After the Reformation: Post-Kamakura Buddhism

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Most historical treatments of Japanese Buddhism end with the Kamakura Reformation. This limitation unfortunately gives the impression that living Buddhist faith in Japan is continuous with the faith of Hōnen, Shinran, Dōgen, and Nichiren. Anthropologists, on the other hand, assure us that present-day Buddhism is little more than an agency to provide funeral services for departed ancestors. Again, academic journals published by Buddhist universities tell of yet another tradition: sectarian scholarship. How can these varying pictures of Buddhism be reconciled? The present article attempts to survey the major trends since Kamakura and to account for developments and discontinuities. The social dynamics of the post-Reformation Buddhist community will be analyzed with reference to some plausible European parallels.

THE REFORMATION MODEL EXTENDED

Two reformations. The Kamakura period (1185–1333) was dubbed "the Buddhist Reformation" by Japanese scholars of the Meiji era. The label was not altogether inappropriate. The Kamakura sects did represent a reform from within that captured the aspirations of the populace. The reformers simplified or condensed doctrines and provided a more immediate means to salvation or enlightenment.

The European Reformation and the Japanese Reformation are by no means fully alike, but the Western model has generated fruitful inquiries into the socio-historical significance of the

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Japanese Buddhist sects of the Kamakura period. Can the same model be extended to cover the post-Reformation period? Few have attempted to compare and contrast such formidable histories, so what follows should be considered only a tentative step toward answering this question.

Divergence and congruence. One reason the Reformation model has not been applied to the post-Reformation period is that the European and Japanese Reformations manifest a fundamental difference: the European Reformation came at the end of the feudal order that was medieval Christendom, whereas the Kamakura Reformation was a forerunner of the Tokugawa era feudal system that was yet to come. The one was accompanied by the growth of European cities and by the growth of trade and commerce, in a word, the rise of a mercantile middle class. Spiritual independence, exemplified by Luther's discovery of the inner conscience, was reinforced by the socioeconomic independence of the new bourgeoisie and their voluntary contractual associations (*Gesellschäften*). The other was accompanied by the emergence of village confederations (*gō*, *shō*) and the rise of the warrior or samurai class. The religious sense of total dependence or dedication was grafted onto new localized loyalties and blended into the idea of serving the feudal values of natural communities (*kyōdōtai* or *Gemeinschäften*). This is the big divide between the two post-Reformation cultures.

Despite this difference, there were also trends suggestive of a certain congruence. Both passed through a politically turbulent period of great activity, but later became less active and even conservative. Both developed a new scholasticism that gave rise to a pietistic reaction. Both came under the influence of nineteenth century liberal humanism, but were forced to confront the reality of world war. In Europe, Luther raised the hopes of the German peasantry, but the peasant revolt led by Thomas Münzer found Luther among its opponents. In writing to the princes against the rebels, Luther set forth the theory of the Two Kingdoms, the religious and the secular, in effect reserving the realm of inner grace and inwardness (*Innigkeit*) to "the religious." Rennyo (1415–1499), chief abbot of Honganji temple (head temple of the Jōdo Shinshū or True Sect of the Pure Land), likewise compromised during the heyday of the *ikkō ikki*, peasant rebellions carried out under the banner of singleminded faith in Amida Buddha. He too distinguished between *shinjin* ("mind of faith") and *ōhō* ("imperial law") and urged the zealots not to violate the latter. Again, Calvinism, after the failure of Cromwell, forsook its theocratic ideals in Europe (not in America), turning its attention instead to the family and to private/civic enterprise. Similarly, the Nichiren sect gave rise to buddhocratic peasant revolts known as *hokke ikki*, uprisings carried out under the banner of faith in the Lotus Sutra, but this buddhocratic militancy was likewise trimmed in the seventeenth century. In the intellectual realm, Luther was followed by Melanchthon and the development of a "Protestant scholasticism." Reacting to this scholasticism and its rationalist bias was the pietist movement of the eighteenth century. The Methodists, for example, spearheaded an emotional piety directed to the poorer workers of eighteenth century England. The Japanese counterparts to these phenomena and to liberal Christianity will be documented later. Though East and West are often presented as quite different (as indeed they are), I believe that adoption of a European model for the purpose of understanding developments in post-Kamakura Buddhism can be enlightening. Unless necessary to the argument, however, the explicit European counterparts will not be named in the body of this essay.

IMMEDIATE IMPACT OF KAMAKURA BUDDHISM

End of the old buddhocracy. From the time of the Nara period (710–794), Buddhist statecraft or buddhocracy was a norm. In Nara, the major temples and the six schools of Buddhism were effectively under the supervision of the state. This trend continued in the Heian period (794–1160), though both Tendai and Shingon had relatively more ecclesiastical autonomy than the earlier schools. In late Heian the religious establishment was far from being apolitical, and politics was hardly free of buddhocratic presuppositions. Armed monk soldiers (*sōhei*) swarmed down from Mt. Hiei with dire warnings of calamities forged by their magic and ritual, and emperors, when it was expedient to do so, would retire in name (the *insei* system) and assume the title of *hō'ō* or king in the name of the dharma, the cosmic law of Buddhism. Developments like these were enough to make pious men despair and to confirm in their minds the prediction that the *mappō* or "age of the degenerate dharma" was imminent. The *Mappō tōmyōki* [Lamplight record concerning the degeneration of the dharma] attributed to Saichō appeared in this period and denounced the evilness of men. So bad were the times that it was thought foolish to expect any monk to lead a pure life in accordance with the monastic precepts. Some reform was inevitable.

