Modern Buddhism
in Japan

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Fifty years have passed since YOSHIDA Kyūichi published his “Research on Modern Buddhism in Japan” (1959), a monumental work in the study of modern Japanese Buddhism which established fundamental directions for this area of research. Guided by Yoshida’s example, research in the field has made great progress through the work of KASHIWARA Yūsen, IKEDA Eishun, and other pioneers.¹

However, suggesting that this research is now in a period of transition, HAYASHI Makoto (2009, 12) has pointed out “the time for a redefinition of ‘modern Buddhism’ has arrived.” I myself have revisited such questions concerning the definition of the concept of “modern Buddhism”—seen as self-evident in the past—as well as the problems it creates in this research field (see ŌTANI 2009). I do not think that additional progress in research can be expected on the basis of former assumptions, and I endorse Hayashi’s call for redefining the field.

¹Acknowledgments: Regarding the composition of this article, I gained a great deal through my engagement with the members of the Shin Bukkyō Kenkyūkai research group (led by Yoshinaga Shin’ichi) as well as mailing lists and other sources, and I am indebted to them in part for my results. I wish here to express my thanks.

¹ For a review of prior research in this field, see NISHIYAMA 1998, KÔMOTO 2000, HAYASHI 2006, and ŌTANI 2009.
Presenting the Problem and Redefining “Modern Buddhism”

A Turning Point for Research on Modern Buddhism

My interest in “Modern Buddhism” (kindai Bukkyō 近代仏教) led to writing an article on the development of research on “Modern Buddhism” (Otani 2009), in which I took a look back over the history of research in the field from the prewar period up to the present, reconsidering the basic line of questioning, the definitions of concepts, the perspectives of the researchers, and so on. In that overview I relied to a great extent on the work of Isomae Jun’ichi (2002 and 2008), who analyzed the establishment and the formation of the concept of “religion” (in Japanese, shūkyō 宗教) in modern Japan. Isomae argues that originally the concept of “Buddhism” was constructed in a way that made it inseparable from the new concept of “religion.” In the historical, social, and intellectual context of modern Japan, which involved the origin of the term shūkyō as a translation of the English word “religion,” this usage was strongly influenced by Western Protestantism, and the term became standard from the late 1870s. In that process “Buddhism” was imprinted by the concept of “religion”; it came to reflect the strongly-weighted orientation to “religion as belief,” which was part of the individually internalized religiosity rooted in the Protestant tradition of faith (Isomae 2008, 69). Thus, a view of Buddhism emphasizing “belief,” which according to Yoshida (1959, 325) came to be assessed as the proper arrival point for “modern Buddhism,” was a universal premise among participants in Kiyozawa Manshi’s Spiritualism or the New Buddhist Movement of Sakaino Kōyō and others; and this has been a commonly-held assumption for researchers who have come after Yoshida as well. Based on such a conception of “Buddhism,” various kinds of pre-World War II ideas and movements came to be categorized in the postwar period as “modern Buddhism.” In my article I clarified how the research field had developed along these lines.

“Modern Buddhism” in Broad and Narrow Senses of the Term

In considering the situation of Buddhism in modern Japan, however, it also goes without saying that reform ideas and movements incorporating a view of Buddhism that emphasized belief were not the only game in town; indeed,
it is more accurate to say such efforts (focused on “beliefs”) were limited. What, then, did characterize the nature of Buddhism existing in modern Japan from the Meiji to early Showa period? I have accepted as fundamental the conceptual analysis of belief and practice employed by Isomae, along with the distinction between householders and clerics recognized by the participants responsible for modern Buddhism. I have also given considerable weight to the work of NISHIYAMA Shigeru (1998, 8), who clarified the essential structure of modern Buddhism as consisting of “doctrine proper,” “ancestor religion” and “this-worldly (material) benefits” (genzeriyaku). This structure is outlined in Figure 1 (see also ŌTANI 2009, 7).

In research on the “history of modern Japanese Buddhism,” every one of the four quadrants of this chart has become the object of some research, and I have defined the whole range of such efforts as concerned with “modern Buddhism in the broad sense.” However, researchers since Yoshida have focused mostly on the second quadrant, which can be defined as “modern Buddhism in the narrow sense.” What is included within the range of this second quadrant, and which has been earnestly studied in much of the leading research in this field, is the reformist Buddhist ideas and movements supported mainly by certain Buddhists in the householder category (or by a number of reformist clerics and secularized ex-clerics) who placed stress on Buddhism as belief.

Here I want to problematize the process of the formation of this “Buddhism in the narrow sense.” In particular, when deeper attention is paid to this “Buddhism in the narrow sense” from the mid-1880s up to the 1930s, we notice that the discourse and activity offered by this “new Buddhism” (shin Bukkyō 新仏教) appears to be only intermittent. Specifically it refers to the “new Buddhism” of Nakanishi Ushirō in the mid-Meiji period, the new Buddhist movements of the late Meiji, and the “Rising Buddhism” of the Shinkō Seinendōmei (Rising Buddhist Youth Association). In the discourse and activity of these groups, the rituals and systematizations involved in the “traditional sanghas” of the fourth quadrant were particularly rejected, since they were considered to be “old Buddhism” (kyū Bukkyō 旧仏教). Also discarded were the Buddhist-related new religions and the magical quality of

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the popular Buddhism of the third quadrant. In short, the “new Buddhism” of the second quadrant formulated its own identity by interactive negotiation and opposition vis-à-vis the other quadrants, in that manner existing as a dynamic movement running through modern Japanese Buddhist history. In my mind, it was this movement that formed the kernel of “modern Buddhism in the narrow sense.”

Throughout these lines of movement called “new Buddhism” there was one great characteristic: as they maintained their premise of an emphasis on a belief-oriented view of Buddhism (together with their disparaging view of practice-oriented elements), their support came from a membership of young Buddhists in their twenties and thirties. In other words, it appears that “new Buddhism” was a youth culture that relied on young followers. That is the hypothesis of my own argument.

Figure 1: Typology of Modern Japanese Buddhism.
In the remainder of this article I will analyze the discourse and movement of “new Buddhism,” focusing on the question of the social base and communications technology (media) that supported it, along with its substantive content. By paying special attention to the structure of distribution and reception of the discourse and its ideas, I want to examine the process by which this “modern Buddhism in a narrow sense” was formed. Within the limits of the available space, the analysis will also concentrate on examining the direction of “new Buddhism” in the Meiji period.

The Quickening of “New Buddhism”:
Nakanishi Ushirō’s New Buddhism and the Hanseikai

Nakanishi Ushirō, Agitator in Theory

I will start by taking up the discourse of the journalist Nakanishi Ushirō (1859–1930) who was active from the late 1880s to the late 1890s and has been described as “one of the theoretical agitators of Meiji Buddhist reform history” (Kōsaka 1937, 28). Nakanishi is a forgotten figure in the field of modern Japanese Buddhist history, but in recent years Hoshino Seiji has energetically published the results of his work on Nakanishi and the description below largely relies on that work.

In passing it may be mentioned that in YOSHIDA Kyūichi’s book on the history of modern and contemporary Japanese Buddhism (1998), which surveyed modern Japanese Buddhist history from the end of the Tokugawa period up to the end of the twentieth century, Mizutani Ninkai (1836–1896)

3. Ikeda Eishun, a leader among those who advanced research on Meiji Buddhist history, in his book on new Buddhist movements in the Meiji period (1976) used the term “new Buddhism” (shinbukkyō) as a descriptive concept. Ikeda comprehensively covered the trends of the reformist Buddhists (clerical and lay) and Buddhist sanghas of the Meiji period. He categorized these as “Meiji new Buddhist movements,” but here I do not follow Ikeda’s usage. The present standpoint is defined in terms of traditional Buddhism (= “archaic Buddhism,” “old Buddhism”) versus new Buddhism (= “rising Buddhism”), and emphasizes Buddhist reform and the discourse and activity of the Buddhists who put it into practice.

