

CULTURE AND IDENTITY

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JAPANESE INTELLECTUALS DURING THE  
INTERWAR YEARS

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*Edited by J. Thomas Rimer*

*Sponsored by the Joint Committee on Japanese Studies  
of the American Council of Learned Societies and the  
Social Science Research Council.*

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*Contents*

*Preface*

**PART I: THE MOVE INWARD**

1. Abe Jirō and *The Diary of Santarō*

*Stephen W. Kohl*

2. Kurata Hyakuzō and *The Origins of Love and  
 Understanding*

*J. Thomas Rimer*

3. Taishō Culture and the Problem of Gender Ambivalence

*Donald Roden*

**PART II: CULTURE AND SOCIETY**

4. Sociology and Socialism in the Interwar Period

*Nozomu Kawamura*

5. Tsuchida Kyōson and the Sociology of the Masses

*Eugene Siviak*

6. Disciplinizing Native Knowledge and Producing Place:  
 Yanagita Kunio, Origuchi Shinobu, Takata Yasuma

*H. D. Harootunian*

**PART III: MARXISM AND CULTURAL CRITICISM**

7. Marxism Addresses the Modern: Nakano Shigeharu's  
 Reproduction of Taishō Culture

*Miriam Silverberg*

8. "Credo Quia Absurdum": *Tenkō* and the Prisonhouse of  
 Language

*Brett de Bary*

9. *Ikkoku Shakai-shugi*: Sano Manabu and the Limits of  
 Marxism as Cultural Criticism

*Germaine A. Hoston*

vii

1

7

22

37

57

61

83

99

129

13

15

16

League framework to make the global organization more realistic and effective. Most proposals for regional order envisioned a Pacific community incorporating such non-Asian entities as the Soviet Union and the United States. The Far Eastern Locarno plan drew inspiration from an arrangement presumed successful in Europe. In nearly every regional framework, the ghost of universalism can be detected. One is reminded of the common explanation for the rise of feudalism in medieval Europe and *bakufu* Japan: the memory of the universal empire of the past helped determine the shape of the decentralized order that displaced it. Similarly, the vestiges of universal order lay entrapped in the hearts of the drafters and woven into the blueprints of regional systems of the 1930s. Nor did Japan after 1931 cherish a so-called autonomous diplomacy. Japanese foreign policy did cease to be accommodationist; but Japan quickly sought new colleagues, at first in Asia and after 1936 in the fascist power of Europe.

Finally, was the retreat from international accommodationism a cultural reversion to Asia? This much can be ventured. Cultural affinity was a basis for only one stream of regionalist thought—the pan-Asianist stream—and was distinctly absent in other streams. The prolific writings and utterances of Nitobe, which clearly document his own shift, show no evidence of an accompanying Asian culturalism. Pan-Asianist ideals became influential in diplomatic thought as the 1930s wore on and were an important intellectual ingredient in the New Order in East Asia. But pan-Asianist ideas began to appear in prominent discussions of regionalism only after the Manchurian Incident and after Japan's estrangement from the League of Nations. In this light, it seems difficult to argue a cultural basis for imperialism. Asian culturalism seems rather to gain prominence as a means of adjustment to and consolidation of established regional power.

## 11

### A Vast and Grave Task: Interwar Buddhist Studies as an Expression of Japan's Envisioned Global Role

JACKIE STONE

UI HAKUJU (1882–1963), Buddhologist and scholar of Indian philosophy during the Taishō–Shōwa periods, in reviewing the achievements of his own generation of Japanese Buddhist scholars, wrote the following in 1951:

By now, with respect to Buddhist studies, we may say that we have reached a point where ours excel those of any other nation. . . . Thanks to the lifetime zeal of many Buddhist scholars, Buddhist studies in our country have developed and advanced as Japanese Buddhist studies, producing something unique and not to be found in either India or China. From the broad standpoint of culture as a whole, Japanese Buddhist studies form our contribution to the development of the culture of humanity, and are the crystallization of the efforts of our countrymen. It therefore cannot be denied that our Buddhist studies are no mere import, but something we have thoroughly integrated and absorbed.<sup>1</sup>

Three decades later, Japan's accomplishments in the world of Buddhist studies still far surpass those of any other nation, not merely in the area of Japanese Buddhism, as one might expect, but also with respect to the Buddhism of India, China, Tibet, and Central and Southeast Asia. Japan attained its present eminence in Buddhist studies—and at the same time self-defined its role as the disseminator of Buddhism to the world—during the Taishō and early Shōwa periods, that is, in the interval between the world wars.