In 1175 Hōnen founded the Jōdoshū ("Pure Land Sect") in open defiance of the Nara-Heian law that no sect could be founded without permission from the Ritsu ("monastic precept") sect and from the state. The Jōdoshū was banned as illegitimate. The truth of Hōnen's insight, the widespread anxiety of the time, and the conversion of a Hōjō lord to the Pure Land faith, however, eventually helped in having the ban lifted. Once the precedent of a separate sect was established, other sects followed, and the unity of religion and politics, held up as ideal since Nara, was destroyed. Kamakura is thought by some to be the most "religious" period in Japanese history, and certainly many of the new ruling class, the samurai, were ardent practitioners of Zen. Structurally, however, the principle of government was gradually becoming detached from the traditional ideal of buddhocracy. Buddhist sanction for governmental rule was no longer deemed necessary. By the time of the Tokugawa period (1603–1867), the de-buddhization of politics was complete (Kashiwahara 1969). Modern Europe went through a comparable experience. Secular politics succeeded the religious pageantry of old Christendom.

Hōnen indirectly instigated the secularization of politics when he denounced this world as corrupt and his period of history as irredeemably lost in darkness. In striving for the Pure Land beyond and throwing himself entirely on the grace of Amida, Hōnen rejected all this-worldly authority, whether preceptual (the authority of the religious organization) or monarchical (the authority of government). His otherworldliness, however, could only generate new socio-political tensions. When his disciples prided themselves on being the "elect," that is, those saved by the light of Amida while the rest of the world was lost forever in darkness, they invited open criticism. And when Hōnen's disciple Shinran founded the Jōdo Shinshū ("True Sect of the Pure Land"), its call for singleminded devotion (*ikkō*) provided fuel to the aspirations of peasants in revolt (*ikki*). Not only did Hōnen create a state of tension between religion and politics, he also destroyed all possibility of a "single *sangha*" or unitary monastic community when he renounced his Tendai ties. The Buddhist "church" suffered first one schism, and then, as sects and subsects proliferated, a series of schisms. For a long while there were conflicts within as well as between sects. The peaceful coexistence found nowadays came later. It is necessary, therefore, to gain a clear perspective on the evolution of the sect.

The nature of the Japanese sect. The sect or *shū* as found in Japan is unique. There is nothing quite like it in India or China (Mano 1964). The Japanese sect is a territorial organization characterized by the loyalty with which its adherents support it. It is not a voluntary association based on doctrinal acquiescence or individual experiences of being reborn. Initially, personal piety may have played a key role in its emergence, but eventually, its nature came to be shaped more by certain structural changes in Japanese society. This transition came about in the following way.

The Kamakura reformers were all individualists. Hōnen had no teacher. Shinran's reliance on Amida was absolute. Dōgen was his own master in more ways than one. Nichiren was a prophet and a lone voice in the wilderness. Up to the time of Hōnen, Japan produced almost no one who, on religious grounds, dared to stand up to the throne with the spiritual integrity of China's Hui-yüan (Jps., Eon). With Hōnen, we begin to witness prophetic individuals who withstood traditional authority. Biographies of the founders, for all their embellishments, depict truly individual joy and sorrow, hope and despair —living experiences that speak to one and all. A historic "leap of being" occurred, it seems, during this period.

The Kamakura Reformation was originally a credal movement. All the founders were men of sublime ideas. There is little doubt that, in the early days, the Kamakura sects were keen on doctrine. Doctrinal defenses were necessary against critics like Myōe (1173–1232), a renowned scholar-priest of the tradition-supporting Kegon sect. Ritualism, though central to later piety, was minimal in the beginning. Even human feeling (*ninjō*) could not stand in the way of true understanding. Thus it was that Shinran painfully disowned his son, and that the *Tannishō* [Treatise deploring heresies] came to be written. The early converts were individual converts, that is, persons won through personal appeals made by the founders and their immediate disciples. Such face-to-face encounters, however, could not go beyond a certain natural limit. Just as much of Germany became Lutheran not because of cumulative individual conversions but more because of socio-cultural alliances, so the Kamakura sects eventually came to be built on a foundation broader than that of familiarity with the leaders and their creeds. The history of subsects (*ha*) shows with considerable clarity that regionalism and lineage assumed increasing importance in the formation of particularized loyalties. When this happened, it became extremely rare for a person to cross over sect or subsect lines for the sake of belief. Localized loyalty doubtless strengthened the sect as an ongoing organization, but it did so at the cost of undermining the original faith.

Loyalty of a personal kind had already figured strongly in some of the founders. Hōnen relied on the Chinese Pure Land master Shan-tao (Jps., Zendō). Shinran went so far as to say that he bet his life on what he had learned from Hōnen, that if he had to go to hell in consequence, he would do so gladly. Personal loyalty to Shinran led in turn to the splitting off of the Jōdo Shinshū from the Jōdoshū, despite the fact that Shinran himself had no interest whatever in founding a sect of his own. Likewise, the charismatic Nichiren had a devoted following. Dōgen might be regarded as exceptional, but Zen as a whole made loyalty a crowning virtue. The resultant "deification" of the founders into *shōnin* ("sages" or "saints") was only too natural. This development is unique to Japan, being unknown in China and contrary to the theology of the European Reformers. Personal loyalty became a basic pillar of the ethical norms inculcated under the Tokugawa regime; it legitimized the familial charisma of Shinran's successors, and supported the hierarchical network of sect temples.

