

RESONANCE AS A CONSTRAINING FACTOR IN THE GLOCALIZATION OF RELIGION

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Abstract: In this paper I approach the phenomenon of resonance in the glocalization of religion from a pragmatist perspective with the aim to contribute to the understanding of these still largely overlooked dynamics. Building on my theory on the global repositioning of religion through insights and suggestions coming from sociology (notably the work of Terence McDonnell and his colleagues) and other disciplines such as anthropology and semiotics, I contend that cultural objects circulating in the global cultural network can become relevant to religious actors and trigger a resonance because they are useful to solve specific religious problems. With reference to the greening of religion in Japan and some aspects of Japanese religions' activities in South Africa and Cuba, I suggest that the solution to such problems, which starts from the realization of some congruences between global ideas/practices and locally shared religious categories, requires both cognitive work and emotional conditions. Moreover, I illustrate how this process implies changes in the structure of a given religious system, takes different shapes for different religious actors, and intertwines significantly with power issues.

Keywords: glocalization, religion, resonance, problem solving, power relations.

INTRODUCTION

Since when it was introduced in the academic debate by sociologist Roland Robertson (1992: 173-174) and geographer Erik Swyngedouw (1992) in the early 1990s, the neologism glocalization has made considerable inroads in areas as diverse as archaeology, literature, politics, philosophy, semiotics, tourism, and the media (see Roudometof, Dessì forthcoming). Despite a certain under-theorization of this concept, which has recently begun to be addressed comprehensively (Roudometof 2016), most of the scholars engaged in the debate would probably

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agree that the nexus global-local implies neither an antinomy between these two terms nor their identification as locations. Rather, as repeatedly emphasized by Robertson himself, it points to the process through which globalization leads to “the adaptation of panlocal developments to local circumstances” (Robertson 2004). The increasing awareness of this fundamental issue has also had the effect of exposing the overlapping between the conceptual framework of glocalization and other interpretive approaches focused on the “production of locality” (e.g. Appadurai 1995) and, more in general, on the issue of “cultural hybridization” (see Stockhammer 2012) under conditions of globalization. This is also the case of the field of studies on religion, within which the creative adoption of global resources by religious actors has been framed not only as glocalization but also through other conceptual frameworks such as hybridization, cultural translation, and bricolage. Starting in the late 1990s, this still relatively limited but steadily expanding body of literature has explored the glocalization of religion in different world regions and from various angles (see Dessì forthcoming), including religious micro-marketing (Vásquez, Marquardt 2003), vernacular religion (Romberg 2005), historical adaptations of religious universality (Roudometof 2014), global repositioning (Dessì 2017a), the work of cultural translators (Rocha 2017), and political strategy (Karagiannis 2018).

One of the areas in this field of studies that is still largely overlooked concerns why and how specific elements circulating in the global cultural network are selected and used by local actors to produce glocal religious forms. Needless to say, this is a sphere of inquiry that shares some similarities with long-standing topics in the broader field of study on religion and culture. One may think, for example, of the phenomena of religious change still investigated by various scholars under the banner of syncretism; of scholarly approaches such as diffusionism; of the attention that has been paid within the field of social sciences and humanities to the dynamics of acculturation; and the tradition of studies on Orientalism. And yet, a few decades after the cultural turn in global studies and the steady progress of the subfields of study on sociology/anthropology/religion and globalization (see for example, Archer et al. 2007; Beyer