4. Kōsaka was a member of the Meiji Bukkyō Hensanjo, which was founded in the Ginza district of Tokyo in March 1932 by Tomomatsu Entai.

5. See HOSHINO 2002, 2006, and 2009. In addition I have had the opportunity to meet Hoshino directly in person to discuss Nakanishi’s writings and ideas.
of the Shinshū Honganjiha branch, who wrote a book entitled *Shin Bukkyō* (1888), and Kitabatake Dōryū (1820–1907) in the same sect, who emphasized the reform of Buddhist temples in his book *Hōkai dokudan* (1889), were introduced as personalities who ranked with Nakanishi in raising the “banner of new Buddhism” in the 1880s. However, Yoshida’s evaluation of all these three men was harsh: “They were riding on the wave of Buddhist reform and revival after the *haibutsu kishaku* episode; but mainly they were agitators, and for them Buddhist reform was a kind of commodity or come-on, and their activity lacked any consistency” (Yoshida 1998, 94). Kōsaka Kuraji, on the other hand, who recalled the Buddhist reform movement of the Meiji period after the war, judged as follows: “Beginning in the late 1880s, Nakanishi [in Buddhism] was ranked with Tokutomi in Christianity; he appeared like a comet and became the darling of the Buddhist world in an instant. His opinions about Buddhist reform together with his refined writing lorded it over the field without opposition” (Kōsaka 1937, 28).6

Nakanishi was most active in the late 1880s and early 1890s, when he fired off one work after another publishing his theories about Buddhist reform: beginning with *Shūkyō kakumeiron* 宗教革命論 in February 1889, he wrote works seeking attention from the public including *Soshiki Bukkyōron* 組織仏教論 in 1890, *Shūkyō taiseiron* 宗教大勢論 in 1891, *Shin Bukkyōron* 新仏教論 in 1892, *Bukkyō tainanron* 仏教大難論 also in 1892, and others in rapid succession. These works had a great deal of resonance in his day.

*From the Impact of “Shūkyō kakumeiron” to a Loss of Hope in “Shin Bukkyōron”*

What made Nakanishi famous, and gained him the title of “master of protecting Buddhism” (護法居士, see Kōsaka 1937, 32), was the publication on the “reform of religion” (*Shūkyō kakumeiron*) by the publisher Hakubundō. Written when Nakanishi was thirty-one years old (according to the traditional method of reckoning age in Japan by counting from one year old at birth), the framework of the book offered a typology and an evolutionary

6. Kōsaka, too, (in a manner of speaking) addressing the “sudden collapse” of Nakanishi after the early 1890s, has pointed out that “many issues were given impetus by problems in his own conduct; he did not give heed to reform practice which was motivated by genuine Buddhist faith, and did not go beyond simply being an agitator” (1937, 29).
theory of religion. It compared Christianity and Buddhism and showed that Buddhism was the “religion of the civilized world.” The contents offered what must be called a Buddhist reform theory, but it was based on a doctrine of comparison which adopted ideas from contemporary Western religious studies, philosophy, sociology, and theosophy.

In the beginning of the work, Nakanishi presented a typology distinguishing natural religions (those that developed based on the inherent spiritual consciousness of individuals) and revealed religions (those that were born from some power transcending the human, such as sages, kami and Buddhas, prophets, or messianic saviors). Taking as its premise the argument that a religious evolution would accompany the progress of civilization, after presenting a diagram in which polytheism shifted to monotheism which shifted to pantheism, the book identified Buddhism as the revealed religion that had pantheism as its foundation and that was placed as the “pure perfect religion” in accord with the ultimate truth. Christianity was stipulated as “archaic religion” and Buddhism as “new religion.” Yet while extolling the value of Buddhism, the book considered that the hitherto existing “old Buddhism” in its unchanged form did not have the qualifications to become “the religion of the civilized world” in the era that was to come; and so a “great reform of the religious world” was emphasized. Celebrating the advent of a “new Buddhism” Nakanishi stressed an evolutionarily progressive reform of Buddhism, which meant that by “transforming old Buddhism, a new Buddhism must be brought into being” (Nakanishi 1889, 181).

In the epilogue to the book, Nakanishi contrasted the relationships the “new Buddhism” and the “old Buddhism” as follows:

1. Old Buddhism is conservative, new Buddhism is progressive.
2. Old Buddhism is aristocratic, new Buddhism is populist.
3. Old Buddhism is materialist, new Buddhism is spiritual.
4. Old Buddhism is scholarly, new Buddhism is oriented to real faith experience.
5. Old Buddhism is individualistic, new Buddhism is social.
6. Old Buddhism is abstractly doctrinal, new Buddhism is concretely historical.
7. Old Buddhism is fantastical, new Buddhism is reasonable.”

(Nakanishi 1889, 183–207)

Of course, at that time Nakanishi’s “new Buddhism” did not necessarily exist
in substance; ultimately it was a product of Nakanishi’s imagination.7 Also, it was hard to say that “old Buddhism” was accurately descriptive of the real state of the traditional sanghas that were being labeled “old Buddhism.” It was rather the case, in accordance with my usage of “modern Buddhism in the narrow sense,” that this dichotomization of new Buddhism versus old Buddhism (in Figure 1, the second quadrant versus the “traditional Buddhism” of the third quadrant) served the role of representing mutually opposed alternatives for contemporary Buddhist institutions.

Nakanishi’s theory of “new Buddhism” called forth the sympathies of the young Buddhists of the time who were critical of the current state of the Buddhist world. For example, the publication Hanseikai zasshi 反省会雑誌 44 (10 July 1891) included an article noting “Mr. Nakanishi’s theory of new Buddhism is certainly progressive.” (The author of the article was given as a “Silent Buddhist Follower” 黙々居士.) Passages like the following appeared:

Concerning the great changes which are stirring up stormy waves in the Japanese religious world, it is necessary to refer to that gentleman [Nakanishi]…. The term “New Buddhism” since that time is now current throughout the entire world of Buddhism. By and large it draws the attention of religious professionals and a few plucky young people. The time for the reform of old Buddhism has come. A mass of voices is cheering that the right occasion for a new Buddhism has arrived. But stubborn elders, as they regard the reforming character of new Buddhism, raise a scowling eyebrow and are angrily resistant to the term. They are stricken with dread, and finally reach the critical point of brazen public attacks directed against new Buddhism. Consequently, while there are those who call themselves the youth of new Buddhism, there are others who scream that new Buddhism is traitorous.

(Hanseikai zasshi 44, 1891: 21)

The Hanseikai zasshi (to be described below) was founded in 1886 by student volunteers of the Jōdoshinshū Honganjiha’s clerical training school Futsū kyōkō as a special-purpose publication related to an alcohol temperance movement. It became a place where reformist Buddhist youth congregated, and it is understandable that these youth who were aspiring to reform the Buddhist world supported Nakanishi’s ideas.

7. The term “new Buddhism” itself had already been utilized in the book Shin būkkyō from Mizutani Ninkai published in July 1888 (author unknown).
Nakanishi’s theory of Buddhist reform was maintained in his succeeding books *Soshiki Bukkyōron* and *Shin Bukkyōron*. What particularly clarified Nakanishi’s own vision of “new Buddhism” was the work *Shin Bukkyōron* published in 1892 by Kōkyō Shoin.