The major factor affecting the nature of sect structure was the collapse of the *shōen* or manor system and its reorganization into *gō* or *shō* ("village confederations"). [The modern *mura* ("village") and *ie* ("household") did not become basic organizational units until during the Tokugawa period.] As the Heian aristocracy disintegrated and regional lords (*myōshu*) assumed control, the new sects spread by way of the new bases, often by appealing to their lords. The Jōdo Shinshū, for example, was most successful in economically advanced areas where the *gō* and *shō* developed as over against Shingon, which remained strong in the more backward *shōen* areas. The social chaos of the Ōnin civil war (1467–1477) contributed to the spread of the new sects: they took over the administration of older temples and established themselves in new localities. Within two hundred years of the Ōnin War, ninety percent of the Jōdo Shinshū temples had found permanent bases. The same holds true of the other Kamakura sects. So effective was their growth and consolidation of local communities into adherents that by the time Tokugawa Ieyasu triumphed over his rivals, Japan had already been parcelled out among the new and old (Kamakura and pre-Kamakura) sects. Henceforth Japan could be neatly mapped in terms of religious affiliations with a completeness that was never possible in China.

The Tokugawa shogunate or military government lent a hand in dividing Japan into parishes. The regime was Neo-confucian, but Ieyasu did not hesitate to make arrangements to be treated as a buddha after his death. He would probably have liked to support his rule with a single ideology, namely, the Confucian, but he learned to accept the Buddhist sects just as he learned to live with the feudal domains (*han*) outside his direct control. He made sure, however, that Christians were banned as subversives, the last *ikki* or peasant revolt suppressed, and the intolerant Nichiren Buddhist sect known as Fujufuse ("neither receive [from unbelievers] nor give [anything but the teaching of the Lotus Sutra]") outlawed. Ieyasu judiciously fanned the schism between the Higashi and Nishi Honganji, the two major subsects of the Jōdo Shinshū, in order to keep this powerful group at bay. In his move to curb underground Christians, he required all households to register with Buddhist temples, all temples to declare their sect affiliations, and all temple affiliations to be charted in accordance with a *honmatsu* ("trunk and branch") relationship model. The system whereby each household was required to support a specific temple (*danka seido*) was used as an administrative device to collect government revenues. In short, the government, putting an end to such anomalies as unaffiliated temples or temples of mixed affiliation, helped create a feudal hierarchy within each sect of Japanese Buddhism. In order to keep the established order intact, the sects were prohibited from spreading their faith. No individual could legally transfer from one temple to another. Each *ie* or household, then the basic legal unit of society, belonged generation after generation to a *dankadera* or *bodaiji,* a temple where the household was registered and where, to this day, many ancestral graves are located. The government's policy of requiring religious registration met, in fact, with little resistance, for loyalty to the regional lord and the regional temple was already intrinsic to the formation of the *gō* or *shō* that had won their autonomy vis-à-vis the *shōen* and the central authority in Kyoto. Under the relative peace and prosperity guaranteed by the *sakoku* or international isolation policy of the Edo government, Japanese society enjoyed a certain degree of stability. Within the confines of this policy, Buddhism too enjoyed an ambiguous prosperity.

RATIONALISM AND PIETISM IN TOKUGAWA BUDDHISM

Learning, liturgies, and ancestral services. Tokugawa Buddhism is known not for dynamic innovations but for consolidation and orderliness. The major drive was toward rationalization, and this manifested itself in the intellectual, ritual, and civic realms as sectarian learning, liturgical reform, and familial piety.

Sectarian learning or *shūgaku* was a new scholasticism that sought to arrange, codify, and systematize the ideas of the founders. It was the natural expression of a now-established sect that required doctrinal clarity and a large degree of ideological uniformity. It was an activity made possible by a time of stability and by economic support made available to a handful of scholars acting as guardians of a tradition's self-understanding. *Shūgaku* was not supposed to "move mountains" or even to inspire people. Its social function was to help legitimize the rising demand for ritualized faith. *Shūgaku* was often tediously detailed; the self-serving exegeses of scriptures and patriarchal writings made difficult reading then and make difficult reading now—unless one is interested in shades of meaning in the concept of *hongaku* ("innate enlightenment"), the many modes of Nichiren's "messianic consciousness," etc. But the *shūgaku* tradition also produced homilies, liturgical formulae, ritual codes, and religious calendars as well as sect-related festivals, genealogies, and printed scriptures for popular consumption. Such endeavors were important in the day-to-day management of the temples.