At least three distinguishing characteristics of Japanese Buddhist studies may be found during this period. First, the new field of Buddhology emerged as an academic discipline independent of the Buddhist clergy and traditional sectarian Buddhist studies. Second, there was a complete absorption of modern Western scholastic methods, including philological and historical studies, textual analysis, and the interpretation of Bud-

<sup>1</sup> Ui Hakuju, *Nihon bukkijō gaisetsu* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1951), p. 217.

dhism in the light of such new disciplines as psychology, sociology, archaeology, and comparative religion. Third, there was a massive effort at integration and systematization, including the collating, editing, and translating of texts, attempts to systematize various Buddhist doctrines and developments within an overreaching framework, as well as a search for a single underlying truth in which the whole of Buddhism might be subsumed. These three developments together enabled Japanese Buddhist studies of the interwar period to emerge as the foremost in the world. I believe it is possible to see them all as expressions of broader intellectual trends operating at that time, including an effort on the part of Japanese intellectuals in the post-Meiji years to define the position of their country with respect to Asia, the rest of the world, and history. I will attempt here to begin drawing some connections between these general trends and specific developments in interwar Buddhist studies, referring where necessary to the background of the latter in the Meiji period.

The Buddhist establishment in post-Restoration Meiji Japan faced an immediate crisis. More than two hundred years of patronage by the Tokugawa regime had bred widespread moral and financial corruption. Now, suddenly deprived of their state support, temples and priests lost a major source of revenue, and in addition, Buddhism came under attack for its foreign origins, an opposition that reached its extreme in the short-lived but violent *haibutsu kishaku* movement, described in William La-Fleur's essay, in which art treasures were destroyed and temples and lands seized. As Japan hastened to Westernize, Christianity posed still another threat. Younger intellectuals, crediting Western religion in part with the remarkable rise of Western science and technology, tended on the whole to turn away from Buddhism. Here and there, however, a few voices could be heard asserting that, far from being an archaic foreign import, Buddhism had by centuries of association become something uniquely Japanese and might therefore contribute to Japan's prestige among foreign nations. "Only in our country of Japan do we have the sects and texts, as well as the people who understand the profundity of the One Vehicle," observed Inoue Enryō (1858–1919), one of the most influential of the new Meiji Buddhist scholars.<sup>2</sup> Writing as early as 1887, he declared:

Buddhism is now our so-called strong point. . . . Material commodities are an advantage of the West; scholarship is also one of their strong points. The only advantage we have is religion. This fine product of ours excels those of other countries; the fact that its good strain died out in India and China may be considered an unexpected blessing for our country. If we continue to nurture it in

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Kathleen M. Staggs, "'Defend the Nation and Love the Truth': Inoue Enryō and the Revival of Meiji Buddhism," *Monumenta Nipponica* 38, 3 (Autumn 1983):271.

Japan and disseminate it some day in foreign countries, we will not only add to the honor of our nation but will also infuse the spirit of our land into the hearts and minds of foreigners. I am convinced that the consequences will be considerable.<sup>3</sup>

I have quoted this passage because it prefigures an identification of Buddhism with Japan's unique role in the world community, which was to emerge fully during the Taishō period. In this respect, Inoue proved to be far-sighted. It is probably safe to say that most of his contemporaries active in the Meiji Buddhist revival movement did not view Buddhist studies as a means of enhancing Japan's global prestige but hoped merely to purify the Buddhist establishment, restore Buddhism to its former power and influence, and enable it to emerge and survive as a modern religion. With this aim in mind, leaders within the various sects sent promising young priests to England and Germany to absorb the latest developments in European Buddhist scholarship. First among those to go abroad was Nanjō Bun'yū (1849–1927), who in 1876 journeyed to England where he would study Sanskrit with F. Max Müller (1823–1900), the great Orientalist and one of the founders of the science of religion. What these students brought back would alter irrevocably the configuration of Buddhist studies in Japan.

