Buddhism and the Problem of Modernity in East Asia : Some Exploratory Comments Based on the Example of Takayama Chogyū

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INTRODUCTION

Modern Japanese history is characterized by radical social and cultural changes which took place under the impact of the West. These changes were both prompted and accompanied by fundamental shifts in the manner by which people understood the meaning of various aspects of Japanese life. While in some instances these shifts resulted in an outright rejection of traditional ideas, more generally they involved a reappropriation, reinterpretation and reformulation of that tradition. The following exploration is undertaken from a particular viewpoint: I propose to examine how references to Buddhism appear in this reorientation of the relationship to the tradition with the hope that we may thus obtain clues leading to a more profound understanding of the place of Buddhism in the Japanese tradition.[1]

To give the examination a specific focus I will consider one controversial writer, Takayama Chogyū (1871–1902), who wrote extensively on the question: what does it mean to be Japanese in the modern world? Chogyū is an appropriate focus because near the end of his short life he surprised many of his contemporaries by turning to Nichiren (1222–1282), the medieval Japanese Buddhist leader, in his efforts to answer that central question.

I will begin the examination with a brief biographical sketch of Chogyū highlighting his early advocacy of a nationalist program

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1. I have commented briefly and tentatively on the Chinese situation from a similar point of view in my unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Shinohara 1977). I would like to thank James Robinson for his valuable editorial assistance in the preparation of this paper.

(*nipponshugi*, to be translated below as "Nipponism"). This will
be followed by a closer examination of Chogyū's transition from
this nationalistic position to one that could be characterized as a
form of Nichirenism. To conclude the study I will offer a few
comments concerning the wider significance of this important de-
velopment in Chogyū's thought.

CHOGYŪ AND NIPPONISM

Formulation of Nipponism. Takayama Chogyū (or Rinjirō)[2] was
born into a *samurai* family in Yamagata Prefecture in 1871 (Meiji
4) and was raised by his uncle's family, first in northeastern Japan
and later in Tokyo. He entered the Philosophy Department of
Tokyo Imperial University in 1893. Toward the end of that year
he won second place in a literary contest sponsored by the news-
paper *Yomiuri* with a short historical novel, *Takiguchi nyūdō* (The
Takiguchi novice). This award made him widely known in lit-
erary circles. After graduating from the university in 1896, Cho-
gyū taught English and ethics in Second High School, his *alma
mater*, and then returned to Tokyo as the chief editor of the maga-
zine *Taiyō*. In 1900 Chogyū was given the opportunity to study
aesthetics in Germany, France and Italy for three years; he had to
decline this opportunity, however, because the tuberculosis which
had plagued him from his youth had worsened. His relationship
with the Nichiren Buddhist circle led by Tanaka Chigaku began
in December 1901. He died 18 December 1902.

Chogyū's writings on Nipponism appeared regularly in the maga-
zine *Taiyō* from 1897 to 1900.[3] He bases his discussion on a broad
and rather schematic description of intellectual development in
Meiji Japan. Chogyū summarizes the development of thought

2. For a helpful summary of Chogyū's life and thought, see Togoro Shigemoto
   1965; Takagi Yutaka 1968; and Tamura Yoshirō 1972.
3. Chogyū's writings are collected in *Chogyū zenshū*, and the material directly
   relevant to our discussion is found mostly in the fourth volume of this col-
   lection. References will be given as *Zenshū*, with volume and page num-
   ber.

from 1868 to 1888 in terms of a polarity between two basic positions: one advocated the indiscriminate adoption of Western ideas (*seiyōshugi* or *ōkashugi*, translated below as "Westernism"), and the other, a reaction against the former, advocated the preservation of the purity of the Japanese tradition (*kokusuihozonshugi*, or "National Purity Preservation Movement"). Chogyū sees this reaction as a "natural expression of the national spirit" (*Zenshū* IV, p. 425), but at the same time, he notes that its limit lies in the fact that basically it was no more than a passive reaction: it advocated preservation of the "national purity" but had little to say concerning what this purity was. Furthermore, it did not deal with the question of why one should preserve national purity; in this regard it assumed that all things developed in the East or in Japan are inherently harmonious with each other and conversely that anything arising in the West or outside Japan is incompatible with the native culture. Chogyū describes this assumption as "dogmatism" (*dokudan*) and points out that any position based on such an assumption is overly formalistic and abstract (*Zenshū* IV, p. 388; p. 399; p. 390).