2013), it is evident that we are dealing with a substantially new set of conceptual and empirical issues. Syncretism, if anything, does not necessarily imply that at least one of the ingredients in the religious mixture has a global relevance, a dimension that is often more effectively caught by other conceptual tools such as creolization and hybridization (e.g. Ackermann 2012). With all its fragilities, diffusionism presents undeniable parallelisms with the idea of global cultural flows, and most probably plays some part in the priority given to the “moving of cultures” (over cultural change) in some contemporary discussions on globalization (Hahn 2008); in the field of religious studies, this aspect is well exemplified by an enduring tendency to emphasize the spatial dimension of religions’ globalization (e.g. institutional expansion) at the expense of other equally important dimensions. In the case of acculturation theory, it is apparent that a certain attention to selective processes and agency is accompanied by an overemphasis on “origins and purism” (Leal 2011). As for the critique of Orientalism, its gaze on the power relations underlying cultural encounters is typically framed in terms of an East-versus-West perspective that places emphasis more on the dynamics of cultural imperialism than on hybridization (see Turner 1994: 95-104; Turner, Khondker 2010: 24-29); if anything, it is several of the basic insights coming especially from postcolonial studies, with their increased attention to the issues of agency and the global context, which have long been implicitly incorporated by scholars in the field of globalization and religion/culture (e.g. Bhabha 1994; Krishnaswamy 2002). By definition, what the aforementioned theoretical approaches are not specifically equipped to grasp is the interplay of cultural change and global dynamics, and – with reference to the issue thematized by this special issue and this article –, the issue of the “production of locality” under conditions of globalization. It is within the broad conceptual framework of glocalization that the question of resonance, that is, why and how specific cultural forms circulating worldwide are selected “locally” to reshape religious identities, can be formulated. And given the place of religion within the global cultural network, it is evident that the exploration of these dynamics cannot leave aside contributions and insights coming from fields such as sociology,



anthropology, and semiotics. To date, an in-depth analysis of the role and scope of resonance in the glocalization of religion is still missing. With a few exceptions (e.g. Mandaville 2001; Srinivas 2010; Dessì 2017a; Karagiannis 2018), previous research has mainly focused on transnationalism and other aspects of the globalization of religions (including Asian religions), which only tangentially address this issue. Against this backdrop, in the following I will take advantage of conceptualizations and suggestions coming especially from other disciplines to build on my previous work on resonance in the glocalization of religion with the aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the constraints and incentives underlying this process.

GLOBAL REPOSITIONING, GLOCALIZATION, AND RESONANCE

The clarification of the theoretical framework with which I will discuss the issue of resonance requires that I briefly introduce the theory of religion and globalization developed especially in my book *The Global Repositioning of Japanese Religions*, with attention to its implications for the issue of religious glocalization (Dessì 2017a; see 2013, 2014, 2017b). My starting point is the working definition of “religion” as a social system that grants or denies access to a variety of this-worldly/other-worldly goods through the authority of a super-empirical agency, which builds on Mark Chaves’ work on religious authority (Chaves 1994; see Weber 1978) to distinguish five parts of the religious system: *a*) the this-worldly/other-worldly goods mediated by religion (i.e. what matters is not their nature but how the access to them is regulated); *b*) the super-empirical (i.e. beyond the intersubjectively observable phenomena) agency (whether or not it is something existing out there, based on a constructivist notion of agency) through which the access to these goods is granted or denied; *c*) the structure of legitimation through which the nexus between the super-empirical agency and these goods is narrated/performed; *d*) religious leaders/professionals, who generally (but not necessarily) manage the structure of legitimation; and *e*) ordinary practitioners, who



can achieve varying degrees of autonomy from religious professionals (Dessi 2017a: 30-32).

Under globalizing conditions, the increasing pressure exercised upon religion by *i*) other religions, *ii*) global ideas, and *iii*) social systems with a global reach such as science and the economy can relativize (i.e. call into question) its authority structure to an unprecedented degree. For example, these three kinds of relativization may affect the religious system by prompting the inclusion/exclusion of specific elements in/from the constellation of goods mediated by religion, by weakening the authority of the super-empirical agency, and by altering the structure of legitimation. Based on my empirical observations in the Japanese religious field, I showed that religions do not necessarily remain unstable as a result of relativization but can reframe themselves through strategies of global repositioning, thus providing a further contribution to the process of globalization. In this connection, I introduced a distinction between three main ideal types of religions' global repositioning (regardless of whether religions go transnational or not) related to the three abovementioned forms of relativization, which include four subtypes each: 1) Global repositioning at the inter-religious level, including "exclusivism" (rejection of the authority claims of other religions), "inclusivism" (conditional acknowledgment of these claims), "pluralism" (acknowledgment of these claims), and "multiple commitment/conversion" (simultaneous acceptance of the authority claims of two or more religions, or transition from one to another); 2) global repositioning at the discrete-elements level, including "anti-homogenization" (rejection of global ideas), "chauvinistic glocalization" (their creative adoption to promote religious chauvinism), "glocalization" (their creative adoption), and "homogenization" (their passive acceptance); and 3) global repositioning at the inter-systemic level, including "anti-secularization" (rejection of the authority claims of other social systems), "conditional secularization" (conditional acknowledgment of these claims), "secularization" (acknowledgment of these claims), and the "stopgap function" (attempt to remedy the shortcomings of other social systems) (Dessi 2017a: 162-186). The inter-religious level of analysis partly builds on John Hick's typology deprived of its