Until this time, Japanese Buddhist studies had been based almost exclusively on the Chinese texts that had been gradually brought into Japan since the introduction of Buddhism via Korea in the sixth century. These texts were generally divided into three major categories: the sutras (regarded as the direct preaching of the Buddha); the treatises, or discussions of the Dharma written by "bodhisattvas" such as Nāgārjuna or Vasubandhu; and the commentaries, or exegeses on the sutras and treatises, written by the enlightened human teachers of past ages. Doctrinal studies were for the most part carried out within the framework of each sect's *kyōhan* or "comparative classification," a ranking of the various Buddhist teachings in some systematic order, usually designed to emphasize the supremacy of one's own school. In short, traditional Buddhist studies in Japan were sectarian in orientation and indissolubly welded to Buddhist faith and practice, carried out within a circle of people who were themselves Buddhists and who all accepted the same body of scriptures as a faithful record of the Buddha's word.

Into this closed system now came the innovations of modern Western scholarship, with its emphasis on historical studies and textual analysis and its demand for academic objectivity. The young priests who had studied in Europe in the first decades of the Meiji era brought back not only these disquieting new approaches, hard to reconcile with the old sectarian

<sup>3</sup> *Bukkyō katsuron jōron*, cited in *ibid.*, p. 271.

and pietistic system, but what their elders must surely have regarded as an unseemly fascination with a body of Buddhist texts that had never formed a significant part of the Japanese Buddhist tradition—namely, the Pali canon. Most of these young men had studied in London, where F. Max Müller was supervising the editing of the ambitious *Sacred Books of the East* series and T. W. Rhys Davids (1843–1922) had founded the Pali text society. For European scholars of the day, Buddhism generally meant Indian Buddhism, and the more ancient the form, the greater the orthodoxy it was assumed to possess. Theravada or southern Buddhism was at first regarded as the oldest, “purest” form of Buddhism. The Pali scriptures, the Theravada canon, represented a tradition contemptuously dismissed for centuries by Japanese Buddhists as “Hinayana,” yet this was the very body of texts now being intently scrutinized by the Europeans, who seriously hoped to find in it the direct words of Śākyamuni himself. More of this later, but for now, suffice it to say that conflict between the traditional and the new approaches to Buddhist studies was inevitable and violent. Murakami Senshō (1851–1929), an important Meiji Buddhist historian, was divested of his Jōdo Shinshū priesthood for some years over an essay published in 1901 in which he asserted that the Mahayana sutras did not represent the direct preaching of Śākyamuni Buddha.<sup>4</sup> Nor was this an isolated instance. Inexorably, lines were being drawn between those who wished to retain the old sectarian mode of Buddhist studies and those who opted for the Western academic approach. By the beginning of the Taishō period, the schism was complete. The new paths in Japanese Buddhist studies would be blazed by a group of young lay scholars centered around Tokyo Imperial University. Most of them had studied extensively in both England and Germany and were thoroughly competent to deal with both Pali and Sanskrit Buddhist texts, as well as the Chinese *tripiṭaka*. Their financial backing came not from the Buddhist establishment but from the Imperial government; as faculty of the Imperial University, they by definition held civil service rank in the Ministry of Education. And while some counted themselves devout Buddhists, they embraced a different set of aims, assumptions, and motivations than any previous generation of Japanese Buddhist scholars.

Buddhist studies at Tokyo Imperial University chiefly centered around the department of philosophy in the College of Liberal Arts. This department had established a chair of Sanskrit studies in April 1901, held by the

<sup>4</sup> The intensity of this reaction can be appreciated more clearly when one realizes that Murakami was in no way suggesting that the Mahayana scriptures be discarded. He continued to regard himself as an adherent of the Mahayana doctrines, which he considered more profound and sophisticated than those of Hinayana. His point was purely and solely historical; modern textual studies clearly demonstrated that the Mahayana sutras did not represent the Buddha's direct preaching.

great India and Buddhist scholar Takakusu Junjirō (1866–1945); a chair of the science of religion in 1905, held by Anesaki Masaharu (1873–1949), who had studied for three years in Germany; and a chair of Indian philosophy in 1917, held by the above-mentioned Buddhologist Murakami Senshō. These individuals and their students formed the nucleus of the new Buddhist studies at Tokyo Imperial University. The major in Indian philosophy in particular often entailed a chiefly Buddhist emphasis.<sup>5</sup> The curriculum reflected the changing orientation: In addition to Hindu and Buddhist texts and the Sanskrit and Pali languages, students were required to study the science of religion, Western and Asian philosophy, and English, French, or German, as well as to choose electives from such diverse fields as psychology, metaphysics, Chinese philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, and sociology.