Chogyū saw these limitations as a reflection of the low level of "national consciousness" (*kokumin ishiki*), and he suggested that several important developments took place in the late 1880's and 1890's which resulted in a dramatic enhancement of "national consciousness" (*Zenshū* IV, p. 389; pp. 427–429). The Meiji Constitution (1889) and the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890) established the fundamental unity of the political and moral thought of the nation. The so-called "controversy over the conflict between education and religion" in the early 1890's highlighted fundamental differences between this new state ideology (*kokutairon*) and Christianity. Finally, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 and 1895 "taught the true significance of nationhood and citizenship to the people (*kokumin*)" through the "awesome facts of life and death and rise and decline [of nations]" (*Zenshū* IV, p. 435). For Chogyū, then, Nipponism is a position that presupposes the higher level of "national consciousness" brought about by these developments.

The tasks of Nipponism. The task of Nipponism, according to Chogyū, was to create the practical morality which would secure the future progress of the Japanese nation and the happiness of the Japanese people (*Zenshū* IV, p. 25; p. 398; p. 438). In contrast to the National Purity Preservation Movement, which he characterized as a reaction, Nipponism was consciously designed to generate principles for future action. Chogyū's ideal Japan was a state which would be as modern and powerful as any other in the world and yet at the same time be unique in being truly Japanese; Nipponism was a program that aimed at translating what was uniquely Japanese into modern terms. A few observations will further clarify the specific orientation of Chogyū's program.

1. Whereas the earlier advocates of the Preservation of National Purity were "dogmatic" in their exclusive reliance on the criterion of geography, Nipponism was said to be "scientific." Rather than geography, its central criterion was compatibility with the "national essence" (*kokutai*) and the "character of the people," or *minsei* (*Zenshū* IV, p. 401). Thus Nipponism meant rejecting both Christianity and Buddhism as other-worldly and non-nationalistic. Nipponism also rejected the conservative and "regressive" elements of Confucianism while adopting elements of German political philosophy and British utilitarianism. Chogyū insisted that these and similar judgements must be based on scientific investigation.

2. What Chogyū meant by the key terms "national essence" and "character of the people" is not entirely clear. In one context he explains what he means by national character through an analogy with the concept of personhood: personal character is what makes a person who he is, and a madman who has lost self-consciousness is no longer the same man as before; similarly, the "national character" is what makes a nation what it is in its uniqueness—it is the self-conscious "spirit" of the nation (*Zenshū* IV, p. 302). Elsewhere Chogyū states explicit that the "national character" of Japan is what is articulated in the Meiji Constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education, namely, the "national

consciousness" that the "ruler and the subjects constitute one family" (*kun shin ikka*; *Zenshū* IV, p. 297). Here he is in line with the Meiji government's official reading of the Japanese imperial myth which transformed the myth recorded in *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* into the ideological foundation of the new nation (Powles 1976–77). In another instance Chogyū suggests that the Japanese people are "open, progressive, and full of vitality."[4] Without these characteristics they would be a body without its spirit. This comment suggests that the vision underlying Chogyū's Nipponism is of a Japan made more Japanese through modernization.

3. Chogyū emphasized that the focus of Nipponism was on practice. In contrasting Nipponism with "world ideology" (*se-kaishugi*), which he understood as an updated form of the earlier "Westernism," Chogyū stated that while these two positions do agree in seeing their ultimate end in the equal and full realization of the happiness of the individual, the crucial difference between them was in the means each would adopt to attain the end. Nipponism advocated that the state with its unique essence and history was the only vehicle through which this ultimate end could be attained. The "world ideology" opposed this and advocated a strict individualism (*Zenshū* IV, pp. 454–455).

At the heart of Chogyū's Nipponism there was a tension between the universal ideal on the one hand and concrete and particular Japanese reality on the other. Chogyū attempted to answer the question "what does it mean to be Japanese in the modern world?" by concentrating on the particular and practical concerns of Japanese life, concerns which have been shaped by Japan's unique history. At the same time, though, his formulation of the central problem as being the place of Japan in the world, and his acceptance of the universal character of the ultimate ideal, suggest that he believed what is uniquely Japanese must be articulated in uni-

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4. *Zenshū* IV, p. 266 and p. 441. One might detect certain parallels between this emphasis and an emphasis on the active, progressive, and expansive character of life among some Tokugawa Confucianists. See the selection on Itō Tōgai in DeBary 1974, pp. 403–413.

versal terms, terms that are real and meaningful to the world as a whole. Chogyū's willingness to face up to this tension and to achieve an appropriate balance gave his position a genuinely programmatic character and distinguished it sharply from earlier positions. This very willingness, however, eventually turned the tension into a contradiction and took Chogyū beyond Nipponism to a viewpoint shaped by Nichiren Buddhism.