theological implications (see Hick 1983); the discrete-elements level on the debate on homogenization/hybridization in the field of cultural globalization (e.g. Robertson 1995; Nederveen Pieterse 2009); and the inter-systemic level on discussions on functional differentiation and secularity (e.g. Beyer 2000; Dobelaere 2004). Thus, within this theoretical framework “glocalization” and “chauvinistic glocalization” are understood as two types of global repositioning occurring at the level of interactions between religion with global ideas.

My analysis has demonstrated that these processes are underlain by several factors – preliminarily categorized as global consciousness, decontextualization, quest for power, and resonance/affinity – playing an analogous role at the three levels of analysis (Dessì 2017a: 163-183). While the working of resonance/affinity can also be seen in the interactions between religions and between religion and other social systems, in the following I will specifically focus on its role in the context of glocalization. With reference to global repositioning at this level of analysis, I especially focused on the greening of religion in Japan and the issue of meditation in Hawaiian Shin Buddhism. The study of the former phenomenon shows that starting in the 1990s Japanese Buddhism, Shinto, and new religious movements have adopted the global ideas of environmental protection and sustainability and made them resonate with traditional ideas such as interdependence and the presence of the *kami* (or the buddha-nature) within natural objects. This is a process that results in the incorporation of environmental protection and sustainability within the constellation of goods mediated by religion (Dessì 2017a: 67-97, 143-150; see 2013). The latter case study has instead illustrated how meditation, an increasingly popular practice in the global cultural network, has been selected by a section of Hawaiian Shin Buddhist priests and lay followers to reshape their own style of Buddhist practice. My qualitative research has shown that to this selective appropriation also contributes a perceived resonance between meditation (which is not practiced in traditional Shin Buddhism) and aspects of practitioners’ spiritual/religious background such as the short practice of quiet sitting during Shin Buddhist services and their appreciation for “life”. In this case, meditation is



incorporated in the structure of legitimation, which encompasses the various ways in which the super-empirical agency and the this-worldly/other-worldly goods are related to each other through specific religious practices, narratives, and doctrines (Dessi 2017a: 98-130; see 2014, 2017b).

OTHER APPROACHES TO RESONANCE AS A CONCEPTUAL TOOL

Within the field of religion, the relevance of resonance in the process of globalization has emerged in varying degrees in some research focusing on cultural hybridization. One early example is offered by the work of Peter Mandaville on the reconceptualization of the *umma* (the world community of Muslim believers), where the search by practitioners for ways of expressing Islam that may “resonate” in new sociocultural environments is presented as one of the modalities of its diasporic transformation (Mandaville 2001: 117-118). With reference to Islam but from a different angle, Emmanuel Karagiannis has observed that “master frames” or cognitive schemas such as justice and human rights exploited by the new generation of Islamists to mobilize support and facilitate the local adoption of global ideas “resonate well with Islamic tenets and traditions” (Karagiannis 2018: 22-23). The role of cultural resonance is implicit in the debate on whether the globalization of Pentecostalism should be better explained in terms of continuity with local religious cultures (e.g. “a [Pentecostal] belief or practice that looks new actually manifests a continuity with a past belief or practice because the two are similar”) or discontinuity with them (e.g. “Pentecostalism tends to accept their ontologies – including their ontologies of spirits and witches and other occult powers – and to take the spiritual beings these ontologies posit as paramount among the forces it struggles against”) (Robbins 2003). In a more explicit way, “cultural resonance” is embedded in Tulasi Srinivas’ discussion of the cultural translation process underlying the Sathya Sai movement’s globalization. In particular, Srinivas argues that in the final stage of this process, imported cultural forms can be contextualized in the



host society in two ways: by appealing to “a yearning for something strange”, when they “can be seen as something external and perhaps exotic”; or by appealing to a “concordance”, when they “can bring up a cultural resonance in the host culture”, which generates a sort of “false nostalgia” for a specific cultural form that can facilitate its re-embedment (Srinivas 2010: 337-338; 2014).