When plans to establish the chair of Indian philosophy at Tokyo University were announced in 1916, Watanabe Kaigyoku (1872–1933), one of the leading Taishō Buddhist scholars and reformers, offered the following response in an editorial:

This, the highest educational institution in the empire, should from the outset have possessed a chair for the teaching of Mahayana and Hinayana, Sacred Way and Pure Land, and exoteric and esoteric teachings. This is but a matter of course in terms of our history, the present state of scholarship, and our prestige with respect to foreign universities. That we have lacked it until today must be termed our greatest grievance with respect to imperial education, and the utmost shame for this outstanding institution. But now, the time having gradually ripened, the grievance and shame of these years are on the way to being resolved. . . .

The [Japanese] Empire is the leader of peace in Asia and must also be the forerunner of her culture. In this sense, the establishment of this chair of Buddhist studies<sup>6</sup> at the Imperial University will surely draw a favorable response from China, on the one hand, and from Siam, India, and Manchuria on the

<sup>5</sup> A similar situation existed at Kyoto Imperial University where, even before the formal establishment of a chair of Buddhist studies in 1926, Buddhist texts, history, art, and so forth were taught under the rubric of “Indic studies” by Matsumoto Bunzaburō, who held the chair in that field, and his assistants. It is estimated that the greater part of those students pursuing an Indic studies major were in fact engaged in Buddhist studies. See Kyoto Daigaku Nanajū Nenshi Henshū Iinkai, ed., *Kyoto Daigaku nanajū nenshi* (Kyoto: Kyoto University, 1967), p. 284.

<sup>6</sup> Though Watanabe refers specifically to a “chair of Buddhist studies” (*bukkyō kōza*), the *Tokyo Teikoku Daigaku gojū nenshi* (Fifty-year history of Tokyo Imperial University) makes no reference to a chair of Buddhist studies established at this institution during the interwar period. Because the dates coincide, and because Watanabe mentions that the chair in question was established largely through the efforts of Murakami Senshō, I have assumed that he refers to the chair of Indian philosophy inaugurated in 1917, to which Murakami was appointed.

other. . . . Indeed, the establishment of this chair will be of the profoundest significance for the peace of Asia.<sup>7</sup>

I have quoted these somewhat rhetorical remarks because they adumbrate several attitudes that were to characterize interwar Buddhist scholarship. First, we note Watanabe's reference to "Mahayana and Hinayana, Sacred Way and Pure Land, and esoteric and exoteric teachings." These pairs denoted the broadest and most fundamental lines of sectarian division under the old *kyōhan* system. Grouping them together in this fashion was a traditional way of indicating "the whole of Buddhism," and I suspect that, in using this expression here, Watanabe is suggesting that Buddhist studies conducted at the Imperial University should be comprehensive and not bound by the earlier sectarian concerns. Indeed, Buddhist studies from this point on would succeed in breaking the confines of the earlier, sectarian orientation and attempt to grasp Buddhism as a single, integrated system. Second, we note the competitive consciousness with "foreign universities"—a new but very powerful impetus in the advance of Buddhist scholarship at this time, as Japan, having eagerly absorbed a great mass of Western influences in the preceding decades, now set about asserting its own identity. Third, Buddhist studies are seen here as a means of defining Japan's relationship to the rest of Asia, both linking it to the long tradition of the Asian continent and helping to qualify it for the leadership of Asian culture, however such leadership might be defined. This, too, would become a recurrent theme in the Buddhist scholarship of the interwar period. Fourth, one sees expressed the hope, often voiced in the tumultuous years following World War I, that Buddhist studies might, by illuminating the basis of human culture, somehow serve the cause of peace.

Watanabe himself—Buddhologist, educator, Jōdo, priest, and initiator of many social welfare projects—was outstanding among the new breed of interwar Buddhist scholars. From 1900 to 1910 he had studied in Germany at the University of Strasbourg (the University of Kaiser Wilhelm II, now in French territory), where he devoted himself to Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, and other languages relevant to Buddhist studies, as well as to comparative religion. During this decade, he also developed a keen interest in the relationship between religion and social issues, which fueled his desire to revitalize Mahayana Buddhism (in a broad, nonsectarian sense) as a force for social betterment and positive contribution to the nation. This determination underlay his many later efforts for the relief of impoverished workers and similar undertakings, which won him widespread

<sup>7</sup> Watanabe Kaigyoku, "Teikoku bukkyō kōza no setchi," *Kogetsu zenshū* (Tokyo: Kogetsu zenshū kankokai, 1933), 2:232–33.

praise as "a modern bodhisattva."<sup>8</sup> On returning to Japan, he was appointed professor at both the University of Religious Studies (Shūkyō Daigaku) and Tōyō University, and he served as editor-in-chief of *Jōdo kyōhō*, the journal of the Jōdo sect's educational establishment.