The intellectual elite within the sects helped to adapt Kamakura faith, with its expectation of historical crisis, to the new immanental mood of the Tokugawa period. The *mappō* psychology could not be sustained indefinitely; the new order required an affirmation of the world. This is the background for the "innerworldly harmony" that appeared in Rennyo's reformulation of Shinran's *shinjin* ("mind of faith") into *anjin* ("mind of peace"). The *nenbutsu* or chanting of *Namu Amida Butsu* ("Homage to Amitābha Buddha") became less a matter of evil men's surrender to grace and more of a mantra based on the mystery of an a priori union between reciter and recited: *namu* was identified as *ki*, the chanter; *Amida* as *hō*, the dharma; and *Butsu* as *ittai*, the union of the two. *Namu Amida Butsu* was thus equivalent to *kihō ittai*, the union of the chanter with Absolute Reality. The *nenbutsu* accordingly became a mystical formula used to effect a mystical end. Similarly, the Nichiren sect learned to tone down the militant anger of its founding prophet and to emphasize instead the timeless peace and all-encompassing resignation of his last days on Mt. Minobu. This sect not only based itself on the eternal *honzon*, a mandala expressing through ideographs the true object of devotion, but also made much of the doctrine of Three Mysteries (a doctrine attributed to Nichiren but actually of questionable origin). The sects all shared or accommodated themselves to the moral norms of the new feudal order. Filial piety, loyalty, sincerity, dedication, thankfulness, diligence, and contentment were as much Buddhist virtues as they were elements of the Neoconfucian, Shinto, or samurai ethos.

Through the system of temple-supporting households established by the shogunate, Buddhism became in effect an arm of the Edo state. This led to a degree of prosperity for the temples, but the Neoconfucian state itself was comparatively free from Buddhist influence. Increasingly, Buddhist thinkers not only had to incorporate Confucian norms so as to make of them Buddhist virtues, they also were thrown, more and more, on the defensive. First, they had to answer the usual Confucian charges against Buddhism. Anti-Buddhist polemics had a long history in China, but the Tokugawa period was the first time in Japanese history when Japanese Confucians were puristic enough to pursue such attacks with vengeance. Second, they had to face the criticisms of the *kogakusha* ("scholars of ancient learning"), of the *kokugakusha* ("scholars of national learning"), and, during the Meiji period, of the Shinto ideologues. All regarded Buddhism as either a foreign import or a betrayal of native faiths—in short, an "uncalled for" intrusion that Japan could do without. The Buddhist apologists, however, convinced none but themselves. Its only "victory" was to suppress Japanese Christians and foreign Christian missionaries, and this was due primarily to the strong arm of the Edo government. Not until the rise of liberal Buddhism did Buddhist thinkers find it possible to keep pace with the times and shake themselves free of their defensive posture.

Only in one area was Tokugawa Buddhism innovative and successful: the development of a complete liturgical system for funeral services and remembrance of ancestors. For better or for worse, this feature henceforth became central in popular Buddhist piety. My hypothesis, which follows from the work of Tamamuro (1964), is that Buddhist ancestral rites came to be practiced generally only in recent centuries. The ideological foundation for such rites can be traced back as far as 700, the date of the first cremation in Japanese history, but the material factors came into being only in the Tokugawa period and particularly during the seventeenth century. Only a sketch of the developments leading to this result can be offered here.

Hōnen's emphasis on faith as over against works and/or magical rites had the effect of liberating popular piety, but it also undermined a major source of income for the temples. In order to make up this loss, the sects developed various forms of the *bodaisho,* services for the welfare and eventual enlightenment of the departed. This coincided with the cult of patriarchal tombs for the founders of the sects and also with Tokugawa Ieyasu's claim to postmortem status as a buddha. Soon commoners too were looking forward to *ōjō* or "rebirth in the Pure Land" (though the term is now used as a synonym for death) and to the prospect of becoming a *hotoke* or buddha. This state was judged to have been reached soon after completion of the mortuary rites for pacification of the spirit of the deceased, rites sometimes alluded to through use of the term *jōbutsu* ("becoming a buddha"). According to the records showing the functions performed by Zen monks, a clear shift took place from a predominant emphasis on meditation to one of performing mortuary rites. From the fifteenth century on, the traditional practice of "abandoning the dead" in open fields, etc. came to an end. With acquisition of family property, census registrations, and establishment of customs governing inheritance, the commoner could afford and even required an ancestral cult. The sharp rise in the number of commoners' graves after the seventeenth century is a reflection of the widespread adoption of cultic practices relating to the dead among the new, land-holding peasants (*honbyakushō*).

Pietism and the myōkōnin. The real saints of Tokugawa Buddhism were the *myōkōnin* ("wondrously good people") of the Jōdo Shinshū tradition. In reinterpreting faith in Amida, Shinran had changed the focus of attention from the moment of death to the pious life of faith in the here and now. It was not the "hereafter" beyond death but the "henceforth" in life where one found real, sanctified vocation. The "saved" strove to make repayment for grace (*hō'on*) within their daily lives. In this way the Jōdo Shinshū brought to an end the literary genre of *ōjōden* ("legends of rebirth in the Pure Land") and initiated the cult of the *myōkōnin*.

I suspect that the *myōkōnin* cult took its inspiration from the genre known as the *shōninden*, biographies of founders of Buddhist sects, biographies that invested them with an aura of preternatural wisdom and saintliness. These biographies were later denounced by liberal historians (see below) for having distorted the real personality of the founders—as indeed they did by dressing them in mythic glory. Moreover, the moral ideal the *shōninden* espoused can be thought of as having enhanced feudal values, and one can be critical of the political passivism induced by such pietism. (Pietism in the West has been criticized on much the same ground.) These narratives also included, however, a human and even folklike aspect. They exemplified the pious life in the context of their times. Used as material for moral and spiritual instruction, they inculcated among the common people an unharried, day-to-day gentleness of spirit. The chief exemplars, the saints of this popular piety were the *myōkōnin*. Some were illiterate peasants, some lowly women. They may not have made political history, but through them the light of Amida shone into the nooks and crannies of everyday life. In their unobtrusive way they were also guiding lights to those who sought the social liberation of the masses, saints to the rising *honbyakushō*.