Nakanishi there presented three features as his concrete vision of “new Buddhism:” (1) looking outside of Buddhism *per se* for a new foundation for truth, which could establish the religion anew; (2) opening up a new school of religion which could stand outside of the various currently existing institutions; and (3) reforming the hitherto existing dysfunctional practices of each religious group, renewing their institutional systems, revising their methods of propagation, and attempting to build a movement for the contemporary world. The aim of his thinking about “new Buddhism” was “unity rather than fragmentation, and harmony rather than conflict,” which he promoted as part of the third feature of his vision. However, Nakanishi declared conclusively that “for today New Buddhism is only a metaphysically existing institution” (Nakanishi 1892, 57) and people anticipating the first and third features of the vision might consider this emphasis to be despair or disappointment. Further, Nakanishi himself in March 1897 published a work *Gongohōjō* (A fortress of stern defense of the Dharma), produced by the Kyoto publisher Yamaoka Etsu. In it, he criticized the reform movement inside the Ōtani branch of Shin Buddhism which was led by Kiyozawa Manshi (1863–1903) and others of his Shirakawa Faction. In that later work Nakanishi wrote that the “reformation of Buddhism” which he had promoted himself had been an error, saying “the new Buddhism I declaimed was in reality a mistake committed by myself. That new Buddhism was in reality a false Buddhism.” (Nakanishi 1897, 17) He had reached the point of enunciating his own critique towards his own earlier position.

*Manifesting “New Buddhism”?*

One of the Buddhist-oriented intellectuals who influenced Nakanishi was Inoue Enryō (1858–1919), who was just one year senior to Nakanishi. In the preface to his work *Shūkyō kakumeiron*, Nakanishi noted that “[Inoue’s] penetrating insight gains my constant admiration” (Nakanishi 1889, 4)8

8. However, regarding that treatment of Buddhism he stated, “My views do not coincide,” emphasizing a difference of opinion with Inoue (Nakanishi 1889, 4). Also, *Shūkyō*
referring to Inoue’s book *Bukkyō katsuron joron* 仏教活論序論, which had been published by Tetsugaku Shoin. The author, Inoue Enryō, a philosopher who had emerged from the Ōtani branch of Shin Buddhism and who was also an educator who founded Tōyō University, had published that book in February 1887 when he was thirty years old, two years ahead of *Shūkyō kakumeiron*. It was obviously also a work pressing for the reform of Buddhism. Inoue, who rediscovered “Buddhism” based on a serious look at Western knowledge, resolved that “in reforming Buddhism, we must make it a religion for the civilized world” (Inoue 1887, 10). He pressed for a revival of Buddhism accenting the social role of Buddhism and interpreted according to Western knowledge, while adopting the standpoint of *gokoku airi* 護国愛理 (“defend the nation and love principle”). With its message of encouragement to a Buddhist world in a state of malaise due to the damage suffered at the beginning of the Meiji period with the separation of Shintō and Buddhism, the episode of *haibutsu kishaku*, and the government policy of making Shintō an official national teaching, the book became a bestseller for its time.9

Yet—to explain briefly—after having initially received the influence of Inoue, Nakanishi’s ideas on Buddhist reform could be seen as subsequently transformed into a bestseller via Inoue’s *Bukkyō katsuron yoron*, having been absorbed into the general currents of contemporary Buddhist reform. As Kōsaka has noted:

> The third section of Inoue’s *Bukkyō katsuron*, which received such wild acclaim, was published in 1890. The reform policies proposed by Nakanishi and other advocates aroused feverish enthusiasm in the stratum of young Buddhists, and within the religious institutions as a whole it sent up a flare of reform. Everywhere a vast number of Buddhist youth groups emerged; the entire situation was truly unprecedented. (Kōsaka 1937, 33)

In *Shin Bukkyōron* Nakanishi himself said that it was beginning with *Bukkyō kakumeiron* that his arguments about Buddhist reform had exerted influ-

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9. For example, Murakami Senshō, in his 1914 autobiography reminisced as follows: “If a work like *Bukkyō katsuron yōron* were done today, probably nobody would take it seriously or would purchase it. Yet at the time, the sales really were tremendous” (1914, 261).
ence within Japan, and it was afterwards that the conception of “new Buddhism” manifested itself more and more. Concrete examples included the Rishō Ankokukai 立正安国会 association of Tanaka Chigaku (1861–1939), the emergence of the private university with Kitabatake Dōryū, the Kyūseikyō 救世教 religion of Daidō Chōan (1843–1908), Olcott’s idea of coordination with southern Buddhism sponsored by the Theosophical Society in Japan, the birth of comparative religious studies, the writings of Inoue Enryō and Oda Tokunō (1860–1911) on Buddhism, the unity conferences held among the leaders of various religious organizations, and the publication of Buddhist periodicals. The ideas promoted by Nakanishi seemingly brought about these phenomena. But was this really the case? In my opinion Nakanishi’s ideas of Buddhist reform were not what brought about these phenomena. Rather, the role of Nakanishi’s writings was of providing justification for the Buddhist reform trends of the late 1880s and early 1890s. I would like to investigate this matter from another angle.

Who Read Nakanishi Ushirō’s Writings?

Just who was it that read and appropriated Nakanishi’s ideas on Buddhist reform? What kind of relationship did Nakanishi’s texts actually have with the ripening of Buddhist reform from the late 1880s?

I would draw attention to the association called the Hanseikai (Self-Reflection Association). In April 1885 the Honganji branch of Shin Buddhism opened a Futsū kyōkō 普通教校 (a “normal” school, that is, containing in its curriculum “normal,” general secular education along with clerical training) to serve as its main educational institution with the primary objective of training Buddhist ministers. Expressing the progressive educational trend in this normal, secular education, in March 1886 fourteen interested students from this school formed a temperance society under the slogan “moral improvement through abstinence” and also founded the Hanseikai (initially entitled Hanseiyūshikai 反省有志会). In August of 1887...

10. However, in October 1888 the Kaikyōkō and the Futsū kyōkō were reorganized into the Kōkyūkin 考究院, Naigakuin 内学院, and Bungakuryō 文学寮, adding layers to the trial-and-error in Honganji’s educational policy.

11. On the Hanseikai, see Shinshū honganjiha shūmusho 1969, Part 3 section 4; Ryūkoku Daigaku sanbyakugojunenshi Henshū Iinkai 2000, Chapter 3, Section 4; Chūōkōronsha 1955 and 1965.
an affiliated periodical called the Hanseikai zasshi began publication (this was renamed in 1893 the Hansei zasshi, and then in 1899 the Chūōkōron). Taking responsibility for its management were Sawai Jun (Takakusu Junjirō, 1866–1945), Sakurai Gichō (1868–1926), Furukawa Rōsen (Isamu) (1871–1899), Umehara Tōru (1865–1907), and other young Buddhists from the late 1870s through the early 1890s.

The growth of membership in the Hanseikai was striking: in 1889 the membership was 8,448, and then in 1895 it reached 18,000. The number of issues of Hanseikai zasshi did not necessarily keep pace. For each issue an average of only about 1,000 copies was produced (with the exception of 1891, when an average of 2,544 copies per issue were published, see Nagamine 2004, 135–36). Indeed, as indicated by Nakagawa Yōko (2000, 3), “The aspiration of the young Buddhists congregated under the Hanseikai was not limited simply to the experience and dissemination of ‘moral improvement through temperance’; it was a means for Buddhist reform, for the flourishing of ‘new Buddhism.’” For example, an editorial entitled “Thinking Today among Young Buddhists” (author unknown) in Hanseikai zasshi 5 (10 April 1888, 213), and appearing before the publication of Shūkyō kakumeiron, stated: “We desire this: It is as if our faction has made a vow in which we expect ourselves to be the leadership of the youth of our nation, to be the reformers of religion, to stand as the protectors of society.” In addition to thus defining their position, it proclaimed: “[The modern era] in reality has become a time when the clerics of the old Buddhist temples must turn to the new youth and entrust to them the future fate of Buddhism.”