By the beginning of the Taishō period, Watanabe had clearly grasped the current state of Japanese Buddhist scholarship vis-à-vis that of Europe, and the directions it would have to pursue in order to rival comparable endeavors in the West. In 1918, he published a book of about two hundred pages entitled *Ōbei no bukkyō* (Buddhist studies in Europe and America), outlining recent advances in Western Buddhist scholarship. A pioneering work, especially with respect to esoteric and Tibetan Buddhism, this book made a tremendous impact on Buddhist circles and became a model for subsequent works of similar type introducing the achievements of Western Buddhist studies. The book also seems to offer considerable insight into the attitudes motivating academic Buddhist studies in the interwar period. In its introductory section, Watanabe advances three reasons why self-respecting Japanese intellectuals should bend their efforts toward overtaking Western Buddhist studies. They were, first, to establish independence in scholarship; second, to promote the development of Asia; and third, to contribute to the culture of humanity as a whole. Concerning the first reason, Watanabe states:

Our nation, which so indiscriminately imports the ideas of other nations, remains in utter ignorance of Buddhology, which is now truly becoming one of the world's foremost disciplines. This casts the utmost discredit upon our people. . . . Our country has now truly become the focal point of Asia. In keeping with the dignity of this position, those who study the writings of the East have a duty to conduct independent research. Yet even with respect to the literature of China, no sooner does the least difficulty arise than they turn immediately to Western writings. . . . The hegemon of Asia, ranking among the world's leading nations, has no independence whatsoever when it comes to scholarship. Our outlook is that of a small businessman with limited capital, relying on the wholesalers or middlemen of Europe for their studies. How pathetic! Not only with respect to their philosophy but in terms of such disciplines as [Western] medicine and the physical sciences, which shine with originality and invention, we have yet to be liberated from our slave-like condition. And in the areas of Asian studies, especially the study of Buddhism, this lamentable state of affairs represents a tragedy of the first order. Whether in Pali or in Sanskrit, in archaeology or history, the progress of Buddhist studies in our country lags far, far behind. With respect to this situation, it is vital that the people of our land—who have a particular bond with Buddhism and who hold for it a special sym-

<sup>8</sup> Serikawa Hiromichi, *Watanabe Kaigyoku kenkyū: Sono shisō to kōdō* (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha, 1978), p. 2.

pathy and interest—arouse at this time the most burning indignation and reflect on their position!<sup>9</sup>

One notes immediately the economic metaphor. Japan's most urgent task as a nation in the first several decades of the modern era was, of course, to gain economic and political footing with the advanced Western capitalistic economies in order not to be exploited by them. Scholarship—especially Buddhist scholarship—Watanabe evidently considered fully as essential to national independence as advances in economics, science, and industry. Heir to the views of Inoue Enryō, who had looked upon Buddhism as “this fine product of ours,” Watanabe too regarded Buddhism as something uniquely Japanese that could help Japan achieve independence and prestige with respect to other nations.

Closely allied to this was his second reason for promoting Buddhist studies: They would aid in the “development” of Asia. Noting that before he and his contemporaries were born, Russian scholars at the University of Kazan had made efforts to collect Mongolian Buddhist texts and pursue the study of Tibetan Buddhism, he attributed the Russian “success” in Mongolia largely to the long-term efforts on the part of Russian scholars to familiarize themselves with the language, customs, and religion of the people there and thus gain the confidence of the native priests. “Our scholars today should note how the Russians in this way appeased and pacified the Lamas, gradually making them their tool, gaining influence inch by inch and yard by yard, until at last, they imposed on Mongolia its present state,” he wrote. “In terms of our awakening to [our role] in the development of Asia, what inducements are offered us by Western Buddhist studies!”<sup>10</sup>