THE MEIJI ENLIGHTENMENT AND LIBERAL BUDDHISM

Reason and humanism. The Meiji Restoration ended the "ambiguous prosperity" of the feudal temples. The separation of shrine from temple was a blow to the sects, and the three articles making Shinto the national faith and reverence for the emperor a duty constituted a challenge to the Buddhists. There were protests and even a handful of notable martyrs. Buddhism was actually the one organized force that could stand up to the government. The tradition of servitude was long, however, and the alternatives were limited. Only in a small sector was there a genuine, revisionist response to the new era. Since those belonging to this sector resembled liberal Christians in outlook and scholarship, I shall call them "liberal Buddhists."

Rational humanism, scientific objectivity, and democratic government were new standards among the liberals. They provided external criteria whereby to judge, evaluate, review, and reformulate traditional creeds and practices. In retrospect liberal Buddhism appears to have been based on somewhat simple assumptions. It assumed that: (a) the essence of Buddhism was rational and humanistic, (b) whatever was otherwise in Buddhism could be attributed to later corruptions, (c) the pristine essence could be recovered, and (d) once recovered, an objective basis from which to resolve sectarian schisms would be in hand.

The early liberals also countered Christian critics and were eager to show through systematic comparison the greater rationality and humanism of Buddhism as over against the prescientific or superstitious elements in theistic Christianity. It mattered little to the liberals that living Buddhist faith in Japan had more idols, spirits, and saviors than Christianity. To a man, the early liberals prided themselves on being rational, critical, and atheistic.

The father of modern Buddhism was Inoue Enryō (1858–1919). His *Bukkyō katsuron joron* [Prolegomenon to a dynamic Buddhist faith] (1889) inveighed against "foolish, barbaric clergy" who were "unlearned, uninformed, and lifeless." This was not an inapt description of a priesthood lost in the backwaters of old routines. By way of alternative, Inoue stated in his preface that he would "trust in that which accords with the philosophical reason of today...and negate that which does not accord with the times." The West he depicted as torn between the dualism of materialism (*yuibutsu*) and idealism (*yuishin*), unable to find a resolution. The materialism and idealism were

Western, but *yuibutsu* and *yuishin* were Buddhist-inspired terms. The solution he proposed was also Oriental. Inoue posited a *yuiri* ("sole principle") that transcended and yet comprehended both mind (*shin*) and matter (*butsu*). The solution was straight out of Kegon philosophy. Inoue included a long defense of Buddhist rationalism and atheism and an attack on the folly of Christian beliefs. He was the first modern Buddhist scholar to make the dharma or universal law of Buddhism relevant and viable in the new age.

Murakami Senshō (1851–1929) developed another liberal thesis: there existed in Buddhism a pristine unity prior to the dissensions that marred the one truth. His *Bukkyō tōitsuron* [An argument for the unification of Buddhism] (1901) claimed to show the way to restore this unity. For almost thirteen centuries Buddhist tradition in Asia had accepted as authoritative the Five Periods classification scheme developed by Chih-i (538–597), founder of the T'ien-t'ai sect in China. The Five Periods were the times that Sakyamuni supposedly set forth all the teachings found in the Buddhist scriptures in a logical sequence up to the final scripture, the *Lotus sutra*. This scheme was Buddhologically determined by T'ien-t'ai ideals and was not historically objective. It was the Lotus *Heilsgeschichte* dressed up as *Historie*. Murakami was objective enough to question its right to be the latter. He then attempted to trace Mahayana to a separate transmission through Kāsyapa (Jps., Kashō), a leading disciple of the Buddha. In this way he thought he could account for the true origin of Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism in the one ascertainable source, the Buddha himself. Murakami, however, merely exchanged the T'ien-t'ai myth for a Zen myth, and unknowingly revived a thesis first suggested by Tao-an in fourth-century China. From a modern perspective, Murakami's *kyōhan* or "tenet classification" was premature and he himself misguided.

In his day Murakami's opinion was radical. Committed to the new objectivity, he left his post at the Pure Land academy (before being asked to leave) and became the first "academic Buddhist." Other liberals like Kaneko Daie were removed from their posts, and the Buddhist university (the term "university" was adopted in this period for the old academies) witnessed some notable strikes and protests. It is to the credit of the sects that Murakami and others were eventually restored to their posts. Murakami was even made president of Ōtani University. In this way, unlike other Mahayana Buddhist countries in Asia, Japan spearheaded objective scholarship within Buddhism.

Murakami eventually admitted that his 1901 work had been premature, and liberalism failed to reunite the sects. The dilemma of "academic Buddhists"—a cultured elite in the ivory towers of academia cut off from popular beliefs and rituals as well as from the real source of political power within the established sects—began then and continues largely unchanged to the present day. Murakami, moreover, precipitated yet another controversy.

