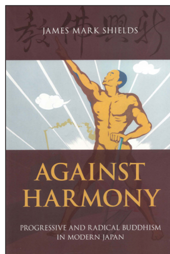

James Mark Shields, ***Against Harmony: Progressive and Radical Buddhism in Modern Japan.***

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From 1885, Buddhism, disparaged by the state and rivaled by the Christian missions, regained self-confidence and espoused broad philosophical outlooks and educational ambitions. Shields takes this year as his starting-point and 1935 as his terminus, and he discovers that this half-century divides neatly into two generations of twenty-five years each: the late Meiji rise and fall of New Buddhism and the subsequent turn to a more aesthetic and cultural Buddhism, marked by some political activism both right and left. Demythologization, scientific rationality, meditation, and socio-political concern are hallmarks of Buddhist modernism, and Shields urges that Japanese Buddhists had a good understanding of socialism as well, nourished by indigenous sources such as Andō Shōeki (1703–1762).

Shields preludes his narration with a paradigmatic account of the family of Akamatsu Renjō (1841–1919), reformer of Nishi Honganji, his adopted son Shōtō, who rejected his bourgeois ethos and championed *burakumin* rights in the spirit of Tolstoy, and the grandson Katsumaro, a radical activist, overjoyed by the 1917 Russian Revolution but taking an increasingly nationalist course in the 1930s. Chapter 1 on "the many faces of the Meiji Enlightenment" is also a string of biographies, beginning with Inoue Enryō (34–40), whose Tetsugakkan was formative for many in the genealogical network of Buddhist modernizers that Shields maps (and who has now received full-scale treatment in Schulzer 2019). Lay movements emerged, in the spirit of the bodhisattva Vimalakīrti, such as the still active Honmon Butsuryūshū, whose "boilerplate modern Nichirenist" (40) outlook anticipates Soka Gakkai and Rissho Kosei-kai. Ashitsu Jitsuzen (1850–1921) exemplifies the evolutionist confidence that saw Buddhism as "the religion that was best equipped to handle—and even to harness—the coursing waves of modernity" (43).

Such thinkers claimed for Japan a role in the spiritual development of humankind, and are unfairly pigeon-holed as "nationalistic." Shields defends D. T. Suzuki's teacher Shaku Sōen (1859–1919) against Brian Victoria's treatment of him as a contributor to the formation of "Imperial Way Zen" by noting his progressive and internationalizing impact. Suzuki himself exemplifies "the seeming paradoxes (or more accurately, tensions) of the type of thinking I have identified as 'progressive conservative,'" and held that Buddhism "could and should be invested in supporting the 'welfare of the people,' which would include actively supporting the nation in times of peril—such as war,… a fairly common way of thinking among Buddhist modernists of the 1890s and early 1900s" (130).

The efforts of the theosophist Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907) and the Swedenborgian Carl Herman Vetterling (1849–1931) to influence the New Buddhism had limited success, and met resistance from the Irish Buddhist Charles James William Pfoundes (1840–1907). The "scientific" study of Buddhism by Takakusu Junjirō (1866–1945), student of F. Max Müller (1823–1900), further thwarted such influences. Some New Buddhists, such as Nakanishi Ushirō (1859–1930), mentored by Akamatsu Renjō, felt an affinity with Unitarianism, then very prominent and influential, but found that the alliance was unstable, since each religion was interpreting the other on its own terms.

Chapter 2 presents Murakami Senshō (1851–1929) and Kiyozawa Manshi (1863–1903) as archetypes of the alternative paths of Buddhist modernism, one tending to a secular humanism, the other focusing on inner transformation. Their critique of Mahāyāna tradition anticipates the Critical Buddhism movement of the late twentieth century, a claim Shields also makes for several other groups. Taking up the historical-critical approach pioneered by Tominaga Nakamoto (1715–1746) (Tominaga 1990), Murakami nonetheless declared that the

Mahāyāna scriptures, though legendary constructions, "reflect the intention of the Buddha" (68). His commitment to history "serves to keep him apart from the growing trend toward the non-historical, existential brand of modernist Buddhism developed… by D. T. Suzuki, the Kyoto School, and many post-war Western Buddhist popularizers" (71). Kiyozawa's *seishinshugi* 精神主義 ("spiritual activism") was based on early Buddhism, the Shin tradition, and Epictetus (81). His disciple Akegarasu Haya (1877–1954) developed the existential, antinomian implications of "accepting all phenomena without making any judgment" (85) and recognizing "the finite and limited nature of ethics" (86).