How far the rather imperialistic tone of this section reflects Watanabe's own views may be open to question. He makes clear that he is here addressing “politicians, businessmen, statesmen, and others in the real world” (i.e., the people who sponsor scholarly endeavors), enjoining them not to dismiss lightly Buddhist studies as irrelevant to their practical concerns. The third point, on which he elaborated at the greatest length, was that Buddhist studies would constitute a major avenue of Japanese contribution to world culture. Here Watanabe outlined what he saw as the impact to date of Buddhism upon European civilization, citing not only the contemporary interest in Eastern religion and philosophy but what he regarded as the indirect influence of Buddhistic elements—introduced via Indian thought and literature in general—on the poetry of Goethe and Heine, the philosophy of Schopenhauer, and even the music of Richard Wagner. “This being the general trend of Europe, those thinkers

<sup>9</sup> Watanabe, *Ōbei no bukkuyō, Kogetsu zenshū*, 1:8–9.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

and writers of Japan who wish to make some worldwide contribution will find the most appropriate, effective, and direct route in research and publication relevant to Buddhism,”<sup>11</sup> he concluded. He then proceeded to enumerate those areas of Buddhist studies toward which Japanese scholars would do well to turn their attention: Pali textual studies, Sanskrit textual studies, Chinese Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Buddhism as illuminated by general Indic studies, and the material relevant to Buddhist studies yielded by archaeological excavations in Central Asia.

What Watanabe does for his readers in this essay is to cast Buddhist studies as a crucial link between Japan and the world, one that would not only help delineate Japan's unique identity with respect to other nations but enable it to assume leadership in Asia, and also exert an impact on the West. Watanabe's discussion of the *existing* Buddhist influence upon European culture, setting aside the question of how deeply this influence had actually penetrated,<sup>12</sup> deserves attention for the shift of perspective it suggests concerning Japan's relationship to Europe. Japan—for several decades the passive recipient of Western enlightenment—is here shown to have a unique bond with the Buddhist thought that has already permeated the cultural basis of Europe. The view of Buddhist studies as a unique vehicle for Japan's contribution to world culture seems to have heavily influenced the advances in that field during the interwar period. Just how strongly Watanabe's views resonated with those of his fellow scholars may be seen from subsequent developments: Within two decades, Japan had surpassed Europe in virtually every major area of inquiry enumerated by Watanabe.

One of the leading figures in this achievement was Watanabe's long-time associate Takakusu Junjirō, mentioned above, who for twenty-seven years held the chair of Sanskrit studies at Tokyo Imperial University. In 1890 he had gone to Oxford University armed with a letter of introduction from Nanjō Bun'yū to F. Max Müller, who influenced him in the direction of Indic studies and urged him to master Sanskrit and Pali. After graduating from Oxford, Takakusu studied at other European institutes, including the universities of Berlin, Kiel, and Leipzig and the Collège du France, where he came to know the French Buddhologist Sylvain Lévi. During this period, he produced an English translation of the *Kuan wu-liang-shou ching* (Jap. *Kanmuryōjukyō*) under the reconstructed Sanskrit

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> For an evaluation of the influence of Buddhism upon Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche, see Guy Richard Welbon, *The Buddhist Nirvana and Its Western Interpreters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 154–93. Wagner's interpretations of Buddhist concepts are further discussed in Dorothea Watanabe Dauer, “Richard Wagner and Buddhism: *Tristan and Isolde* and *The Victors*,” *The Eastern Buddhist* 9, 2 (October 1976): 115–28.

title *Amitāyurdhyāna sutra* and other works. On returning to Japan in 1897 he became an instructor at Tokyo Imperial University and a full professor two years later. From 1900, he concurrently headed the Tokyo School of Foreign Languages, and he was appointed to the chair of Sanskrit studies in 1901. He also became interested in Buddhist education for women, and after retiring in 1927, he served as president of Musashino Girls' School, which he had founded in 1924. From 1931 to 1934 he was dean of Tōyō University and taught as guest professor at the University of Hawaii from 1938 to 1939.