CHOGYŪ'S TRANSITION TO NICHIRENISM

References to religion. The development in Chogyū's life and thought can be poignantly illustrated by examining his references to religion. At a number of points in his discussion of Nipponism Chogyū makes negative statements about religion. He says, for example, that Nipponism is compatible with universally valid philosophy or "purely theoretical philosophy" (*junritetsugaku*) because it rejects religion and bases itself on scientific investigation. Here, religion is contrasted with science and said to be grounded on irrational superstitions (*Zenshū* IV, p. 270). He also contrasts the this-worldly and progressive orientation of Nipponism with the other-worldly and conservative orientation of Christianity, Buddhism and Confucianism.

Another aspect of Chogyū's attitude toward religion appears in his comments on the controversial career of his contemporary Murakami Senshō (1851–1928).[5] Murakami was simultaneously a member of the Shin Buddhist hierarchy and an academic who taught Buddhism at Tokyo Imperial University. A member of the Ōtani sect of Shin Buddhism, Murakami repeatedly took a courageous stand as a critic and reformer of the corrupt practices of the sect's leadership. Chogyū, noting that Murakami's stand was based on a "historical description of the evolution of religon" and a "comparison of the situation of the Ōtani branch of Shin Buddhist sect with that of ancient history" (*Zenshū* IV, p. 591 and p.

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5. There is a brief summary of Murakami's life in Tsunemitsu Kōnen 1968, Vol. I, pp. 275–285.

599), praised Murakami for being "a follower (*gyōja*) of Sākya-muni" (*Zenshū* IV, p. 602), and not an advocate of any particular sect or school. Eventually Murakami resigned from his status as a Shin priest because he felt that this was incompatible with the basic orientation of his scholarly research, which involved "removing sectarian biases" and recovering "the pure spirit of Buddhism" or "the common ideal underlying the doctrines of various schools" through "impartial research" (quoted by Chogyū in *Zenshū* IV, p. 876).

In his response to Murakami's resignation Chogyū expresses great disappointment. In this response Chogyū introduces a distinction between the attitudes of a scholar and the religious man: the former involves theoretical analysis which remains on the level of written texts, and the latter involves emotion, practice, faith, religious enlightenment and certainty. Murakami's attitude, says Chogyū, is admirable as an example of the former but it is fundamentally different from the latter. In this context, Chogyū offers a pointed comment intimating his respect for the attitude of the religious man: "The hungry man begs for bread, not for a comparative study of bread" (*Zenshū* IV, p. 879).

Considered together these episodes clearly indicate that important and fundamental shifts had taken place in Chogyū's understanding of the relationship between religion and scientific investigation. In his schematic discussion of Nipponism, he says that the adoption of the latter involves rejecting aspects of religious life not compatible with science, and recognizes no internal coherence that is uniquely religious. In his initial comment on Murakami Chogyū accepts Murakami's position that genuine religiosity is to be recovered through objective scientific investigation. Finally, in his later comment on Murakami, Chogyū sees a fundamental tension between the two and he definitely sides with religion rather than science.

Shift to Nichiren. These shifts in Chogyū's attitude towards religion reflect his transition from Nipponism to Nichirenism. Cho-

gyū's writings on Nichiren come in the last few years in his life, when he was suffering from worsening tuberculosis.[6]   His physical condition partially explains why his writings on Nichiren are much less developed than those from earlier periods but these fragmentary writings do at least provide a sufficient basis for reconstructing the outline of his views on Nichiren.   These writings are distinctive in their personal focus on Nichiren himself, with an almost total disregard for the institution and history of Nichiren Buddhist tradition.[7]

Chogyū describes the life of Nichiren by highlighting the developments leading to Nichiren's conviction that he himself was the *bodhisattva* Jōgyō of the Lotus Sutra.[8]   Chogyū interprets this conviction primarily as an expression of the remarkable strength of Nichiren's character.   Intriguingly, Chogyū also points to a number of parallels between the lives of Nichiren and Christ: they were alike in their "purity" of intention, in their "fierceness and boldness of will," and in the "highminded and tragic" character of their enterprises which involved recognizing an "ideal world outside of and beyond this world" and striving towards its realization

6.   Chogyū's writings on Nichiren have been gathered in a separate volume (Anesaki and Yamakawa 1913), to be abbreviated as *Chogyū to Nichiren*.

7.   Chogyū recalls that as a young man he had been impressed by the strength of character that comes through vividly in Nichiren's writings (*Chogyū to Nichiren*, pp. 191–192). During the period Chogyū moved towards Nichiren, he was also deeply affected by the writings of Nietzsche. This interest is undoubtedly closely related to Chogyū's focus on the personality of Nichiren. See Takagi 1968, and Togoro 1965. I will postpone the examination of this important aspect of Chogyū's thought for a future occasion.