Search for the historical Buddha. The search for the pristine essence of Buddhism, assumed by Inoue and thought to have been traced by Murakami, led inevitably to the problem of the "historical Buddha." The "higher criticism" practiced by the liberals resulted in the thesis that Mahayana Buddhism could not have been taught by the historical Buddha (*daijō hibussetsu*). This charge had already been leveled in the West. Mrs. Rhys Davids of the Pali Text Society was so sure that the rational, humanistic, pristine Buddhist message was represented in the Pali tradition that she deemed Mahayana a later corruption. For admitting this possibility, Murakami too shocked the traditionalists. (Murakami was not really as radical as he was often made out to be by his opponents; he never denied the truth of Mahayana, only its alleged dating.)

Critical scholarship raised other doubts. One of the longest, still unresolved debates has to do with the prestigious *Awakening* *of faith in Mahayana,* a definitive work on the nature of Mahayana traditionally attributed to Aśvaghoṣa (Jps., Memyō). It was doubtless upsetting, to say the least, to hear that this work might be a Chinese forgery or that its doctrine of "dynamic suchness" might have no precedent in India. Similar dismay must have resulted from the critical view that Amida Buddha and his Pure Land, despite centuries of devotion to Amida in his Western Paradise, may have been a scribal creation that had no grounding in history or objective reality.

It is to the credit of Japanese Buddhism that liberal scholarship is now accepted. Thus the Rev. Ikeda Daisaku, president of Soka Gakkai, can uphold the liberal dating of the *Lotus sutra*—but still retain Chih-i's view that this sutra was the culmination of the teachings of the Buddha himself. One may well wonder how these two assertions can be maintained. How can this sutra be regarded as at once the work of the Buddha himself and a compilation by unknown persons long after the Buddha had passed away?

Liberal scholars themselves found a way to answer this question that accords well with the spirit of the tradition. The problem they had to deal with was that of the *daijō hibussetsu*, the theory that Mahayana does not derive from the Buddha. Their resolution of the problem can only be summarized here.

First of all, liberal Buddhist scholars rejected the thesis of the Pali Text Society that the pristine teachings of the Buddha were to be found only in Theravada or Hinayana Buddhism as represented in the Pali tradition. They justified this rejection on the grounds that the Pali canon itself was of late compilation and that some of the Theravada Pali texts and some of the Mahayana Sanskrit texts were contemporaneous. The Mahayana outlook, they argued, can be traced to pre-Mahayana "liberal sectarian Buddhists" (Skt., *Mahāsaṃghika;* Jps., *daiten*), contemporaries of the Theravadins or "elders." Given that the two positions were coexistent, there is no reason to posit one as earlier or more original. Indeed if, per contra, one were to seek nonetheless to prove that one or the other was older, there is reason to select Mahayana as reflecting the original "openness" of the Buddha himself. But instead of speaking of "Mahayana" (the date of which is late, about the first century B.C.), the liberal Buddhists of Japan spoke of *konpon bukkyō* or "basic Buddhism." Basic Buddhism need not imply "primitive Buddhism" (Jps., *genshi bukkyō*). Basic Buddhism represents, rather, the essential core of Buddha's vision, one that can permeate both Hinayana and Mahayana. The two *yanas* ("vehicles") denote smaller and greater expressions of the one Truth. The insubstantiality of phenomena, for example, is a basic tenet. In Hinayana it was expressed in terms of the *anatman* ("no soul") and of the desire for nirvana ("cessation" of the self). In Mahayana the same tenet was expressed in terms of the idea of universal emptiness (Skt., *śūnyatā*), the wisdom *not* to seek nirvana as if it were real and substantive, recognizing that even nirvana, like transmigration, is "empty." Another basic tenet is that of interdependent origination. In Hinayana this led to a form of causative analysis, whereas in Mahayana it became the basis for a recognition of cosmic interrelatedness.

The liberal Buddhist search for the historical Buddha did not end in the same way as the Christian quest for the historical Jesus. Mahayana, though grounded in history, is not itself a literal historical faith. *What forms the cornerstone of Buddhist piety is not the specificity of a man called Gautama of the house of Śākya who was born to a woman named Māyā, etc., but the transcendental quality of Buddha's enlightenment.* Basic Buddhism, rather than primitive Buddhism, represents the spirit of the dharma. The core essence, not temporal priority, is the fundamental criterion for Truth. "Higher criticism," therefore, did not and could not undermine Buddhist faith as it did for a sizable sector of the Christian community. Controversy over the authenticity of Chih-i's "Five Periods," whether certain key scriptures were forgeries, and whether Mahayana was trustworthy was heated but, in the end, peripheral. Ui Hakuju aptly summarized and synthesized both the conservative and liberal positions when he said that the "Five Periods" were incorrect historically but valid nonetheless in principle. Truth lies not in origin or authorship. Truth has to do with content.

Failure of the liberal movement. Noble as the liberal enterprise was and still is, it was hampered by certain self-imposed limits. It was too rational, humanistic, and elitist. Unable to effect in the sect hierarchy structural changes corresponding to its ideals, it was left to float helplessly adrift. Finally its vocabulary proved malleable enough to serve the interests of rightists who put it to less noble use.