Takakusu, together with Watanabe Kaigyoku, was responsible for the colossal undertaking that first brought Japanese Buddhist scholarship to world attention: the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, or simply the "Taishō tripiṭaka," the most complete collection of the Chinese Buddhist scriptures ever before assembled. Takakusu conceived the plan and sought Watanabe's assistance in implementing it. Formally launched in 1922, the project eventually ran to a full hundred volumes, published between 1924 and 1934. With its arrangement of the sutras in probable chronological sequence of their compilation and the treatises according to their school, and with Sanskrit or Pali etymology provided for technical terms, the Taishō tripiṭaka represents the most thorough, well-organized collection of the Chinese scriptures to date, "marking a considerable advance over all precedents, as much for the wealth of sources employed as for the critical erudition that informs the arrangement of the text and the convenience of its presentation,"<sup>13</sup> as the foreword to a French-language index praises it. The Taishō tripiṭaka received the Stanislaus Julien Prize from France's Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in 1929 and the prize of the Tokyo Imperial Academy in 1933. Journals in the United States, Germany, and France hailed its publication. This single work placed Japan prominently on the map of world Buddhist scholarship, and its fame at present is such that a single capital T in a footnote will identify it to students of Buddhism anywhere in the world. Interestingly enough, it is the "Taishō" rather than the "tripiṭaka" that is thus immortalized.

In the foreword to their magnum opus (actually written by Watanabe), professors Watanabe and Takakusu state in part:

The completion of the way of benevolence and love, the ultimate principle of perfectly endowed truth, permeates the ten directions and pervades the three existences, encompassing all things and unfolding in all phenomena. How vast and great is the true teaching of the sage Śākyamuni! Moreover, this complete and wondrous teaching which he left behind is transmitted and set forth in our tripiṭaka. In this immense work with its more than eight thousand fascicles, its

<sup>13</sup> Sylvain Lévi and Takakusu Junjirō, eds., "Fascicule Annexe: Tables de Taishō Issaikyō," in *Hōbōqirin* (Tokyo: Maison Franco-Japonaise, 1931), p. i.

hundred million and many tens of thousands of words, the true reality of the universe is thoroughly expounded and the conclusion of life made clear. . . . Truly it is the fountainhead of wisdom and virtue for humanity and the great treasury of the world. . . . Yet apart from us, the Buddhist scholars of Japan, who can clarify and spread its teachings? The responsibility of propagation rests on our shoulders. All the more so, after the great world war, when the need to seek the truth presses most urgently upon us, when the study of Buddhism is now on the rise in Europe and America, and when we see so few scholars versed in the Chinese scriptures! The Buddhist scholars of our nation must realize how vast and grave our task has become.<sup>14</sup>

Here again one glimpses the peculiar juncture of the universal and the particular that characterizes interwar Japanese Buddhist studies. Buddhism is seen as the absolute truth transcending time and space and capable of bringing peace and enlightenment to all people, but the Japanese are the ones preeminently capable of interpreting it to the world. Buddhist studies at this time evidently contributed to the Taishō-period transformation of the national self-image: Japan, recipient of Western enlightenment in the Meiji period, becomes the country that shall bring enlightenment to the world.

Publication of the Taishō tripiṭaka was accompanied by a veritable flood of similar collections compiled and edited during this period. Among the most important are *Nihon daizōkyō*, a collection of Japanese Buddhist texts published in 48 volumes between 1914 and 1921; the *Dainihon bukkyō zensho*, another collection of Japanese Buddhist texts published in 150 volumes between 1912 and 1922; the *Kokuyaku daizōkyō*, a Japanese translation of important Chinese sutras and other texts, published in 30 volumes between 1917 and 1928; the *Kokuyaku issaikyō*, comprising two collections in Japanese translation, one of Indian Buddhist texts, published in 155 volumes between 1930 and 1936, and another of Chinese Buddhist texts other than those included in the *Kokuyaku daizōkyō*, published in 66 volumes between 1936 and 1944; the *Seizō daizōkyō sōmoku-roku*, a complete index to the Tibetan tripiṭaka published in 1934; and the *Kokuyaku nanden daizōkyō*, a Japanese translation of Pali scriptures that had circulated in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and other Southeast Asian countries, published in 65 volumes between 1935 and 1941, also under the editorial supervision of Takakusu Junjirō.

This mammoth effort to assemble, translate, and systematize texts formed the basis for a parallel effort to integrate the concepts and doctrines contained in those texts into a coherent framework. This attempt

<sup>14</sup> Takakusu Junjirō and Watanabe Kaigyoku, eds., *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō sōmoku-roku* (Tokyo: Taishō shinshū daizōkyō kankōkai, 1924), pp. 1–2.

at synthesis stands out in sharp contrast to earlier sectarian studies: Among the new publications of this period, one finds some dealing with isolated works or schools but a great many dealing with the overall history of Buddhist thought as well as fundamental doctrines (Emptiness, dependent origination, liberation, the Middle Way, etc.) that serve as threads of continuity among the various schools and phases in Buddhism's development. The search for continuity extended even so far as to attempt to uncover some single underlying truth common to the whole of Buddhism, if not to the entirety of religion and human culture. This distinctive feature of interwar Buddhist studies in Japan would seem to stem from several factors. One, I suspect, may have been the reaction of the new generation of Meiji Buddhist scholars to the discovery of the Pali canon.