Following the publication of Shūkyō kakumeiron, the influence of Nakanoishi became conspicuous in the discourse and showed the reformist aims of the young Buddhists. Another editorial entitled “The Fundamental Character of the New Buddhist Movement” (author unknown) in Hanseikai zasshi

12. See Nagamine 2004, 135–36. According to Nagamine, the core stratum of those who read house organ journals in the early period consisted of organization supporters from outside high schools or universities. This was in contrast to the full members who came from within such schools. From this it can be surmised that the core readership was probably “people within a sangha who had Buddhist connections” (Nagamine 2004, 138).

13. When looking back at events ten years earlier, Furukawa (1896, 33) suggested that in the Futsūkyōkō there was a trend for Buddhist reform, for in that school “the true face was the bringing together of all kinds of people, both clerical and lay, cultivating the energy of Buddhist reform.”
Modern Buddhism in Japan stated: “In addition to bearing chief responsibility for the ultimate reform of the Buddhist sectarian lineages, the fundamental character of the new Buddhist movement is to create a movement of their entire organizational systems.” This spoke to institutional reform in accordance with the term “new Buddhism.” Also, an editorial entitled “Two Great Buddhist Followers since 1891” (authored by the twenty-one-year-old Fukuoka) in Hanseikai zasshi 42 (10 May 1891, 5) cited the previously quoted schema of old Buddhism and new Buddhism used in Nakanishi’s Shūkyō kakumeiron and offered its approval, saying “we all completely concur in the writer’s comparison.” It declared: “Our self-reflection group, though truly only a small band of poor ability, is the great organ of this new Buddhism.… It is fit for a great karmic destiny of social reform and clerical purification.” The direct influence of Nakanishi can be seen here.

We may note that the same issue that contained the above editorial included an editorial of Nakanishi’s entitled “Japan and Buddhism.” Nakanishi’s draft for Shūkyō kakumeiron had come to the attention of the powerful Nishi Honkanji institutional figure Akamatsu Renjō, and by means of a monetary contribution from Honkanji, Nakanishi had sojourned in America from June 1889 through April 1890. In October 1890, after returning to Japan, he was appointed concurrently assistant principal and professor at the Bungaku-ryō (although this was terminated in September 1892 due to a reorganization of the school.) Nakanishi undertook activities under the umbrella of this Honkanji connection, and in June 1889 he affiliated with the Hanseikai as a supporter14; in February 1891 he was appointed its assistant director.15 Thus between Nakanishi and the Hanseikai there was not only an intellectual influence but also direct personal interaction.

The Expanding Buddhist Youth Circles and the Buddhist Periodicals

The Hanseikai, which supported Nakanishi’s ideas on Buddhist reform, was a community of Buddhist youth that had certain reformist tendencies. In fact, however, a great many Buddhist youth circles besides the Hanseikai came into being between the late 1880s and the late 1890s. In addition to

Kōsaka, the above-quoted editorial found in Hanseikai zasshi under the title “The Fundamental Character of the New Buddhist Movement,” contained a description stating that “as of this time small associations of Buddhist followers are truly frequent and youth organizations are especially numerous” (10 April 1890, 1).\textsuperscript{16} Surveying this history, RYÛKEI Akio has noted: “The Buddhist youth movement in modern Japan can be said to have begun from the late 1880s” (1987, 313).\textsuperscript{17}

According to RYÛKEI, from the late 1870s amateur organizations of students centered in Tokyo emerged who were devoted to Buddhism and wanted to pursue it. These groups were found in both state and private schools. Then, in the late 1880s, groups called “Buddhist Youth Associations” were also established in Tokyo, in the Kansai region, and in various regional schools and Buddhist temples. In April 1887 (two months after the publication of Bukkyō katsuron yoron) a Buddhist youth association was formed in Tokyo, and in January 1892 (the same month and year as the publication of Shin Bukkyōron) the first genuine unifying umbrella organization, the Greater Japan Buddhist Youth Association, was established. Buddhist students from the Imperial University (today’s University of Tokyo), Tokyo’s High School Number One (also today’s University of Tokyo), the Tokyo Senmon Gakkō (today’s Waseda University), Keio Gijuku (today’s Keio University), Tetsugakkan (today’s Tōyō University), and others participated. The purpose was, in every university, “to incubate personal relationships among Buddhist youth and together give them a taste of the dharma.” Activities included scheduled events such as a Shakyamuni Birthday Association in the spring and a Summer Workshop Association.\textsuperscript{18} In addition, students in Kansai formed into groups from Kyoto Imperial University (today’s Kyoto University), Kyoto’s High School Number Three (also today’s Kyoto University), Nishihonganji’s Daigakurin and Bungakuryō (today’s Ryûkoku

\textsuperscript{16} It is also pointed out that at this time “a great number of Buddhist periodicals” are “being published.”

\textsuperscript{17} On the history of the Bukkyō Seinenkai in the Kansai area, see SONODA 1960. The description here relies on the research of RYÛKEI and Sonoda.

\textsuperscript{18} See HIROTA 1994. Incidentally, among the contemporary Buddhist intellectuals who gave these summer lectures that year were Shimaji Mokurai, Nanjō Bun’yū, Ōuchi Seiran, Murakami Senshō, Sawayanagi Masatarō, Maedu Eun, and Shaku Unshō.
University), and the Shinshū Kyōto Chūgakkō (today’s Ōtani University). An overall Kansai Buddhist Youth Association was also formed.\(^\text{19}\)

Unfortunately, it cannot be determined whether or not the students who participated in these Buddhist youth associations in fact read the texts of Inoue Enryō and Nakanishi. However, it can be affirmed that Nakanishi’s activities were carried out with these Buddhist youth circles from the late 1880s situated in the background.

We must also mention that the late 1880s though the 1890s was a period of growth in Buddhist-related media. Kōsaka Kuraji has introduced the following data about numbers of Buddhist newspapers and periodicals (comprising changes in titles as well) in the Meiji period:\(^\text{20}\)

- 1872–1877: 37 publication titles
- 1888–1887: 64 publication titles
- 1888–1897: 237 publication titles
- 1898–1907: 166 publication titles
- 1908–1912: 73 publication titles

It is clear that there was a plethora of new publications founded from about 1888. There were forty-eight items in 1889 and forty-five items in 1890, so that the largest number appeared in those two years. According to Kōsaka, in the background was the energetic activity that accompanied the newly-achieved independence of various Buddhist organizations, a change that had occurred with the suspension of the kyōdōshoku national teacher system in 1884. Other important factors were resistance to Christianity and a period of prosperity in the Japanese economy. The Hanseikai zasshi in August 1887 and the journal Bukkyō in March 1889 were established amidst such conditions, adopting a transsectarian pan-Buddhist standpoint as described below. Regarding the decade from 1888 Kōsaka points out that “the lethargy of Buddhist clerics as made visible through the periodicals, the exposure of decadence and decay, the forcibly argued declaration of stag-

\(^{19}\) Kimura Naoe (1998) has indicated that the birth of the term “youth” (seinen) to refer to the new generation occurred in the late 1880s. According to Kimura, throughout Japan from the late 1880s there was a vigorous movement to form such associations led by the younger generation, and these many organizations of youth undertook by themselves the publication of periodicals. Both the Hanseikai and Bukkyō Seinenkai, as the new generation in the Buddhist world, were the “youth” who now made their entrance.