Within the broader field of anthropology, Brian Larkin has provided some suggestions on how imported forms can trigger a positive response in the new cultural context. Against the backdrop of his theory of “parallel modernities” (i.e. “the co-existence in space and time of multiple economic, religious and cultural flows that are often subsumed within the term ‘modernity’”), he has explained the popularity of Indian films among Hausa viewers in Nigeria in terms of the cultural space that they came to occupy, “outside the binary distinctions between tradition and modernity, Africa and the West, resistance and domination”. For Larkin, despite the evident distance of Indian culture, these movies offered to the new Hausa audience an “alternative world” that shares an analogous concern for traditional social relations. Stated differently, such “coexistence between likeness and dissimilarity” was allowed by the fact that Indian films opened a perspective on modernity that strategically countered the spread of westernization through Hollywood movies (Larkin 1997; see Vander Steene 2008). The process through which imported forms can open new cultural spaces in host societies has also been thematized by Signe Howell in her reflections on cultural diffusion. With reference to the Western reception of “‘primitive’ art” and alternative spiritualities, the Norwegian anthropologist has argued that imported knowledge can be used to fill “lacunae” in local cultures, by which she does not mean gaps or missing parts, but rather latencies or “openings” that become apparent only within the context of specific cultural interactions. For example, the attraction for the primitive and the exotic in Europe and North America can be partially understood as the manifestation of “experienced lacunae in western knowledge” insofar as they offer an alternative to Western materialism and rationality. When such cultural resonances activate a lacuna and this is perceived and shared by a



sufficient number of people, the unknown can be assimilated, re-contextualized, and conventionalized by the local discourse, and bring about a shift in the “parameters of previous understanding”. More in general, Howell has also implied that imported knowledge can be used “in ways which best support pressing needs, appeal to the imagination, or fill local lacunae”, or otherwise to simply replace existing cultural practices (Howell 1995). A partial overlapping with the theme of cultural resonance is also shown by research on mimesis. Psychological anthropologist Jeannette Mageo seems to point in this direction when she characterizes “incorporative mimesis” as the incorporation of the cultural Other by copying foreign images that allude to local schemas and “combining these with images and corresponding schemas of one’s own that are to a degree concordant” (Mageo 2017).

Insights on the issue of resonance also come from the area of semiotics. In this connection, it is worth mentioning Franciscu Sedda’s analysis of the translation of food(s) from one “semiosphere” (with reference to the work of Juri Lotman) to another – or, with a focus on food, from one “foodsphere” to another – as an instance of glocalization. By focusing on the historical import of plants and animals from the Americas to Europe, Sedda notes that only part of the available species was selected, while the others remained in the domain of the “untranslatable”. Moreover, the selected species were preemptively disentangled from their original cultural framework before their adoption, and, consequently, the reality of those foods as the product of indigenous cross-fertilization/breeding remained long unknown to the European audience. Whereas the selection of certain American foods was accompanied by their reduction to “natural elements” without a history, their insertion in the European foodsphere depended on their transition from “foreignness” to “familiarity”. For Sedda, this implies crossing the border between “food and non-food”, as shown by the example of the tomato, which kept for a long time the status of ornamental plant before entering the European foodsphere through its translation into a salad ingredient and, finally, into a sauce. Relevant to our discussion, he argues that the incorporation of the tomato required such intermediate stages because



it was not already “recognizable as positionable in the structures of the target culinary semiosphere” – differently from the turkey, which was promptly incorporated in the European cuisine because of the medieval custom to eat large birds. Sedda also shows that this process of alimentary translation, which “innovates alimentation abiding by its structures”, is filtered by a plurality of languages, including “scientific discourses, bourgeois ideologies, culinary texts, and practical experiments in the regional cuisines”, and is accompanied by the linguistic work of “denomination” (or “re-nomination”) of foods (Sedda 2016).