In liberal hands, Gautama the Buddha was too often decked out as a nineteenth century liberal rational humanist living in fifth-century B.C. India. (Jesus suffered a similar metamorphosis at the hands of his liberal defenders.) It is still customary to depict the Buddha as a social critic, a skeptic, an atheist, someone living on the frontier of Brahman culture in East India, fully alert to the racial tensions and social ferment of his time. According to liberal exegesis, the *anatman* ("no soul") doctrine was an oblique critique of Aryan egotism and all other egoism as well. *Pratītya-samutpāda* was really the dream of international cooperation in disguise. The Buddha's references to the caste system and his meditative vision of "evenness" were proofs of his democratic idealism and his insight into equalité—if not into liberté and fraternité! The liberal recreated the Buddha in his own image.

That he did so is nothing to be surprised at. Even the Kamakura Reformers made use of the sutras for their own purposes from time to time. It is only that the liberal often overlooked other important elements. He stripped the Buddha too bare. The Western scholar most responsible for exposing this one-dimensional picture of Buddhism as rational and humanistic is Edward Conze; in present-day Japan the art historian Umehara Takeshi, having rediscovered the tradition of esoteric Buddhism

(Jps., *mikkyō*), is calling for a similar review of the rationalist bias and a renewed appreciation of the irrational and the mystic in Buddhism.

The greatest weakness of the liberal movement was its limited social influence. Its members worked mainly at universities, spoke largely among themselves, and tended to be overtly or covertly "transsectarian." They looked back to a historical Buddha that few Japanese knew, to a "basic Buddhism" that was an abstraction created by their coterie, and to Sanskrit texts collected by Max Mueller and Nanjō Bunyū whose very titles few could even pronounce. All this resulted in their working ineffectively *outside* the temple structure.

Far more influential was Kiyozawa Manshi, the True Pure Land School reformer who supported the educational reforms that permitted the liberals to teach in the universities. Unlike them, however, Kiyozawa worked *within* the given structure. More personal in his synthesis of the agamas and stoicism into his interpretation of the *Tannishō*, he was also more able to appeal directly to True Pure Land followers. His *seishin shugi* ("spiritualism") was direct, somewhat spartan, and indeed a passive kind of escape from immoral and materialistic society. Nonetheless, by example and skillful means, this moderate reformer had more impact than many a higher critic. His philosophy provided for many an inner sanctuary, an oasis of sanity, in an increasingly desolate time as the Shōwa period (1926–) gave rise to fascism and the slow demise of the liberals.

As was the case with Sakaino Koyō's group *Shin bukkyō* ("New Buddhism"), the liberals were generally socialists. During the Shōwa period polarization between left and right, however, the liberal-socialists were edged out. Among the modern Buddhists, only Senō (1889–1961) openly swung to the left. He decried the capitalist system, denounced the whole structure of the sects, called Kiyozawa's "spiritualism" an escape, and tried to rally young workers and farmers to the cause of his New Buddhist Youth. Senō was jailed and silenced (Lai 1978b).

His articulateness and the comparative silence of other liberals ended alike in failure.

It is ironic that the liberal vocabulary was easily coopted by rightist Buddhists who supported the imperialist war. "Basic Buddhism" concepts like no-self, interdependence, overarching principle, emptiness, etc. somehow ended up being used in the call to "selfless devotion to an interdependent network that is the Great Asian Empire, overseen by the principle of the divine emperor, to whom the perfect emptying of self and other should be dedicated." The war came. The war went. Nothing like a Barthian soul-searching occurred to change the tone of Buddhist scholarship. Tanabe Hajime's *Sangedō to shite no tetsugaku* [A confessional philosophy], published just after the war (1945), was sobering, for in it Shinran's realistic appraisal of men as sinful and wretched was carried forward. But if we judge the postwar situation of Japanese Buddhism by the New Religions, many of which are based on the *Lotus sutra* and linked to Nichiren, the mood seems to be rather optimistic.

Soga Ryōjin's *Hōzō bosatsu* [Dharmakāya bodhisattva, or Amida-to-be] (1962) is a near-perfect example of what in the West was called "demythologization." *Hōzō,* meaning "dharma-store," was interpreted as *zōshiki,* the "storehouse consciousness" full of good dharmas or elements. Soga reduced the "objective" bodhisattva to the "subjective" inner consciousness in man—a procedure not unknown to traditional scholarship (for example, the Pure Land as "mind only"). Soga thus built a bridge between tradition and modernity for those Buddhists who recognize the importance of scientific analysis as developed in Buddhist Idealism but who no longer see Pure Lands and heavenly hosts as objective.

BUDDHISM IN POSTWAR JAPAN

New challenges to the traditional sects. In the postwar period a series of events posed a serious threat to the old temple organizations. First, the land reform took away sizable blocs of their land holdings. Second, the *danka* (temple-supporting parish household) system suffered when the law took away the temples' right to control their cemeteries. Third, the new religious freedom made possible the mushrooming of many new cults, which further weakened old loyalties. And fourth, rapid urbanization following the Korean War drained the temples of their rural adherents, many of whom affiliated with the New Religions. The Kamakura sects instituted various movements intended to renew old loyalties and build on the attraction of old traditions. A casual visitor to Japan will still see many temples well kept up as tourist attractions, but he will also notice that many local temples have obviously seen better days.

