinshū has spread beyond Japan, the rituals associated with it have been adapted to a range of local contexts. For Honganji-ha, in the overseas areas examined in this book, Hawai'i and the United States, South America and Europe, ritual adaptations have shown some sharp contrasts. In Hawai'i and the United States the emergence of new ritual forms has been influenced by a combination of a religious landscape dominated by Protestant Christianity and severe discrimination against the ethnic Japanese Americans who initially formed the core of Jōdo Shinshū in these areas. This discrimination created strong pressure to adapt, and to be seen to fit in with the surrounding society. This in turn favoured the development of forms of service which share much in terms of structure with Protestant Christian services – and feature congregational singing of *gathas* set to Western style music which resemble Christian hymns (but often contain references to wider Buddhist tradition beyond Jōdo Shinshū). In contrast, services in Europe and South America are more likely to draw on a Japanese pattern of sutra chanting, and do not tend to feature the hymn-like *gathas* of North American service books.

Although Jōdo Shinshū in South America, as in North America, developed from a Japanese ethnic base, the religious context at the time of the first Japanese migrants was dominated by Roman Catholicism in institutional terms, and a tendency to hybrid religious practices. This led to quite a different pattern of adaptation in comparison to North America, with many Japanese migrants in South America converting to Roman Catholicism. Hybrid forms of ritual have also been observed, for example, with reference to early funerary practices, as noted in Chapter 3.

In Europe, Jōdo Shinshū groups first formed after World War II. In the absence of significant long term Japanese migration, there are few ethnic Japanese followers,

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especially in Honganji-ha groups. Many followers have come to Jōdo Shinshū from a background of interest in other forms of Buddhism, and an important concern historically has been to situate Jōdo Shinshū in relation to broader Buddhist associations, and to affirm Jōdo Shinshū's Buddhist identity. Linked with this, there has been a concern among some to distance Jōdo Shinshū from perceived similarities with Christianity. This has probably contributed to the preference in Europe for retaining sutra chanting and avoiding *gathas* which may seem similar to Christian hymns.

Adaptations of Jōdo Shinshū ritual in different contexts have thus shown distinctly local inflections, reinforcing arguments that the term "glocalisation" may be more apt than globalisation, as a way of capturing this local dimension (see, e.g., Matsue 2014). However, there are also broader currents which have had implications for ritual practice across different localities. One of these is the widespread association outside Asia of Buddhism with silent seated meditation, as discussed in Chapter 6. This has presented challenges in the Jōdo Shinshū context outside Japan, and has sparked internal debates over how meditation is best understood, and whether/in what way it might be incorporated within Jōdo Shinshū temples. These debates have been particularly visible in the Americas, where Jōdo Shinshū communities are much larger than in Europe. But in Europe too, some priests have noted that the absence of opportunities for silent seated meditation in Jōdo Shinshū groups may be a deterrent for some. One Shin Buddhist priest in Germany explained:

> People in Europe expect that Buddhism equals meditation and vegetarianism. People may come to the *dōjō* once, ask about meditation, and when you say you don't meditate they say, "Can you offer meditation classes?" Then I say, "I could, but what's the point?" Then often they don't come back!

Although this example is taken from Europe, this is a common issue in Jōdo Shinshū outside Japan, and relates to the difficulties that Jōdo Shinshū has faced in gaining acceptance beyond the Japanese diaspora. At the heart of this are questions about the authenticity of Jōdo Shinshū as a form of Buddhism, given that it does not correspond to, as Amstutz (2014: 143) puts it, "stereotypical (Orientalist, White) Western expectations of Buddhism". And this in turn is linked to the globalised discourse of Buddhism as a world religion that emerged from the late nineteenth century onwards (and was heavily influenced by Western understandings of Buddhism), as discussed in Chapter 2. Relating to this is a concern observable throughout Jōdo Shinshū's overseas groups to relate Jōdo Shinshū to broader teachings on Buddhism. In ritual terms this manifests in a range of ways in addition to the issue of meditation: for example, in the incorporation of references to Śākyamuni Buddha in North American *gathas*, or the use of Pali refuges in some European Jōdo Shinshū groups.