8.   *Chogyū to Nichiren*, pp. 44–58. The reference to the *bodhisattva* Jōgyō (Visistacāritra) is based on a passage in the "Welling up out of the Earth" chapter of the Lotus Sutra (Hurvitz 1976, p. 226). Chogyū suggests that Nichiren arrived at this remarkable conviction on the basis of an interpretation of another passage in the Lotus Sutra in the light of his personal experiences. The passage is found in the "Fortitude" chapter and describes the difficulties that those who proclaim the teaching of the scripture are to encounter.

"through the sublimation of human spirituality" (*Chogyū to Nichiren*, pp. 60–61).

Chogyū's discussion of Nichiren includes a basic shift in his understanding of the relationship between religion and the state. In the preceding section of this paper we noted that his Nipponism involved both the rejection of Christianity[9] and the subjugation of religious concerns under the this-worldly concerns of the state. In the comparison of Nichiren to Christ in his later writings Chogyū implicitly accepts the latter as the universal norm for his interpretation of Nichiren. Furthermore, the "this-worldly" authority of the state is described as "means" (*hōben*) and contrasted with spirituality, which he portrays as "independence, freedom, glory and dignity" (*Chogyū to Nichiren*, pp. 54–55). He states clearly that religious teachings (*hō*) are more important than the state (*Chogyū to Nichiren*, p. 77). Nichiren, Chogyū says, "recognized the state for the sake of the truth, not the truth for the sake of the state. For this reason he affirmed the destruction of the state for the purpose of serving the truth. Or (to put the matter differently) it was his unchanging conviction that a state that met destruction in this manner would find new life through it" (*Chogyū to Nichiren*, p. 78).

According to Chogyū, Nichiren was a true patriot in spite of the fact that he rebelled against earthly authorities and predicted their destruction. Nichiren was convinced that there was a "necessary relationship between the truth itself and this land [of Japan]."

9. An interesting exchange between Chogyū and the Christian leader Uchimura Kanzō is summarized in Togoro 1965, pp. 141–142. The exchange focuses on the relationship between ideal and practice. Chogyū accuses Uchimura of failing to address himself to real and practical issues, saying that Uchimura is not a practical statesman, a philosopher or a religious man, but is rather a poet. Uchimura replies that Chogyū's distinction and separation between the ideal and the practical ultimately makes him a liar and a hypocrite. The development of Chogyū's thought outlined here suggests that he later shifted his position much closer to that of the Christians without openly acknowledging it.

This relationship was proven by the fact that "the land in which the *bodhisattva* Jōgyō appears is . . . Japan and that this *bodhisattva* is none other than Nichiren himself" (*Chogyū to Nichiren*, p. 80).

It is important to understand that in Chogyū's later thought patriotism is transposed from being a mere this-worldly concern for the survival and prosperity of the existing political order to being a spiritual ideal. A new distinction is drawn between the state as the existing earthly order and the state in the ideal sense as the political order purified by religious teaching. Chogyū's view of Nichiren can be interpreted as a new phase in his attempt to translate the uniqueness of the Japanese tradition. The central motive for this translation shifts from that of articulating a blueprint for Japan as a modern nation to reappropriating Japan's spiritual heritage in a new context. In this regard the significance of his comparison between Nichiren and Christ is that this comparison enabled Chogyū to identify a spirituality which would have as much place in the modern world as Christianity and yet would still be uniquely Japanese. The implication of this development is that the various spheres of life (secular state, scholarship, etc.) which were held together as mutually harmonious aspects in Chogyū's earlier program are now understood to be in conflict with each other.[10]

CONCLUSION
Chogyū and the sociology of religion. To conclude this discussion I would like to make a few general observations on Chogyū from the standpoint of the sociology of religion. Hopefully these observations will help to clarify the significance of Chogyū's case as an

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10. Ikeda Eishun 1976, interprets Buddhist thought during the second half of the Meiji period as being characterized by emphasis first on attempts at philosophical synthesis (represented by Inoue Enryō) and later by the rise of modern Buddhist scholarship and the "spiritualist viewpoint" (Kiyozawa Manshi). Yoshida Kyūichi suggests a similar interpretation. These suggestions indicate that Chogyū's development reflects and articulates broad tendencies in Buddhist thought in modern Japan.

episode illustrating the place of Buddhism in Japanese tradition and suggest possibilities for further study. I have interpreted Chogyū's transition from Nipponism to Nichirenism as a process in which the effort to synthesize different types of concerns (politics, scholarship and religion) breaks down as the inner tensions between secular and religious concerns come to the surface in an increasingly radicalized form. It is interesting to note certain parallels in Chogyū's transition with the process Max Weber described as religious rationalization. In his sociology of religion Weber described religious rationalization as a process in which the specifically religious concern, i.e., the preoccupation with other-worldly salvation ("salvation religiosity"), and the formulation of an inner ethic based on this concern *(Gesinnungsethik)*, become differentiated and come to stand in a relationship of radical tension with other this-worldly concerns ("world rejection").[11] That Weber's ideas are useful in the study of Japanese intellectual history is illustrated by the fact that Robert Bellah, in particular, has used them to such advantage in his studies.