\(^{20}\) See Kōsaka 1935, 88. In addition see Tokushi 1933 and Nakano 1937.
nating degeneration—all bit like a severe autumn frost” (Kōsaka 1935, 81). Thus a discourse of criticism towards traditional Buddhism can be heard in the Buddhist media from about 1887.

It is clear that by the 1890s the environment for Inoue’s and Nakanishi’s theories of Buddhist reform was a historical and social context that encouraged the organization of Buddhist youth circles and the development of Buddhist media. Nakanishi grasped at the contemporary opportunity for Buddhist reformation as it was given meaning by the most progressive knowledge of the day, and as it was being constituted through the outlook of comparative religion with a foundation in Western scholarship and justified on the basis of the term “new Buddhism.” It can be surmised that as the Buddhist media spread and supported an awareness (both pro and con) of Nakanishi’s reformist theory of new Buddhism, it was accepted into the social base provided by the Buddhist youth circles led by the Hanseikai. The Buddhist youth influenced by Nakanishi applied pressure for Buddhist reform both inside and outside the sectarian organizations. It was just this circulatory or reciprocal relationship that formed the structure of “new Buddhism” in the decade from 1887 to 1896 and seems to have served as a mechanism for amplifying opportunities for Buddhism reform.

The Practice of “New Buddhism”: The “Free Investigation” of the Shinbukkyō Dōshikai

Furukawa Rōsen as Mediator

At the end of the year 1896, the Hansei zasshi moved from Kyoto to Tokyo, since it was seeking to attract a more general audience. Its page layouts were revised, and by strengthening the arts and literature contributions (which

21. In addition to the Hanseikai, we could name the Bukkyō Shin Undō of the Jōdo organization. A periodical called Bukkyō shin undō was launched in March 1889 as a project of the staff and students of Chion’in’s Jōdoshūgaku Kyōto Shikō school. (Later in the same year the name changed to Dai ni bukkyō shin undō.) This publication introduced Nakanishi’s new “highly famous” writing Soshiki bukkyōron (in Dai ni bukkyō shin undō 8 [May 15, 1890]: 33), and declarations appeared such as “for the greatest number under heaven, hopes are vested in our young clerics; in any case, the young clerics are really the spirit of new Buddhism.” See the article by “A Nonattached Ordained Person” [pseudonym], “Seinen no sōryo (setsuzen)” 青年の僧侶(接前), in Dai ni bukkyō shin undō 14 (November 15, 1890): 35.
it had already begun to incorporate) it succeeded in obtaining a readership four times larger than it had been in Kyoto. Thus it began to turn into a commercialized general magazine. Replacing the *Hansei zasshi* was the journal *Shin Bukkyō*, founded in 1900 as the organ of the Shinbukkyōto Dōshikai (New Buddhism Friendship Association), which had begun to set forth ideas about radical Buddhist reformism. Basically the “new Buddhism” movement had been transferred from the activities of Nakanishi and the Hanseikai in Kyoto to the activities of the New Buddhism Friendship Association in Tokyo. A specific figure had mediated that transition, namely Furukawa Rōsen of the Hanseikai. Subsequently the journal *Bukkyō*, for which Furukawa was chief editor, became the continuation of both *Hanseikai zasshi* and *Shin Bukkyō*.

Born in a Shin Buddhist Honganjiha temple in Wakayama in June 1871, Furukawa entered the new Futsū kyōkō school of Honganji in September 1886. As a member of the Hanseikai, he took on responsibilities for writing articles and editing for the *Hanseikai zasshi*. In October 1888 he opposed an educational reform in the Honganjiha, as a result of which in February of the following year he moved to Tokyo, where he studied at Tokyo Hōgakuin (today’s Chūō University), Kokumin Eigakukai, Meiji Gakuin, and the Imperial University. With the support of Shimaji Mokurai (1838–1911) he formed a Buddhist Youth Society in March 1889, whose purpose was to provide “a youth society to mutually polish and refine morality, by taking such principles into Buddhism.” It declared “a time to declaim Buddhist activity has come, when Buddhism will indeed leap onto the stage above society’s horizon.”22 (However, the activity of this society atrophied with Furukawa’s enrollment in Meijigakuin in September of the same year.) In April 1891 Furukawa wrote the above-mentioned editorial “Two Great Buddhist Followers.” Then in October of 1892, as a graduate of the Honganji Futsū kyōkō school in Tokyo, he founded a new Tokyo Buddhist Youth Association as an association for monthly discussions and for lectures by Shimaji. He also participated in the Greater Japan Buddhist Youth Association. In this way Furukawa threw himself into the very midst of the currents of the contem-

22. See Furukawa 1889, 1. For further information on the life and activities of Furukawa see Sugimura 1901, Kobayashi 2005, and Yoshinaga 2009.
porary Buddhist youth association movement and began to elaborate his insistence on Buddhist reform.

In December 1893 Furukawa and his colleagues founded the Keiikai (Warp and Woof Society) with the aim of “specially studying significant problems in scholarship and religion, refining knowledge, and cultivating morality.” The founding members were six: Nishiyori Kinjirō, Ōkubo Itaru, Furukawa, Hōjō Taiyō, Sugimura Kōtarō (Sojinkan), and Kikuchi Kenjō. (Nishiyori and Kikuchi were members of the Tokyo Buddhist Youth Association.) Later Koga Shin, Tagami Tamekichi, and Sakaino Kōyō were added. The Furukawa group planned to cooperate with the leaders of the Greater Japan Buddhist Youth Association and consulted on adopting the journal *Bukkyō* to represent their organizations, but they were unable to come to agreement and finally cooperation was not implemented. Furukawa, Kikuchi, and Sugimura ended up editing the journal *Bukkyō*. The Keiikai and *Bukkyō* became the direct parent of the New Buddhism Friendship Association.

In January 1895 Furukawa, as a twenty-five year old Imperial University student, took over as editor of *Bukkyō*. The journal had its origins as the house organ *Nōjunkai zasshi* of the Nōjunkai (Prosperity Association) formed in September 1885 in Fukagawa in Tokyo. It was succeeded by *Nōjunkai shinpō* and renamed *Bukkyō* in March 1889. With Furukawa’s editorship, *Bukkyō* “achieved new standing at the head of all the rest in the Buddhist journal world” (Nakano 1937, 68). In January 1894, before he took over at *Bukkyō*, Furukawa published an article entitled “Entering an Age of Skepticism” (*Bukkyō* 83), in which he had presented a study regarded as the “bell of the dawn of the reform faction” (in Sugimura 1901, 409). Furukawa divided the development of philosophical thought into three stages: “arbitrary dogmatism,” “skepticism” and “critique.” In contrast to Christianity, which was already in the age of critique, Buddhists were only gradually entering the age of skepticism, and he emphasized the need for Buddhist thought to evolve. In his principal argument he emphasized that Buddhists, who had long stayed within “dogmatic faith,” “need to take a look at

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24. On the detailed history of the journal *Bukkyō*, see the “Chronological History of the Journal *Bukkyō*” (Zasshi *Bukkyō* etsureki nenpyō* 雑誌『仏教』 閏歴年表) included in *Bukkyō* 18/12 (1901).