Another linked question that is frequently raised outside Japan is "what is your practice?", with the assumption that all forms of Buddhism must be rooted in a practice. This is a complex question within Jōdo Shinshū, and has been the subject of much controversy since the *sangōwakuran* debate described in Chapter 2. This in turn relates to the *nenbutsu*, and saying the name, discussed in Chapter 7. With

the intensive *nenbutsu* practices discussed here, we see localised ritual practices, but in this case articulated in a rhetoric of lamentation for a "tradition", represented as having once been practised at the centre of Jōdo Shinshū, in Japan, but now lost, and revived in the periphery.

This highlights two points that are worth exploring further. Firstly, the process of globalisation has temporal as well as spatial dimensions. Considering the temporal dimension, we frequently observe the expression of change in terms of modernisation, or adapting to the times. This is very visible in Japan from the Meiji period onwards, as ritual innovations (for instance in the introduction of Western-style Buddhist music in some contexts discussed in Chapter 8) have been explained in terms such as *jidai ni sōō* (appropriate to the times). But as we can see with the continuous *nenbutsu* practices in the Americas, the reverse may also take place, with changes represented in terms of reviving a lost past.

Secondly, this is a reminder of the complexity of global flows. As described in Chapter 7, the intensive *nenbutsu* recitation at the restaurant-*dōjō* of Fūraibō in Buenos Aires not only consciously evokes the practice of *hyakumanben nenbutsu* in the past in Japan, but has also been taken back to Jōdo Shinshū temples in Japan by the priest of Fūraibō and other students and sympathisers. This is not a simple centre-periphery relationship, with influences flowing from the centre outwards. Rather, ritual practice in Japan may be drawn on in various creative ways by Jōdo Shinshū individuals and communities overseas, in this instance drawing on past practice as a critique of the present, and then seeking to reintroduce this to contemporary Japan.

It is important to underline here that in the various transformations of ritual practice we have described in this volume, it is not just a question of ritual adaptations in an overseas context. Practice in Japan has also been subject to significant change. Although ritual innovation can be observed throughout the history of Honganji, with the opening of Japan in the Meiji period, Buddhist schools, along with other institutions in Japan, underwent a period of seismic change, as described in Chapter 2. These changes, in which overseas influences, and the emerging discourse of a globalised trans-sectarian Buddhism played an important role, also affected ritual practice. We have described above some of the transformations in the liturgy, in terms of music and chanting; and in architecture.

This period of change also coincided with Jōdo Shinshū's initial expansion overseas, further complicating the picture, as changes in Japan took place at the same time as new Jōdo Shinshū communities were being established in North America and Hawai'i, leading to complex multi-directional flows of ritual innovation. Ritual music is one example of this, explored above in Chapter 8. The adoption of Western style music as the standard in the Japanese education system in the Meiji era contributed to the development of a particular style of choral and congregational Buddhist singing known as *bukkyō ongaku*, or Buddhist music. In turn, subsequent generations of Japanese Jōdo Shinshū priests, educated in Western style music in Japan, composed Western style Buddhist songs for overseas congregations (as well as for use in some contexts in Japan). And in a few cases, songs composed initially for use overseas then became commonly used in Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha services in Japan – the *Ondokusan* mentioned in Chapter 8

is the most notable example. Of course, many of the Western style Buddhist songs, or *gathas*, used in North America and Hawai'i were composed by local followers, and it is certainly true that North American and Hawai'ian Jōdo Shinshū developed their own distinctive local liturgical forms, as outlined above. But the point that we wish to emphasise here is that the exchanges between Japan and North America and Hawai'i during this period, and the development of ritual forms, were more complex and multi-layered than can be captured by a simple model of acculturation.

Overall, considering the ritual changes in Jōdo Shinshū in Japan, the Americas, and Europe since the late nineteenth century as a case study in globalisation, we find Tweed's (2006) model of a sacroscape understood in terms of flows across both space and time persuasive. But we also note Tsing's caveat that globalisation needs to be considered as an "uneven and contested terrain" (Tsing 2000: 330). In order to explore this further, we return to the question of ritual: in what ways can a study of the globalisation of ritual enhance our understanding of ritual, and the various debates surrounding it in Jōdo Shinshū?