In one essay Bellah describes the differentiation(s) between religious and this-worldly concerns in terms of a typology of the "cosmological myth" and "radical transcendence." Tracing how undifferentiated orientation to life, symbolized as the cosmological myth in Japanese tradition, broke down under the impact of the modern West and Christianity, Bellah identifies what he calls "the problem of meaning" (Bellah 1970, pp. 100–119). He also interprets various developments in modern Japanese intellectual history by attempting to measure the extent to which they are guided by a symbolic structure representing "radical transcendence." He pays special attention to the manner in which traditional Japanese religious symbols are reappropriated in these modern develop-

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11. See, for example, his important essay "Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions," in Gerth and Mills 1958, pp. 323–359. The original, "Zwischenbetrachtung: Theorie der Stufen und Richtungen religiöser Weltablehnung," is in Weber 1920, pp. 536–578.

ments. In a recent essay, Bellah extends this basic viewpoint to highlight the manner in which the experience of transcendence presented in Kamakura Buddhism is reappropriated in the modern context (Bellah 1974).

It seems to me that the case of Takayama Chogyū also illustrates an attempted reappropriation of the tradition in a modern context: Chogyū's attempt initially was based on the "cosmological myth" represented in the Meiji Constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education; this initial attempt broke down and gave way to another attempt that found its basic symbols in one major development in Kamakura Buddhism. As evidence of this we can focus on the experience of transcendence in Chogyū's description of Nichiren and the subjugation of this-worldly concerns under a religious viewpoint.

While it is illuminating to consider Chogyū's case in the light of Bellah's studies, it is also evident that such a view needs further refinement and clarification. This is because Bellah's understanding of the relationship between the Japanese tradition and the modern context is quite complex. On the one hand, he interprets that tradition in terms of the model of the "cosmological myth" and here his primary emphasis is on the lack of internal differentiation. On the other hand, though, Bellah sees the effort to come to terms with the problem of meaning in the modern context as an effort to reappropriate the experience of radical transcendence that took place and was preserved in the tradition itself. The relationship between these two aspects of the tradition highlighted in Bellah's analysis is not fully clarified in his own discussion, and a degree of ambiguity remains.

The Chogyū example. In this regard Chogyū's example presents an opportunity for further exploration of the question. The example of Chogyū illustrates how certain traditional themes represented in Shinto mythology and some Confucian concepts were reappropriated in the modern context in the form of a vision and a program. It also shows how inner tensions among various com-

ponents in this program became heightened as the meaning of
these components were thought through more consistently, in
terms appropriate to the modern context. Moreover, the further
transition which Chogyū underwent in his later period contains an
especially intriguing development: his apprehension of the prob-
lematic character of his original attempt to retrieve Shinto elements
in the Japanese tradition mediated his further effort to reappro-
priate specifically Buddhist elements in the tradition. To put it
more directly, the breakdown of his effort to reappropriate in the
modern context the Shinto and Confucian elements from the tradi-
tion through the symbolic structure of the "cosmological myth"
led to his reappropriation of Buddhist elements, through the sym-
bolic structure of "radical transcendence." In Chogyū's case the
symbolism taken from Nichiren's life and writings highlight the
radical character of inner tensions among themes in his Nippon-
ism.

Understood in this way the case of Chogyū suggests that there
is a genuine dualism in the Japanese tradition. Buddhism repre-
sents one pole of this dualism and the other, more this-worldly
oriented traditions represent the other pole. Chogyū's example
further suggests that the "problem of meaning" that arises through
radical social and cultural changes may involve dimensions that
ultimately cannot be dealt with adequately through the refurbish-
ing of this-worldly "cosmological myth." It may be of some
interest to turn this suggestion into a hypothesis and examine it
more systematically through the analysis of further examples,
examples which derive not only from the modern period but also
from other periods of massive social change in Japanese history.
It is hoped that the examination of Chogyū's example initiated
above may help clarify the important place that Buddhism occupies
as an integral part of the Japanese tradition.

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