25. See the essay on “Kaigi jidai ni ireri” 懐疑時代に入れり, in Sugimura 1901, 106–11.
the mass of Buddhist doctrines with a skeptical, critical eye, must consider what is not the fundamental teaching of Buddhism, and—extracting what can be taken as Buddhism—must establish the foundation of Buddhism and trust to a diamond-like faith” (FURUKAWA 1895, 2). In short, distancing himself from Nakanishi’s influence, Furukawa adopted a view of Buddhist reform based on a critical reformulation of Buddhist thought and teachings.

“New Buddhist Followers” and “Reformist Buddhist Followers”

In contrast to Furukawa’s ideas were those of his close friend Sugimura Sojinkan (1872–1945), a member of the Keiikai who used the term “new Buddhism” but argued for another conception of Buddhist reform. In Bukkyō 99 (10 February 1895), Sugimura contributed an article called “The Real Direction of New Buddhists.” Here stating that “religion is something changeable that evolves”—agreeing on that point with Furukawa’s criticism of “dogmatic faith”—Sugimura declared the role of “new Buddhists” to be as follows:

The value of this religion is considered only in terms of its Buddhist scriptures, but our historical era of searching goes beyond that. The time has come when it is necessary to think of a history separate from the scriptures. Seeing the scriptures as sacred and as pure abstract principle, and on that basis assuming that there is no need to refer to other kinds of thought—Heavens! That is only the false thinking of stubbornly obtuse followers of old Buddhism. And at the same time as we critically and rationally interpret the Buddhist doctrinal scriptures on one level, we turn to the affairs of the real world to provide results that come from religious faith. It goes without saying that we need to undertake abstract research, but we must not forget the need to interpret it in concrete terms. (SUGIMURA 1895, 49–50)

Together with interpreting (that is, freely investigating) Buddhist doctrine critically and rationally, he emphasized that active relationships must be formed with society. Indeed, he was promoting the idea of putting the new Buddhist movement first.

In August of that year, Furukawa, who had experienced a sudden hemorrhage of the lungs, was diagnosed with tuberculosis and compelled to

26. In the background was the high tide of Unitarian free investigation and the episode of claims that Mahāyāna Buddhism was not the original teaching of Shakyamuni.
undergo treatment. With Furukawa incapacitated, the editorship of *Bukkyō* was taken up by Sakaino Köyō (1871–1933), who belonged to the same generation as Furukawa and Sugimura. Sakaino had published polemical treatises concerning Buddhist studies and at the same time had advanced strong criticisms of traditional Buddhism.

For example, in an article “Followers of Reformist Buddhism” published in *Bukkyō* 15 (June 10, 1896), he presented his policies for reforming Buddhism (SAKAINO 1896). Highly interesting was the notion that in the past among those who called themselves “reformist Buddhists,” there were clearly “false reformers.” The article alleged that they “wielded the pen and played around with trends among the public because it was a matter of making a living; they called themselves significant figures, but by seizing empty honors they duped the uneducated Buddhist clerics out in the hinterlands, and there were some who used their influence in the Buddhist scholarly world. This is something we definitely cannot overlook.” Such remarks constituted a criticism of the Unitarian Saji Jitsunen, who had come from Shin Buddhism, and of Nakanishi Ushirō. As a substantive policy of Buddhist reform, Sakaino emphasized the manifestation of a spirit of free criticism within the Buddhist world. This meant carrying out rigorous philosophical and historical research to eliminate the “superstitious fallacies” that had become attached to Buddhism, both in the Buddhist world as a whole and in the sectarian doctrine of individual lineages.

Afterwards it was Sakaino, not Nakanishi, who inherited and carried on Furukawa’s emphases and activities, continuing to develop a new kind of Buddhist reform activity. Still, the Keiikai dissolved in February of 1899 (it was revived later), and in November of the same year Furukawa passed

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27. See Futaba et al. 1982, 793. Sakaino was a scholar of Buddhism from a family of the samurai class in Sendai. He studied at the Tetsugakkan and under Inoue Enryō and Murakami Senshō. While holding certification as a Shinshū Ōtaniha cleric, he was active throughout his life as a lay Buddhist intellectual.

28. Incidentally, Sakaino’s first meeting with Furukawa was in 1894 or 1895. Graduating from the Tetsugakkan, Furukawa—described as “dark-complexioned, tall, sturdily-built”—came to visit Sakaino, who was lodging at a Buddhist temple called Shinjōji in Komagome near Tokyo. They held forth on the contemporary Buddhist situation, the need to energize the young Buddhist followers, and the future prospects of the newly emergent Buddhists from the universities and specialty schools. Encouraged to join *Bukkyō*, SAKAINO later recorded his recollections in an essay, “Tsuioku zatsudan” (1933, 530).
away at the young age of twenty-nine from tuberculosis. Following Furu-
kawa’s path, Sakaino and Sugimura now came to form a new association
aimed at “new Buddhism.” This next student circle of young Buddhists to
raise the banner of “new Buddhism” was the Bukkyōseito Dōshikai (here-
after shortened to Dōshikai).

The Bukkyōseito Dōshikai as a Circle of Young Buddhists

An article entitled “The Bukkyōseito Dōshikai Organized” was included in
Bukkyō 48 (15 March 1899); 29 later a more polished version was published
under the title “Our Declaration” as the lead article in the first issue of Shin
Bukkyō, the group’s official journal, which was founded on 1 July 1900. Here
the differences with “old Buddhism” were highlighted. From the viewpoint
of the membership of the Dōshikai, old Buddhism was “habitualized and
conventionalized old Buddhism,” “formalized old Buddhism,” “superstitious
old Buddhism,” “world-weary old Buddhism,” and “intellectually fantasti-
cal old Buddhism.” They indicated their own perspective in stating: “We
oppose old Buddhism. Yet although we are called the reformers of old Bud-
dhism, we do not have solely an idea to destroy old Buddhism. Rather we
are merely the builders and advocates of a new faith” (Bukkyō 148: 1–2). They
posted the following “manifesto”:

1. We shall take as our fundamental principle a sound faith in Buddhism.
2. Promoting and disseminating the knowledge and morality of this sound
faith, we shall strive for the fundamental improvement of society.
3. We shall emphasize the free investigation of Buddhism and other religions.
4. We look forward to the end of all superstition.
5. We shall not recognize the need to retain hitherto existing religious institu-
tions or rituals.
6. We reject all government protection or interference. (Bukkyō 148: 5)

These points clarify a concrete vision of “new Buddhism”: great importance
attached to an inward, subjective sense of “faith,” which must be the basis for

29. Originally Sakaino’s group thought of making Bukkyō the house organ of the
Dōshikai, but their negotiations with the publishers of Bukkyō were unsuccessful, and
in the following year they launched their own house organ Shin bukkyō. For more detail
concerning the founding of the Shin Bukkyō Undō, see Sakaino 1905, 1907, and 1910; and
Takashima 1910.
“social improvement”; a posture of criticism and study with an attitude of “free investigation”; rejection of religious superstition and the merely outward institutions and rituals of traditional Buddhism; and independence from political power.

The Dōshikai had been formed by carrying forward the goals and personal networking of the Keiikai and the journal *Bukkyō*. The members at its time of formation included Sakaino (1871–1933), Tanaka Jiroku (1869–?), Andō Hiroshi (1876–1942), Takashima Beihō (1875–1949), Sugimura Sojinkan, Watanabe Kaigyoku (1872–1933), and Katō Genchi (1873–1965). All of these were young men of the era ca. 1887–1900 and so this most definitely is a group based on Buddhist youth student circles. (The only person active as a formal cleric was Watanabe; the other members were active as ordinary laymen.)