Globalisation as a lens to explore ritual

One consequence of exploring ritual through the lens of globalisation is that we have necessarily focused on change and adaptation. Initially curious about the ways in which ritual in Jōdo Shinshū has changed and adapted in an overseas context, in the course of the research for this book we have become increasingly aware of ritual change, innovation, and variation in Jōdo Shinshū in Japan. As detailed in Chapter 2, ritual innovation in Jōdo Shinshū is not new: it can be traced back to the late thirteenth century, and the time of Kakunyo. It is also entangled with structures of authority. New ritual forms are often framed in a way that evokes the past, and by doing so make claims for authority and authenticity. Kakunyo's establishment of the *hōonkō*, a new ritual to memorialise Shinran's death (and, in doing so, implicitly emphasising his own authority as Shinran's successor) is a good example of this. Contemporary innovations may also be framed with reference to innovators of the past – as in Asakura's comments regarding his techno services cited in the introduction. In discussing the use of the internet, and the introduction of new forms of service, Asakura referred to the well-known fifteenth-century Honganji leader, Rennyo, commenting that Rennyo also adapted to his times. The legitimation of a contemporary innovation with reference to past practice can also be seen in the case of the intensive *nenbutsu* recitation at Fūraibō in Buenos Aires referred to above. But ritual innovation may also be framed in terms of necessary adaptations to local contexts, as in the brief review above of different local forms of liturgy in Jōdo Shinshū outside Japan; or to changing times, for example, in the adaptations of the liturgy in Japan post-Meiji, or the development of virtual online ritual during the Covid-19 pandemic, as described in Chapter 9.

Our research has also shown some of the ways in which ritual innovation may be contested. Two of the authors, in our roles as recently ordained priests, participated directly in the creation of new online rituals in the United Kingdom during the pandemic, and in the debates surrounding them. We were also in a position of relative freedom to innovate. In the absence of formal institutional structures in

European Jōdo Shinshū, unlike in the Americas or Japan, there was no one in a position to tell us what we could or could not do – it was up to us. This experience has also given us a first-hand view of ritual innovation, which we have reflected on in Chapter 9. In the context of this discussion, it is worth noting that in these online services, as with other forms of ritual innovation described in the literature, the form produced was never completely new, or "invented" by us as priests: it always drew on pre-existing ritual elements, including elements of liturgy, prescribed forms of dress, bodily movements, and self-presentation. The use of these elements was important in creating a ritual that was perceived as legitimate, and part of the Honganji-ha tradition, although there was considerable scope for flexibility and debate as to precisely how they were put together. These online rituals were not without controversy – a number of criticisms were voiced directly to us, and have been reproduced here. And of course there are limitations in our perspective – there may well have been further criticisms which people did not voice. Nevertheless, this study contributes a fresh angle from the point of view of the ritual innovators themselves to the growing body of literature on online ritual, and its contestation.

Perhaps the counterpoint to discussions of ritual innovation is the question of cohesion: how is a degree of uniformity or consistency achieved? What makes the different Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha communities identifiable as part of the broader Honganji-ha tradition, across different geographical areas, languages, and even in the relatively new online contexts? And how is the authority and legitimacy of a Honganji-ha priest created and maintained?

One important means by which this is maintained is the system of training and ordination for priests. In the modern period, officially recognised ordination for Honganji-ha has been centralised in Kyoto and has paid close attention to developing an embodied ritual mastery, as described in Chapter 4. And all aspirants, whether Japanese or not, need to master the same ritual forms in order to be ordained. The centralised control over the process of ordination training aims to standardise basic ritual knowledge and embodied competence, so that all ordained priests, from anywhere in the world, should be able to perform the same basic rituals. However, priests may also add the performance of local elements to these, as detailed above. And there is also a considerable range of officially recognised forms of liturgy, for example, in the approved musical settings, so in practice recognised forms of service may be quite varied. And even within Japan, there is greater variety among temples in their localised practices than one would guess from the highly standardised ordination programme. There is a paradox here, in that the authority conferred by ordination may also enable priests to innovate to a certain extent on a local level. In this sense, there is always a tension between standardisation and innovation, the central and the local.