Within the field of sociology, Terence McDonnell, Christopher Bail, and Iddo Tavory (2017) have criticized a tendency in the “framing literature” to present cultural objects as “resonant in and of themselves”. For them, one way to fully exploit the theoretical potential of resonance and avoid circular arguments (i.e. some objects are resonant because they resonate, and vice versa) is instead to give up considering this concept as an inherent quality of cultural objects, and to acknowledge it as a process “produced in relations between an object and audience in a specific situation”. McDonnell, Bail, and Tavory are admittedly not concerned with the issue of globalization, which they never mention. However, their claim that “resonance is shaped by and flows through interactional dynamics” and that “the opportunities for resonance shift according to the availability of different cultural objects and ideas within broader networks, fields, or institutions” (McDonnell et al. 2017: 9) implicitly positions their theory as a tool suitable to the study of cultural interactions withing global cultural flows. The three scholars have proposed a shift to a pragmatist approach as a first step toward the construction of a “theory of resonance”, the other two being the analysis of its cognitive and emotional implications, and that of the underlying interactional dynamics (McDonnell et al. 2017: 2). In their articulation of such pragmatist move, McDonnell and his colleagues argue that congruence and familiarity alone, that is, the alignment of cultural objects with the views of an audience, are not sufficient conditions for the emergence of a resonance. Rather, any cultural object cannot become relevant and “resonate” unless it is “employed to solve a problem”. In this way, resonance is framed as an “experiential effect” that



emerges in the face of practical puzzles (ranging from “mundane” to “existential”) in individuals’ daily lives, some of which a specific cultural object in a specific situation can unexpectedly help to crystalize into a solution.

The three sociologists distinguish between three main forms that the solution to these problems may take: *a*) “It may crystalize a previously unarticulated experience”, *b*) “provide a novel way to approach a problem actors routinely encounter”, or, alternatively, *c*) “problematize something previously taken for granted in a way that sheds new light on an old pragmatic problem”. It is worth emphasizing that by problem solving McDonnell and his colleagues do not necessarily mean an intentional and planned activity (an “explicit project”), because a solution can also retroactively define a problem (McDonnell et al. 2017: 3-5). For the three North American scholars, although a certain degree of initial congruence is necessary for resonance, this process also requires “cognitive distance”, that is, the cultural object offering a solution to a given problem should be “neither too familiar nor too resistant to interpretation or extension”. Emotions, too, contribute decisively to the process of resonance, because individuals are more prone to search for solutions that may validate/justify their feelings (McDonnell et al. 2017: 5-7). Finally, McDonnell, Bail, and Tavory call the attention to the fact that the search for a solution can also be a collective act. In this connection, they observe that when an actor centrally located in these interactional dynamics experiences a resonance, the chance that other actors with a lower status (and in search for a higher one) come to see the same cultural object as resonant considerably increases. Thus, resonance can spread through a network creating (not necessarily as the result of a cynically planned action) a sort of social “hierarchy of credibility” of cultural objects (McDonnell et al. 2017: 7-8).

THE ROLE AND SCOPE OF RESONANCE IN THE GLOCALIZATION OF RELIGION

Building on McDonnell and his colleagues’ work, I suggest that within the context of interactions between religious