*The Organization and Practice of the New Buddhist Movement*

In the late 1880s and the 1890s, when Nakanishi was active, “new Buddhism” was a mere product of the imagination. What, then, formed the organization and actual practices of the new Buddhist movement that made reform a concrete reality in the decade after 1897?

I have in front of me a copy of a booklet *Shin Bukkyō no shiori* 新仏教之栞 (a special supplement to *Shin Bukkyō* 4/3 [15 December 1903]) which provides an outline of the Dōshikai. It included “manifesto and rules” and “what is done by new Buddhism” (above as written by Takashima); in addition explanations of the manifestos printed in *Shin Bukkyō* were collected together with clarifications of the organization and the house publishing organ. According to this document, the Dōshikai consisted of a “board of trustees” which consulted on administrative matters (its members included Yū Kiichi, Katō Totsudō, Takashima, Tanaka, Andō, Sakaino, Kin Gikan, Mōri Saian, Sugimura, and others), and regular “association members.” When we observe the bent of the trustees, we see that the supporters of the early period of the new Buddhist movement were scholars and educators (Tanaka, Sakaino, Kin), newspaper journalists (Andō, Mori, Sugimura), public speakers (Katō), and merchants (Takashima): all laypeople belonging to the middle and upper social classes. However, many came from Buddhist...

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30. I was given access to primary sources by Takashima Beihō's grandson, Mr. Takashima Kazuo, for which I wish to express my thanks.
temple families, making it clear that the group was led by young intellectuals with Buddhist connections.31

Their recorded activities included monthly lecture gatherings on every second Saturday at one o’clock in the afternoon (the venue was the Unitarian meeting hall in Shiba, Mita, Shikoku-chō, Tokyo), regular monthly meetings on every second Saturday at five o’clock in the afternoon (the venue was an office in the Imperial University at Kanda Hitotsubashi) and various large lecture gatherings on no fixed schedule. The journal Shin Bukkyō was published once a month, with the “editorial staff” listed as Itō Sachio, Yū, Ono Tōta, Katō Totsudō, Tanaka, Takashima, Furukawa Giten, Sakaino, Yūki Somei, Mōri, and Sugimura.

With the aim of actualizing the ideal of “new Buddhism” in the urban setting of Tokyo, activities were undertaken from the late 1890s to the beginning of the 1910s which consisted of holding regular meetings and lecture events on a fixed schedule and the publication of a monthly journal. As seen in various other shifts and trends—official government recognition of Buddhism, the criticism of the Sankyōkaidō (Conference for Three Religions), the movement against licensed prostitution, temperance movements against alcohol and tobacco, the movement for prevention of cruelty to animals, or social work to establish nonprofit medical clinics—their social participation was positive in nature and had contact with socialists such as Sakai Toshihiko and Kōtoku Shūsui.

Yet fundamentally, the new Buddhist movement was centered on verbal expression, and there was a great deal of criticism regarding social action. For example, there is an editorial entitled “Just What Is the Reform of Buddhism?” in Jōdo kyōhō 515 (30 November 1902), the official journal of the traditional Jōdo sect sangha. The author argued that contemporary Buddhism and other religions could not provide consolation to the human heart. That was provided rather by the “heritage of the old traditions of thought,” those that did not conform to the spirit of the current era. However, while imagining that these old forms were only clinging to life out of inertia, when in fact they actually wanted to answer the spiritual needs of contemporary people, reformist disputants were shouting “We need a revo-

31. Nothing is known about the number of members or readers of the house organ, and previous research is not clear; the matter requires future investigation.
olution, improvements must be done, reforms must be done.” Thus, beginning with the “new Buddhism of the new Buddhist followers,” the editorial enumerated the names and works of Inoue Tetsujirō, Katō Hiroyuki, Inoue Enryō, and Yokota Kuniomi, and leveled fierce criticism against them: “As for this business of merely crying reform to Buddhist followers, even if they shout for these innovations, it has no effect whatsoever; even if their grand words can gain acclaim for a moment, not only can they not escape the scornful laughter of informed persons, but their fate is like a flash of fireworks or a stick of incense. They will come to be disregarded by the public” (Jōdo kyōhō 515 [1902], 2).32

I now wish to scrutinize the meaning reform activities had in the Japanese society of that time.

The Language Practice Called “Free Investigation”

“Followers of new Buddhism stand on a pantheistic foundation, as a distinct religious element that is freely seeking faith” (SAKAINO 1901b, 388). “What is called new Buddhism is Buddhist followers insisting on free investigation (SAKAINO 1902, 232).” Such was the self-definition of the Dōshikai as derived from Sakaino, one of the theoretical leaders of the new Buddhist movement. The terms “pantheism” and “free investigation” show the influence from the American Unitarians who entered Japan in the late 1880s.33 The members of the Dōshikai absorbed such doctrines and attitudes through Nakanishi and Furukawa. The discourse of “old Buddhism” versus “new Buddhism,” the criticism of traditional Buddhism as “old Buddhism,” the religious idea of pantheism, the skeptical and critical attitudes and methods based on the reasoning called free investigation: none of these was original to Sakaino and his group. They were an inheritance passed along from the Keikai and the journal Bukkyō which had their origins in the discourse of Nakanishi.34

32. Serving as the chief editor of Jōdo kyōhō since 1895 was Watanabe Kaigyoku, a member of the Dōshikai. During this period, however, Watanabe was studying abroad in Germany and someone else served as the actual editor.

33. On the reception of Unitarianism in modern Japan, see SUZUKI 1979, Chapter 1, Section 2. On the relationship of Unitarianism and followers of new Buddhism, see YOSHIDA 1959, Chapter 5.

34. For details on the currents connecting the Keikai to the new Buddhist movement, see YOSHIDA 1959, Chapter 5.
Be that as it may, this attitude and method of “free investigation” became a fixed part of the identity of the new Buddhist movement. Takashima Beihō, one of the core members of the Dōshikai, stated in a record of a public lecture entitled “New Buddhism and Old Buddhism” (published in Shin Bukkyō 6/3 [1 March 1905], 224) that “Old Buddhism has the principle of dogmatic teaching authority, while new Buddhism has the principle of free investigation.” This succinctly summarized the differences between the two.

It was just such free investigation that characterized the style of “new Buddhism” from the late 1890s. It was a matter of the use of language. The figure who recognized the characteristic of the new Buddhist movement in this practice of “free investigation” was Fukushima Shinkichi. For Fukushima, the intellectual milieu of 1887 to 1896 provided an environment blending enlightenment and rational discourses. It was based on the formation of an orthodox discourse involving the terms “religion,” “morality,” and “education” that had accompanied the political settlement of the Meiji state, as well as on an evolutionary view of civilization. The critical and rational free investigation that relied on the latter was a requisite condition for securing legitimation in the elite culture. Furthermore, because of the modern reorganization of Buddhist sanghas and modern administration, new levels of Buddhist institutional self-governance, an advance of sangha power, and a strengthening of traditional authority (what Takatori called dogmatic teaching authority) were among the elements characterizing the Buddhist world of the time. These provided the intellectual and religious institutional environment of the late 1880s and early 1890s, which served as a premise for the activity of the new Buddhist movement. Fukushima pointed out the following with regard to free investigation:

Among the activities of the Dōshikai, the house organ Shin Bukkyō is the primary locus of practice. This is because the establishment of a “new faith” takes place by relying on free investigation. Or rather, it is precisely because this kind of journal exists, that a religious movement depending on “free investigation” has become possible. “Free investigation” is fundamentally a practice of language based on reading, thinking and writing. By reading, thinking and writing about research, by means of newspapers, periodicals, Buddhist texts, and sources related to Buddhist history, and by putting written material in the form of printed media, action that stirs up both criticism and approval is implemented. “Free investigation” may be called a practice dependent on the act of reading and on printed media. (FUKUSHIMA 1998, 119)
According to Fukushima, who refers to the research of Nagamine Shigetoshi and others, the development of printing technology and publishing distribution networks furthered the evolution of a cultural structure dependent on printed media. Focusing attention on the practice of reading, which made free investigation possible, and on the birth of a journal culture serving that practice, his analysis concluded that these cultural conditions made the new Buddhist movement possible. Naturally, a high level of reading and writing literacy and mastery of knowledge were indispensable, and the members of the Dōshikai were young intellectuals who in the late 1880s and early 1890s had studied in places like the Buddhist sectarian schools or the Tetsugakkan. Fukushima also pointed out that despite their youth, they were people with a great deal of self-confidence.