Successfully completing the training, and displaying ritual mastery in, for example, the correct wearing of robes, and the performance of services, confers legitimacy and symbolic authority on ordained priests. In so far as the source of this authority is the central organisation of Honganji-ha, located in Japan, this system also maintains the authority of the centre.[1] More broadly, it can also be seen as conveying visible clerical status to Jōdo Shinshū priests in the absence of a life-long monastic tradition,[2] or identifying signs such as a shaved head.[3]

Implications for the understanding of ritual

So what does all this tell us about ritual? Our description in Chapter 4 of the ordination training offers a detailed account of one of the main occasions for the formal process of learning ritual, from a trainee priest's perspective. This underlines the importance both of embodied aspects of ritual (bodily movements, dress, other aspects of bodily discipline) and ritual as performance. Through repeated daily practice, the training programme aimed to create "ritual bodies" that had absorbed the required movements and postures, as well as the ability to chant and breathe correctly, in such a way that the new priests would be able to produce an effective (or at least acceptable) ritual performance. In some respects it could be compared to a choreographed theatrical performance – when done successfully, the planning and training behind it becomes invisible to the audience.

Another aspect of embodiment in ritual is that bodily movements, gestures, and dress, eventually, through repetition, become automatic, or part of the habitus of those performing the ritual, to use Bourdieu's term. The messages conveyed in this way may not be explicitly articulated, or even fully conscious. For example, wearing a priest's robes becomes a normalised aspect of performing a service, and one that the priest concerned does not necessarily reflect on beyond making sure that they are wearing the correct robes, correctly arranged. However, by wearing the robe, the priest is, even if unconsciously, performing their authority. Both the garment and the way it is worn, expressing the training, act as implicit signifiers of the status conferred from the ritual centre.

In addition to conveying, or constructing, status, or authority, ritual, and ritual artefacts, may also communicate identity. For example, we have seen in Chapter 4 the ways in which clerical robes communicate membership of a particular religious organisation – differentiated by features such as the style in which knots are tied, or the weaving of the crest representing the particular Buddhist school into the fabric.

In Jōdo Shinshū outside Japan, aspects of ritual, including liturgy and the construction of ritual space may also mark new identities combining both Japanese and local elements, and sometimes elements evoking Buddhism's historical origins. The development of a distinctive liturgy in Jōdo Shinshū in North America referred to above is a case in point, and has become an important signifier of belonging to the North American Jōdo Shinshū community. We can see a process of "creolisation" or hybridity here, with the creation of a hybrid third space, described by Homi Bhabha (discussing political change) as "a rearticulation or translation of elements that are *neither the One …* nor *the Other … but something else besides*" (Bhabha 2012 [1994]: 41 emphasis in original).

Ritual may thus communicate important messages relating to the broader social context, for example, structures of authority or identity. But we would concur with Lewis (1980: 8–9) that communication is only part of what ritual does. The meanings of ritual are not always readily apparent, and it is not always possible to get an agreed explanation of the meaning of elements of ritual – even for priests, who may be referred to as ritual experts. As Lewis points out, commonly "what is clear and explicit about ritual is how to do it – rather than its meaning" (Lewis 1980: 19). Certainly this was our experience in the ordination training programme.

For participants, ritual is something that is experienced, not decoded. Indeed Crossley (2004: 39) argues that "part of the value of the ritual, qua body technique, is its capacity to … circumvent verbal negotiation". This brings us back to the realm of the body, and the important dimensions of aesthetics, the senses and emotion. The rituals described above engage a range of senses: sound, with the various forms of chanting and other music; the visual, with the varying arrangements of sacred space and its adornments; smell, with the pervasive fragrance of incense; as well as the bodily sensations of moving through the different spaces of temples and other centres for ritual, sitting (sometimes uncomfortably) for long periods either on *tatami* or on chairs. Aesthetics is also important. In Chapter 8, both the teacher of ritual in Honganji-ha commenting on *shōmyō*, and Asakura reflecting on the techno-services he performs at his temple in Fukui emphasise the importance of the aesthetics of ritual. In Askakura's words: "[rituals] should be beautiful – they show the beauty of Buddhism, they create a special time and space". Rituals are (or are intended to be) evocative, in a way that is not readily translatable into words.