systems and cultural objects circulating in global flows (i.e. global ideas/practices), some of these cultural objects can become relevant and trigger a resonance because they are useful to solve specific religious problems. If we consider once again the case of the greening of religion in Japan, the initial spark for the process of resonance is provided by the perceived congruence of the issues of environmental protection and sustainability with a relatively wide range of local religious concepts that I have identified in my previous work. Within the context of Shinto, for example, the “spirit of reverence and gratitude” (*ikei to kansha no nen*) to nature understood as a vessel for the deities (*kami*) is perhaps the most popular catchphrase. Within traditional Buddhism and Buddhism-related new religious movements several ideas may be emphasized in varying degrees. Among these, one finds the belief that “mountains and rivers, plants and trees, all attain buddhahood” (*sansen sōmoku shikikai jōbutsu*), a variation of a Chinese Buddhist doctrine; the “interdependence” (*engi*) of all things, which refers to the teaching of codependent origination and can be alternatively expressed through the concept of “living in harmony” (*kyōsei/tomoiki*) or the more generic reference to the dignity of “life” (*inochi*); and the admonition of “being contented with few desires” (*shōyoku chisoku*), which refers to the Buddhist aversion to greed (see Dessì 2017a: 89-90). These congruences play an important role in the initial phase of resonance, as is also acknowledged from a different interpretive perspective by characterizations of “incorporative mimesis” as a way of thinking and feeling the cultural Other by copying foreign images that allude to locally shared ideas and feelings (Mageo 2017). The relevance of these congruences also emerge in the reflections on alimentary translation by Sedda, who notes that certain American foods were more promptly incorporated by European cultures because their place was “already envisaged” in the local foodsphere (Sedda 2016). It is also worth recalling that in the case of the greening of Japanese religions, such congruence may partly result from the previous impact of Japanese religious culture on the global cultural network – as shown, for example, by the borrowing of Zen Buddhist elements for the construction of the



global “religious environmentalist paradigm” (see Kalland 2005).

However, as suggested by McDonnell and his colleagues, this congruence alone would not be enough to generate a resonance. Rather, these traditional resources are marked by a cognitive distance (i.e. they present analogies with environmental protection and sustainability but are not too similar to them) allowing for the emergence of a creative moment aimed to solve a religious problem that may be generically stated as follows: “How can religion help to solve the environmental crisis?” In my view, this approach to resonance as something not inherent in cultural objects but resulting from relations between them and a given audience is somehow implied in Howell’s (1995) discussion of lacunae, which she sees as emerging from a “conjunction of circumstances” (and not as something pre-existing such circumstances). That is, given their relational quality, there is no need to postulate that resonances preexist global cultural encounters. Moreover, to the extent that lacunae can be activated, as Howell implies, by specific issues – e.g. the perception of the excessive materialism, rationality and resulting ‘social unhappiness’ in Western societies –, they are apparently related to the sphere of problem solving. Also, Larkin’s (1997) observation that Indian movies elicited a positive response from Nigerian viewers by offering an alternative to Western modernity from the perspective of traditional relations would seem to link these dynamics to the solution of a socio-cultural problem.

From the perspective of my theoretical framework sketched above, the solution to the religious problem of “How can religion help to solve the environmental crisis?” is the incorporation of environmental protection and sustainability within the constellation of goods the access to which is regulated through religious authority. In this way, they are religionized (that is, it is now assumed that they can be achieved also through a religious life) and become an integral part of the religious system. In other words, the problem-solving activity inherent in the dynamics of resonance can be understood as one the basic functions of the religious system; potentially (i.e. compatibly with other constraints presiding over the process of globalization), anything can be/become a religious problem and



provide the opportunity to religion's globally-oriented reshaping, irrespective of the fact that such activity is planned or retroactively defined.

In other instances of religious glocalization, such as that revolving around the adoption of meditation in Hawaiian Shin Buddhism that I have illustrated elsewhere (Dessì 2017a: 98-130), the perceived congruence between a variety of meditational techniques available to global spiritual seekers with aspects of Shin Buddhist practitioners' religious identity can open the way to their local use to solve another kind of religious problem: "How can we reach more effectively a state of peace of mind within the context of Shin Buddhism?". In this case, the process of resonance culminates in the incorporation of a certain style of meditation as a practice within the structure of legitimation of the religious system.