Just what kind of people were they who actually took on this use of language dependent on free investigation? In the aforementioned document Shin Bukkyō no shiori, a condition stipulated for being a regular member was that one be “a clean-minded, proper person who had received an education above middle school and was following a clear occupation, or one who was pursuing a specialized art or craft.” Clearly, it was the middle social stratum they had in mind. The period when the Dōshikai was active was indeed an era of growth in the middle level of readership.

According to Nagamine Shigetoshi, from about the time of the Sino-Japanese War a structural change had come about in the periodical-reading stratum. Because of a rise in educational opportunities, the base of the pyramid of readership as a whole expanded; the levels that received middle school education or continued their education, that is, the number of intellectual readers throughout the country, including those outside the major urban areas, accumulated and built up by slow degrees (Nagamine 2004, 113). In short, the existence of growing urban middle classes and an intellectual readership countrywide supported the activity of the movement for new Buddhism.

In perusing the pages of Shin Bukkyō, one notices that the argumentation embellishing its pages came not only from among the Dōshikai members but also involved the preceding generation of Inoue Enryō and Katō Hiroyuki,

35. In addition, Sakaino and Takashima commented that “mid-level society” (the middle classes) ought to be the object of propagation and religious conversion (see Sakaino 1901a; Takashima 1912). However, since the real nature of the membership is unclear on many points, clarification of this matter requires future investigation.
and even readers of the journal. Notes on lectures given in the lecture gatherings and the regular meetings were published in *Shin Bukkyō* and ongoing controversy about these lectures was common. In a manner of speaking, it was through the pages of the journal that free investigation was practiced, just as it was an unspoken assumption for the lecture gatherings and regular meetings. Such an attitude regarding the practice of free investigation through language was attractive not only to the members of the Dōshikai who were transmitting the message of new Buddhism, but also to the readers who were receiving the transmission. Behind the Dōshikai’s activities were specific social and cultural conditions that make this possible. The social basis that supported the new Buddhist movement was, along with the earlier Buddhist youth circles, the urban middle classes and the nationwide intellectual readership.

In summary, the new Buddhism movement formed and developed from around the turn of the century because, in addition to the historical and social conditions surrounding the organizing of the Buddhist youth circles of the late 1880s and early 1890s (which were activated by Nakanishi) and the maintenance of a Buddhist-related media, new intellectual and religious institutional circumstances existed after the late 1880s that involved various multilayered demands created by changes in the structure of the book culture and the readership class.

*From “New Buddhism” to “Rising Buddhism” (Shinkō Bukkyō)*

In August 1915, the journal *Shin Bukkyō* ended publication with issue eight of its sixteenth volume. Regarding the final issue Takashima noted, “For things that are born in response to necessity, when that necessity disappears they must die out.” He listed reasons that the original necessity had vanished, including “the diffusion of new Buddhist ideas: transition in the spirit of the times is swift and the new Buddhism of those days is not necessarily today’s new Buddhism” (*Shin Bukkyō* 16/8 [1915], 722). He also noted a variety of other reasons, one of the principal being that, as the membership of the Dōshikai grew older, its social position rose and new Buddhism’s claims and activities became established. At this time Takashima had reached the age of forty-one; his youth was over and he was a mature man. The Dōshikai had become something that was no longer a student circle of Buddhist youth.
Nevertheless, the claims of “new Buddhism” were carried on. In April 1931 in the Hongo section of Tokyo, the Shinkō Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei (Rising Buddhist Youth Alliance) (hereafter shortened to Dōmei) was formed under the leadership of Senōro Girō. Senōro and his group hoisted the banner for “rising Buddhism,” which signified “reliance on the name of Buddha, dissolution of all the separate sects of Buddhism and their unification, and reform towards a cooperative capitalist society” (Senō’o 1933, 1). This meant developing practices of Buddhist reform and social reform based on a return to the Buddha. Senōro himself was a mature man of forty-two, but the key leadership of the Dōmei were all young people in their twenties or thirties, so that the Dōmei amounted to a Buddhist youth circle. There was no direct connection between the Dōmei and the new Buddhism movement, but Takashima wrote for the Dōmei’s house journal Shinkō Bukkyō (issues of September and October 1931). He expressed his feeling of empathy with them, writing “that truly, just like in its name, the spirit of a new rising will flourish; my delight knows no bounds” (Takashima 1931, 38).

A Few Conclusions: What Was “New Buddhism?”

We have considered the current of “new Buddhism” as seen in Nakanishi Ushirō’s theory of new Buddhism, in the Hanseikai, in Furukawa Rōsen’s Keikai and the journal Bukkyō, in the Shin Bukkyōto Dōshikai of Sakaino Kōyō and his group with their journal Shin Bukkyō, and finally in Senōro Girō’s Shinkō Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei and its organ Shinkō Bukkyō. From the late 1880s to the late 1890s, Buddhist youth circles served as the social base. After that, the “new Buddhism” movement was diffused through print media in the form of periodicals and continued to respond to the rise of general education and changes in readership arising from the nationwide growth of an urban middle class and an intellectual readership. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Buddhist reform was more and more emphasized and put into practice through the verbal expression of “free investigation.”

The discourse followed a pattern emphasizing the actualization of “new Buddhism” and was consistent from Nakanishi up through Sakaino. It presented a schematic dichotomy of “old Buddhism” and “new Buddhism,” and criticized the old from the standpoint of the new. The bearers of the
movement were Buddhist youth from circa 1887 to 1907, and (along with some reformist clerics and laicized clerics) were nonclerical but Buddhist-connected intellectuals.

“New Buddhism” was a dissenting youth culture that depended on young Buddhist followers. It is hard to reach a conclusion as to whether its claims made any contribution to reform of the practices of actual Buddhism or the Buddhist world. But its way of speaking about “Buddhism,” which adopted inner religious faith as a standard and emphasized social participation, had a great influence on the life of contemporary Japanese “Buddhism” via both in its positive and negative critiques. Through the print media, the verbal practice called “free investigation” also seems to have become fixed within the modern Buddhist world.

In this way, nonclerical young Buddhist intellectuals supported the movement alongside some reformist clerics and laicized clerics. The characteristic social foundation of “new Buddhism” was the Buddhist youth, the middle class, and the intellectual readership, all of which typically underlay “modern Buddhism in the narrow sense.” Moreover, the core elements of “modern Buddhism in the broad sense” were drawn together in “new Buddhism.” It was through this “new Buddhism” that “modern Buddhism in the narrow sense” came to be formed. Admittedly, a large number of unanswered questions have turned up in the course of the above discussion, and I look forward to further research on these matters.

[translation by Galen Amstutz]

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