Clearly, individual responses to different rituals will vary, and some find ritualisation, in general (or the form of particular rituals) alienating, or even oppressive. They may be a source of anxiety, as participants (including priests) may worry about whether they are performing a ritual correctly. But for others, as for the ritual teacher cited in Chapter 8, they may be experienced as "an encounter with the sacred". This experiential dimension of ritual may also transcend its propositional content – it is possible to understand very little of the content of a ritual or of its symbolism, and still feel moved by it.

Concluding thoughts

By focusing on the case study of Jōdo Shinshū, we have highlighted the complexity of global flows of influences as this particular school of Buddhism has expanded beyond the borders of Japan. These include both specific local factors, and the broader influences of the ways in which Buddhism has been re-imagined as a world religion, and Jōdo Shinshū's positioning within that. And it is also a process in which notions of centre and periphery are sometimes problematic, and complicated by the multi-directional flow of influences. For this reason, we find that it is more fruitful to consider this in terms of a transforming sacroscape rather than a process of acculturation.

Turning to ritual, a critical evaluation of the history of ritual and its transformations in Jōdo Shinshū, has revealed both ritual innovation, and the ways in which innovation may be framed (sometimes with reference to the past, sometimes to the perceived imperative to adapt to changing times). In terms of broader theoretical perspectives, we have found it helpful to consider ritual through the lens of embodiment and performance. Building on this, we also contend that the sensory, aesthetic, and emotional aspects of ritual must be considered. We have included descriptions of some particular rituals in order to convey something of this experiential aspect of ritual, but this is an area which would benefit from further research. We argue here that a focus on embodied experience is essential for an understanding of ritual.

Bringing together a consideration of globalisation and of ritual has highlighted ritual innovation and change, and the ways in which this is entangled with questions of authority and centre-periphery relations. An example here is the North American controversy over access to the sacred space of the inner altar area, or *naijin*, described in Chapter 5. More broadly there is a question here of whether, how, and in what circumstances decisions are made locally or by the centre in Japan. Also relevant here is the role of the ordination programme, which is controlled by the central organisation in Japan, in conferring authority to priests. Authenticity is also at stake here: how far can ritual practice overseas differ from practice in Japan before it is perceived as problematic? And how are local adaptations viewed: as necessary adjustments to a new context, or unacceptable deviations? The answer to these questions may well vary depending on one's perspective – what is well accepted in one context may not be accepted in another, as we can see with the use of Western style music in North America and Hawai'i contrasted with the lack of enthusiasm for such forms in Europe. It is also interesting to note here that overseas followers may ascribe more fixity and uniformity to practice in Japan (as the source of orthopraxis) than is in fact the case. As we have seen, Japan shows a substantial amount of internal variation and innovation, so the idea of an authoritative, fixed Japanese source of ritual practice is problematic, if not illusory.

We conclude by again acknowledging our own dual positioning in writing this account as both priests and academics. Although we have spoken to many other followers of Jōdo Shinshū while writing this, both clerics and lay, this book draws extensively on our own experiences. Others who are positioned differently will have other experiences to contribute, but, to quote Tweed (2006: 18): "it is precisely because we stand in a particular place that we are able to see, to know, to narrate". We do not claim that this is a complete account – the topic of ritual in Jōdo Shinshū is too big for this to be possible – but we present it here as a contribution to the study of the shifting sacroscape of ritual in Jōdo Shinshū, and, more broadly, to debates concerning ritual and globalisation.

Notes

1 This authority has, on occasion, been challenged, for example in the short-lived initiative by the Swiss priest Éracle, to establish European based ordinations (Matsunaga 2018: 240–1).
2 As explained in Chapter 4, while the *tokudo* and *kyōshi* training retreats follow a monastic format, these are for a fixed period of time; Jōdo Shinshū does not have monasteries, or any provision for life-long monasticism.
3 Some Jōdo Shinshū priests do keep their heads shaved, but this is not required, and is not a universal practice.

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