Though most Japanese still profess to be Buddhists, for many this has long meant only that the priest of their temple was called on to officiate at funerals and memorial services. Most historical accounts of contemporary Buddhism take the prosperity of Tokugawa-period temples as the standard. From that point of view, Buddhism has suffered repeatedly ever since its disestablishment at the beginning of the Meiji period. I do not know if it is possible to speak of "religionless Buddhism" in the same way that Bonhoeffer spoke of "religionless Christianity." I do think, however, that nostalgia for the prosperity typical of the Tokugawa period is hope misplaced. As suggested above, it was the Tokugawa period that took the sting out of Kamakura Buddhism and turned it into the handmaid of feudalism. Liberal attempts to go beyond Kamakura and China to the "basic Buddhism" of India itself managed only to sever the bonds between tradition and faith. Of all the trends in modern Japanese Buddhism, my perspective leads me to suggest that historical study of the Kamakura reformers is the most promising of all ventures.

The conscience of the reformers. During the Taishō period (1912–1926), not long after the liberals had begun to study the "historical Buddha," others began to apply the same critical and sympathetic method to the study of the founding fathers of the various sects of Japanese Buddhism.

Yamada Bunsho wrote on *Shinran to sono kyōdan* [Shinran and his community]. One of the contemporary watchwords was "to the human Shinran himself," that is, work through the legends and myths about Shinran to solid, historical facts. Yamada's scholarship was objective, and that objectivity made possible the discovery of Shinran's attitude toward the state—an attitude with which Rennyo's "two kingdoms" theory was by no means congruent.

Yanagi Muneyoshi's *Ippen shōnin* [Ippen the sage] (1955) was another historical treatment of a figure often overlooked by historians because the sect he founded, the Jishū, never cared much for organization.

Even Suzuki Daisetz helped to uncover minor Zen schools like that of Banke, schools too readily ignored by traditional sectarian orthodoxy. Kaneko Daie turned his attention to various True Pure Land heresies collectively known as *ianjin*, of which he made an empathetic study. Anesaki Masaharu undertook a study of Nichiren in his *Hokkekyō no gyōja Nichiren* [The Lotus sutra ascetic Nichiren] (1916).

Together, these studies resurrected the crisis and the faith of the Kamakura reformers. Since these reformers are well known to the Japanese and since humane feeling (*ninjō*) may well be the key medium through which to inculcate the values by which people live, such historical works just might open the way to a "religionless" Buddhist faith in Japan.

Historical scholarship alone, however, does not guarantee an authentic picture of the Kamakura giants. There have been fashions and fads in the past, and some will doubtless be in vogue in the future. Anesaki recalled his own unpopular approach to Nichiren in the preface of his work when it was reprinted in 1932:

> Up to the very end of the Taishō period, the naturalistic interpretation had predominated.... From that perspec-

> tive, the reformers were depicted in the form of biographies or novelettes with a focus on their frailties. Since that time, the tendency has been the opposite: to depict them as supermen in overflowing glory. These two successive styles can also be seen in studies of Nichiren. The first made Nichiren out as another Shinran, a sickly introvert and a noble failure. Later he was seen as a patriot and superhuman prophet. . . .
>
> Sixteen years ago, when I first presented this study, I departed from both positions as well as from sectarian understandings. I underlined, on the one hand, Nichiren in his penance and activism as the one commissioned by the Buddha to engage in religious austerities in order to battle against evil. I underlined, on the other hand, his role as the sage who revived the spirit of the original Buddha. I described these two aspects in their intricate dialectics. I was then criticized for doing so. Since then, after further research, I am even more convinced of the correctness of my perspective (Nakamura et al. 1978, pp. 11–12).

The search for the original Nichiren—or Shinran, Hōnen, or Dōgen—may never end. A personal pilgrimage to confront these living ideals of the not-too-distant Japanese past should, however, always be fresh and instructive. Unlike the search for the historical Buddha who is so largely lost in myth, these searches for the reformers in their Japanese setting are more realizable. More than doctrines, creeds, or the legend-surrounded *shōnin* images, these eminent figures of Japanese humanity should withstand the test of time.

In this way, the spirit of the Kamakura reformers can and will live on in the hearts of modern Japanese people. This spirit can still instruct men in the true Buddhist way of life. In this way too, the uniqueness of a religious tradition can be appreciated for what it is.

GLOSSARY

anjin 安心
bodaisho 菩提所
Chih-i (Jps., Chigi) 智顗
daijō hibussetsu 大乗非仏説
daiten 大天
danka seido 檀家制度
genshi bukkyō 原始仏教
hokke ikki 法華一揆
honbyakushō 本百姓
hongaku 本覚
honmatsu 本末
hō'ō 法皇
Hui-yüan (Jps., Eon) 慧遠
ianjin 異安心
ikkō ikki 一向一揆
Kashō 迦葉
kihō ittai 機法一体
kogakusha 古学者
kokugakusha 国学者
konpon bukkyō 根本仏教
kyōhan 教判
Mappō tōmyōki 末法燈明記
Memyō 馬鳴
Myōe 明恵
myōkōnin 妙好人
myōshu 名主
ninjō 人情
ōhō 王法
ōjōden 往生伝
Rennyo 蓮如
seishinshugi 精神主義
Senō Girō 妹尾義郎
Shan-tao (Jps., Zendō) 善道
shinjin 信心
shōnin 上人・聖人
shūgaku 宗学
Tao-an (Jps., Dōan) 道安
T'ien-t'ai (Jps., Tendai) 天台
Ui Hakuju 宇井伯寿
Umehara Takeshi 梅原猛
yuibutsu 唯物
yuiri 唯理
yuishin 唯心
zōshiki 蔵識

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