Along this process, the religious system is adapted to make sense of a problem rather different from those that it routinely solves, which echoes with Howell's (1995) reference to the conventionalization of the unknown and a shift in the "parameters of previous understanding", as well as with Sedda's (2016) reference to the innovation of "alimentary language" as part of the glocalization of food. In my view, this pragmatist move also allows to overcome the opposition between continuity and discontinuity underlying certain anthropological discussions on global Pentecostalism (Robbins 2003). That is, both Pentecostalism's similarities with local religious beliefs/practices (i.e. "continuity") and its preservation of the local spirit world while reversing its moral value (i.e. "discontinuity") can be seen as contributing to the solution of a practical religious problem (e.g. "How can we accommodate Christianity to an indigenous worldview?"). Similarly, this pragmatist approach helps to make sense of Srinivas' claim that the contextualization of imported cultural forms can appeal either to the desire for something exotic or to a concordance with aspects of the local culture (Srinivas 2010: 337-338), since both options are embedded in the process of resonance as problem-solving.

Emotional conditions, too, facilitate this process of resonance. Religious actors' attention comes to be focused on the religious implications of ecology also as a result of the



widespread concern for global warming and other aspects of the environmental crisis. It is not by chance that for most Japanese religions this process of resonance has reached its peak after the disaster at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant following the Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami in March 2011, amidst a generalized sense of anguish. Incidentally, the fact that such ecologic resonance has been taking place for a few decades and has been characterized by topical moments finds a correspondence in Sedda's observation that, as shown by the example of the tomato, resonance can be a cumulative process requiring intermediate stages for the imported foods to become "one's own" (Sedda 2016) – or, one may say, for specific global ideas and practices to be incorporated in a given religiosphere.

From another angle, the importance of emotion is shown by the occasional shifting (more in certain Japanese religions than in others) of the terms of the religious problem to be solved. When "How can religion help to solve the environmental crisis?" becomes "How can our own religion alone (and not others) solve the environmental crisis?", religious actors are evidently motivated to search for resonances that validate their proud cultural nationalism and religious superiorism, thus crystallizing into some form of chauvinistic glocalization. In this case, the interplay of resonance with the search for power by religious actors – which is to some extent already implied in the activity of problem solving – becomes even more apparent. Another possible way of approaching these dynamics of chauvinistic glocalization is offered by Mageo's "emblemizing mimesis", which allows to relate to the (oppressive) cultural Other (and, I would add, also to the Others perceived as oppressive) by using images from one's own culture thought to be absent in the culture of the interlocutor to mark a cultural border. Relevant to our discussion, according to Mageo this kind of mimesis can coexist with incorporative mimesis, with the latter "creatively expanding the local repertoire of schemas", and the former (i.e. emblemizing) "creatively deploying distinguishing schemas to represent cultural identity" (Mageo 2017).

The interactional dimension, too, is important in this process of resonance, not least because the selection of specific cultural objects becomes more likely to the extent that they are

available within the global cultural network. As for the increased potentiality of cultural objects to lead to resonance after they have been experienced as such by high-status players within these interactional dynamics, the greening of Japanese religions represents a borderline case. In fact, the diffusion of such ecological resonance from the center of religious systems (the institutional level) to the peripheries has been only partially successful and is more noticeable in the case of some new religious movements than among traditional religion. In fact, in the latter case most followers remain presumably untouched by these religious solutions to the environmental crisis because of their general disconnection from the activities of temples and shrines, except on certain ritual occasions.

A clearer indication of this interplay between resonance and power, that is, the way in which the sanction by power brokers may help the spread of these patterns of resonance, is offered by the comparative analysis of Soka Gakkai International's (SGI) strategies of glocalization. For example, both in South Africa and Cuba SGI has tried to connect its religious project of "human revolution" to local prestigious figures. As for South Africa, SGI President Ikeda Daisaku has occasionally attempted to coopt the legacy of Nelson Mandela (1918-2013) by establishing a link between Mandela's anti-apartheid political activism and Buddhism (with the former deriving from the latter through Gandhi's *satyagraha*), and even implicitly identifying him as a Bodhisattva of the Earth because of his "deep sense of mission and commitment based on a personal vow" (Ikeda 2014; see Dessì 2020). In Cuba, an analogous development can be seen with regard to National Hero José Martí (1853-1895), who has been praised by Ikeda as a bodhisattva whose spirit reflects the Buddhist principle of *ichinen sanzen* ("All universal phenomena are contained in a single moment of life"), and, similarly to SGI's founder Makiguchi Tsunesaburō (1871-1944), as the leader of an emancipatory project ultimately aimed to transcend the "limitations of the ego" and achieve a "human revolution" (Rodríguez Plasencia 2014). Interestingly, the fortune of the resonance pattern in these two cases has been rather dissimilar due to the different modalities of involvement of high-status players. In the former case, charismatic President



