Henk Blezer/Mark Teeuwen (eds.), *Buddhism and Nativism: Framing Identity Discourse in Buddhist Environments* (Leiden; Boston: Brill Press, 2013) [§]

Vladimir TIKHONOV
朴露子[*]

As neo-liberal globalization has been dominating almost the whole world since the late 1980s, the dialectics of global vs. local logically became an important focus of the academic inquiry. That the opposition "global-local" is dialectical – that is, both elements of the pair are bound to mutually interact influencing each other in a variety of complicated ways – is more than obvious if one looks, for example, at the ideologies and values of today's globalizing world. "Market" is ubiquitous and triumphant but the way it is understood and practiced in Scandinavia still differs markedly from what is seen as a norm in the USA; contrary to the stereotypes, even relatively less globalized North Korea does not reject the global discourse of human rights, but frames it in its own (essentially nationalist and Confucian) way, emphasizing the people's right to state sovereignty and the ideal of "benevolent state" guaranteeing the safety and subsistence minimum for its subjects.[1] In a way, multi-faceted localizations may be said to constitute an important part of the globalization process. Concomitantly, local cultures, values and ideas are being reinvented, re-framed

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1 Song Jiyeong, *Human Rights Discourse in North Korea: Post-Colonial, Marxist and Confucian Perspectives* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011).

and often commoditized on a global scale, as the international successes of, say, Japanese and Korean popular cultures testify to.[2]

The book under review deals with the phenomenon which one can define as "mediaeval globalization" of sorts – that is, with the local reactions to the spread of avowedly universal religion/ideology of Buddhism in such diverse societies as mediaeval Japan, Tibet, Korea, Indonesia (Java and Bali) and India. In fact, in the last case the situation was reversed: as Johannes Bronkhorst shows in his contribution (pp. 195-205), there Buddhism came to play the role of the subdominant "other" to the Brahmanic tradition, on the understanding that Buddhists had to live in the world already pre-framed by Brahmanism. While the volume deals with diverse societies across South, Southeast and East Asia, the broad and far-reaching exercise in comparativist scholarship its authors and compilers attempted does bring highly useful results. In effect, through making cross-regional typological comparisons the creators of the volume come to define several important persistent patterns – the *regelmäßigkeiten* (regularities) which any system of knowledge claiming to be scientific should be striving after – in the configurations of the mediaeval religious world.

As the volume shows us, in South, Southeast and East Asia the arrival – or the rise, in case of India – of Buddhism results in a complicated re-arrangement of the religious world which may be aptly described with the modern-sounding term "pluralism": perhaps some parallels with twenty-first centuries' globalizing world are not necessarily misleading. As Anette Hornbacher describes in her chapter (pp. 205-229) using Javanese court tradition and Balinese religious situation as examples, such pluralism might imply a degree of mutual complementarity between the two co-existing tradition; in the Indonesian case, such a mutually complementary co-existing was additionally facilitated by the common Tantric heritage of both Hinduism and Buddhism in their local varieties.

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2 See, for example, Nissim Otmazgin and Eyal Ben-Ari (eds.), *Popular Culture and the State in East and Southeast Asia* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2012).

In case of Koryŏ period (936-1392) Korea, as Remco Breuker persuasively argues in his contribution (pp. 229-259), pluralism had also a functional side: while Confucianism determined much of the statecraft, Buddhism, together with a number of other traditions including the more indigenous ones, was – among other things – seen as responsible for the ritual-based maintenance of the cosmic harmony in and around the realm. Such a pattern of heterogeneous religious and ideological landscape implied also a high degree of openness towards the complexities of an international system in which Korea found itself a part of a developed tributary networks centred upon the current hegemon of China's Central Plains. Indeed, an attempt of a group of nativist ritual experts and their regional political allies from the northwest of the country to re-define the Korean polity in terms of self-contained self-centeredness (the so-called Myoch'ŏng rebellion, 1135-1136) was quickly crushed. A move away from pluralist worldview was hardly realistically possible inside the framework of the Koryŏ-period system.

Ironically, or, perhaps, rather naturally, Myoch'ŏng, the chief nativist opponent of Koryŏ-period pluralist worldview inside which Buddhism played one of the most prominent roles, was a Buddhist monk himself, and amply utilized Buddhism-derived terminology in his attempts to redefine in the nativist style Korea's ritual geography and cosmology. In a fully comparable way, as Mark Teeuwen showed in his chapter (pp. 51-77), mediaeval Japan saw the development of "Buddhist nativism" of sorts inside Tendai and Singon schools. Japan, originally a peripheral land in the sacred geography of Buddhism, was elevated in this trend to the status of the "original land" of cosmic Buddha Vairochana. The global vision of the Buddhist *ecumene* was retained; it was the position of one particular locality (Japan) that underwent a drastic change. From a slightly different angle, Satō Hiroo showed in his contribution (pp. 29-51) that the notion of Japan as a "divine land" (*shinkoku*) as a mediaeval Buddhist concept was not necessarily only to elevate, but also to relativise Japan and its rulers as a part and parcel of the Buddhist cosmos in which "gods" are subject to

the universal Dharma laws. The "de-universalisation" of the concept happened much later, when it was used in an anti-Buddhist context by early modern Shinto ideologues. As the two first "Tibetan" chapters of the book, by Jean-Luc Achard (pp. 77-123) and Henk Blezer (pp. 123-159) show, the attempts to re-write the history by omitting the connections with the global (Buddhist) paradigms are typical also for New Bőn historiography. Yet another "Tibetan" chapter, by Dan Martin (pp. 159-195), deals with the mediaeval Buddhist appropriation of a local ritual – again showing the degree to which the interaction between the native and global frames the identity patterns for both of them in the concrete regional contexts.

Overall, the book is an important contribution to the comparativist scholarship on Asia's mediaeval religion. It could be further improved by paying more attention to the *social* forces beyond the negotiations between the practitioners of different ritual traditions. This part, however, is always difficult for the scholars working predominantly with religion as such; perhaps, more cooperation with social historians may be conducive to enriching the religious studies' works in this respect?