Chapter 3 introduces the Warp and Woof Society (Keiikai 経緯会), led by Furukawa Rōsen (1871–1899) in the 1890s; it was devoted to "free investigation" (the warp) and "progressive reform" (the woof), and to "the moral and spiritual regeneration of Buddhism" with an eye on the growth of Christianity (92). The youthful New Buddhist Fellowship continued this reform activism. The prolific scholar Sakaino Kōyō (1871–1933) promoted an ill-defined "pantheistic" Buddhism and a wide tolerance in matters of belief; "Because we value the free employment of reason, we are unwilling to restrict a person's faith" (109). Takashima Beihō (1875–1949) took up the "New Buddhist discourse on pantheism as an appropriate 'middle way' between theism and atheism, spiritual idealism and 'vulgar' materialism" (114); his liberal credentials were dinted when he saw the Great Kanto earthquake as "divine" retribution for the failures of the people (131). Sugimura Sojinkan (1872–1945) exemplifies the growing sympathy of this movement with socialism. He was arrested in 1910 for "alleged involvement in a leftist plot to assassinate the Meiji Emperor (the so-called High Treason Incident)," but as a recently discovered letter shows "decided not to act on behalf of his one-time comrades" (124) in prison. More radical was Inoue Shūten (1880–1945), a pacifist critical of Japan's activity in the Asian countries he visited, who was under suspicion for his links with the Zen monk Uchiyama Gudō (1874–1911), one of twelve leftists executed in the High Treason Incident. Shields corrects many political characterizations of the figures he studies, wisely noting in connection with Takashima Beihō's crusade against the new religion Ōmotokyō that "as usual, the lines between 'left' and 'right,' 'liberal' and 'conservative,' and 'nationalist' and otherwise are blurry enough to encourage us to suspend judgment" (131).

In chapter 4, "Zen and the Art of Treason," Shields traces efforts to combine Buddhism and socialism, beginning with Shin priest Takagi Kenmyō (1864–1914), a champion of the *burakumin*, who died in prison after his alleged role in the High Treason Incident. Takagi and Uchiyama Gudō were disowned by their respective denominations but rehabilitated in the 1990s. "Uchiyama's 'anarcho-communism' has much in common with the Zen-Nichiren ultranationalism put forth two decades later by Inoue Nisshō" (158). The first half of Shields' book

ends with a government-organized "Meeting of the Three Religions" (Buddhism, Shinto, and Christianity) in 1912, at which the participants pledged allegiance to the imperial household and "national morality" (163–164). The backlash against this state intervention from the press and religionists, New Buddhists in the vanguard, was fierce, but New Buddhism was a spent force at this stage.

Chapter 5 deals with "Taishō Tolstoyans" and chapter 6 with "Radical Buddhists of Early Shōwa." Seno'o Girō (1890–1961), a student of Quaker Nitobe Inazō (1862–1933), became a militaristic Nichirenist apostle. Shields' mysterious title is perhaps explained here: "Seno'o came to reject the blithe metaphysics of harmony—what Critical Buddhism would later call 'topicalism'—found within much of the Mahāyāna philosophical tradition" (219). Yet Seno'o embraced the emptiness-*upāya* flexibility of the *Lotus Sūtra* to assert that what was required in Japan in the 1920s and 1930s was socialism, such that "socialism becomes the (new) 'one vehicle' that will, at long last, establish the foundations for the promised attainment of buddhahood by all beings" (233). Seno'o is compared with Inoue Nisshō, who took the phrase "kill one to save the many" literally, rather than as "a spiritual admonition to overcome one's own weakness and ignorance in order to more fully serve society" (235–236). When Seno'o was charged with treason in 1936 his use of the phrase became incriminating "evidence."

This authoritative book contains much more valuable information, which perhaps overflows the frameworks that would reduce it to unity. The definitions of modernity, modernism, and progressivism in the introduction do not particularly serve to order and illuminate the rich material, though spiced by a startling claim that modernism might have been "originally a product of Japanese culture that was adopted by the West, only to return to Japan sometime later. This issue is probably irresolvable" (9). A conference in New Zealand in 2009 is cited for "the Japanese roots of modernism" (265). That would begin to make sense if substantial Japanese influence could be detected in Wagner, Henry James, Cézanne, Kafka, Proust, Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Bergson, Husserl, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein. Meanwhile, *Japonisme*, as well as the roles of Fenollosa, Hearn, Yeats, and Pound, have been discussed exhaustively. It is true that "some Japanese intellectuals and religious leaders were involved in 'modernist' ways of thinking as early as the 1870s" (10), but no more than some Americans of the same time. Nevertheless, Shields reveals how Meiji and Taisho Japan were pervaded or invaded by the breath of modernity, exhilarating and intensely stimulating, and how this period remains a resource still to be mined by students of Japanese and Buddhist thought.

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