

Abstract: International Symposium on management and marketing of globalizing Asian Religions

Panel 5: Japanese Religions in the Global Context

Jodo Shinshu in Europe

Louella Matsunaga

Most of the existing research on Japanese religion in Europe concerns NRMs or Zen Buddhism. In contrast, Jodo Shinshu remains little known in Europe, despite the size and importance of this sect of Buddhism in Japan. The European situation also presents a marked contrast with Jodo Shinshu in the United States, where it has a significant presence, largely based in the Japanese American community. Jodo Shinshu can thus be seen as a global religious organization which has a significantly different profile in different regional settings. The reasons behind this variation form the focus of this paper.

Based on research gathered through participant observation, publications produced by Jodo Shinshu, and interviews with European members of Jodo Shinshu conducted over a ten year period, this paper considers the history of Jodo Shinshu in Europe, and the challenges it has faced in the European context. Questions to be addressed include: how has Jodo Shinshu sought to adapt to the European setting, and in particular how has it situated itself in relation to other Buddhist organisations, and umbrella groups within Europe encompassing various Buddhist sects? How is the positioning of Jodo Shinshu in Europe different from Jodo Shinshu in the United States? And finally, how can we account for the relatively low levels of membership of Jodo Shinshu in Europe?