Ikeda's move to coopt Mandela's legacy looks rather weak, with his brief reflections on the South African leader appearing in the context of other discussions (e.g. his book of conversations with Brazilian intellectual Austregésilo de Athayde). To this, one should add the fact that the resonance between Mandela and Buddhism has been hardly exploited as a theme for reflection and discussion by local leaders, and found almost no room in SGI-South Africa's publications. This is probably one major reason why this potential solution to the problem of 'how to link SGI's Buddhism to local South African culture' (i.e. the resonance between Mandela and Buddhism) has found little echo among local SGI followers (Dessi 2020). On the contrary, José Martí has occupied a central place in Ikeda's agenda since the time of his 1996 speech at Havana University, and he has further discussed the "harmonious resonance" between Martí and Nichiren (Buddhism) in dedicated publications, notably the dialogue with the late Cuban intellectual Cintio Vitier (then Honorary President of the Martí Studies Center) appeared in 2013 with the English title *On José Martí*. In addition, this publication has been used as a discussion theme and object of study by local leaders not only in SGI group meetings, but also within the context of public cultural activities organized in close collaboration with the state-run Martí Program Office and the NGO José Martí Cultural Society (Rodríguez Plasencia 2014). All this certainly speaks of a much larger diffusion of the Martí-Buddhism resonance within SGI in Cuba than the Mandela-Buddhism one in South Africa, also as a result of the role played by centrally located religious actors.

Finally, it is worth mentioning another implication of the interactional dimension of resonance that concerns the differences between center and periphery in a given religious system. That is, the "hierarchy of credibility" of cultural objects resulting from the process of resonance tends to be more stable at the center of the system (institutions and religious leaders) than at the periphery (ordinary practitioners), and resonance experienced at the former level does not necessarily correspond to that at the latter level. Similar to what suggested by Sedda (2016) with regard to the transition from "non-food" to "food", we may observe that the successful incorporation of a cultural good

into a specific part of the religious system depends on a complex balance of external factors. These include not only the role of high status players within the religious sphere, but also that of power brokers in other domains such as science and the economy capable of altering (whether intentionally or not) the flow of cultural objects potentially prone to resonate, whose impact may have rather different effects in different parts of the religious sphere.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have suggested that we can make sense of resonance in the study of religious glocalization through a pragmatist perspective. Approaching resonance as a process and not as an inherent quality of cultural objects allows to acknowledge both congruences between ideas/practices circulating in the global cultural network and local cultural practices, and the creative work necessary to use them to solve specific religious problems. Based on my previous theoretical work on religious glocalization, I have illustrated how the solution to such problems (e.g. “How can religion help to solve the environmental crisis?”) implies changes in the structure of a given religious system, such as the incorporation of environmental protection and sustainability within the constellation of goods mediated by religion (as in the case of the greening of religion), or a certain meditative technique in the structure of legitimation (in the case of Hawaiian Shin Buddhist meditators). This cognitive work, which may take different shapes for different religious actors depending on their position within the religious system and their reliance on centrally sanctioned hierarchies of credibility, is also influenced by emotional conditions (e.g. the concern for global warming) orienting the problem-solving activities of religious practitioners toward certain goals rather than others. Moreover, it can be meaningfully related to internally-driven power issues (e.g. a more or less aggressive marking of cultural borders) and a wide range of largely unpredictable and everchanging constraints posed by domains such as science and the economy. This is also a useful reminder that resonance



alone cannot account for all the constraints/incentives underlying the glocalization of religion, and that further in-depth analysis is required to shed more light on other concurring factors, including the search for power and global consciousness. And, as also emerged from the overall discussion, it suggests that such an endeavor would profit greatly from a constant and creative dialogue with other disciplinary fields.

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