I have already mentioned that the first wave of Japanese students of Buddhism to go abroad found European Buddhologists absorbed in study of the Pali scriptures, in which they initially hoped to find the direct words of the historical Buddha. The Mahayana scriptures, on which the Japanese Buddhist tradition is based, were widely regarded at this time as a later corruption. The introduction of this view to Meiji Japan, coinciding as it did with the nation's general identity crisis, wreaked temporary havoc in Buddhist circles. Several scholars raised a cry for a return to "original Buddhism" (*genshi bukkyō*) or "fundamental Buddhism" (*kompon bukkyō*), believing, along with their European counterparts, that in the Pali canon they might discover the true preaching of Śākyamuni. Anesaki Masaharu (1873–1949), for example, writing in 1910, said, "East Asian Buddhism is the flower, and Southeast Asian Buddhism, the leaves and branches. To be dazzled by the color of the blossoms and forget the root, for leaves and branches to flourish futilely, alienated from their source—surely this describes the state of modern Buddhist studies!"<sup>15</sup> Such, he said, was his conclusion based on comparative studies of the Pali canon and the Chinese tripitaka.

This trend to seek the "fundamental Buddhism" in the Pali scriptures for a time placed the entire Japanese Mahayana tradition in a rather ambiguous light. I suspect, however, that as Japan emerged from the period of almost indiscriminate Westernization and began the process of redefining its own role, Buddhist scholars similarly began to feel a need to reclaim the Japanese Buddhist tradition. In any event, works soon began to appear suggesting that intensive textual study would uncover some fundamental truth common to both Hinayana and Mahayana. An early pi-

<sup>15</sup> Anesaki Masaharu, preface, *Kompon bukkyō* (Tokyo: Sankōdō, 1910); revised in *Anesaki Masaharu chōsaku shū* (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1982), 8:1.

oneer in this attempt was Murakami Senshō, who states in the foreword to his *Bukkyō tōitsu ron*:

My aim in taking a unified approach in my research was to make known the unified oneness of the Buddhist ideals, which hitherto have been represented in so fragmented a fashion. . . . No matter what points of difference or friction might exist among the various sects, when one views these points from the perspective of their depths, they all prove without exception to be developments of thought concerning nirvana, the great enlightenment of Śākyamuni.<sup>16</sup>

This search for the underlying truth of Buddhism expanded and gained momentum in the Taishō period. It may have been aided on its way by the progress of European historical and philological studies, which eventually yielded the discoveries that even the Pali canon scriptures show marked layering and had not begun to be recorded until at least two to three hundred years following Śākyamuni's death. With these new insights, it became clear that the Pali canon could in no way be said to derive in its entirety directly from the Buddha himself. One may easily imagine that such discoveries gave confidence to the next generation of Japanese Buddhist scholars, seeking to validate their own tradition.

In their effort to uncover truths common to both Hinayana and Mahayana traditions, the Japanese scholars of Pali and Sanskrit soon found they possessed an unexpected advantage over their European colleagues: their familiarity with the Chinese tripitaka and the East Asian Buddhist tradition. During the Taishō period, research based on comparative studies of Chinese and Pali, Sanskrit, or even Tibetan texts flourished, and in this area the Japanese had no rivals. Among the pioneers in this area were Takakusu Junjirō and two of his most brilliant pupils, Ui Hakuju and Kimura Taiken (1881–1930). In 1914, Takakusu and Kimura together published *Indotetsugaku shūkyō shi* (A history of Indian philosophy and religion), a detailed study of the development of Indian religion based on exhaustive study of the Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads, and Buddhist sutras, one of the first works to attempt to grasp Indian Buddhism within the overall historical framework of Indian religious thought. In 1922, Kimura alone published *Genshi bukkyō shisō ron*, a systematized discussion of early Buddhist thought based on his study of the Pali canon, the *vinaya-pitaka* and the Chinese *āgamas*. In this work he denied the longstanding view that equated the Pali *āgama* sutras with Hinayana and regarded Mahayana as a later development; Hinayana and Mahayana alike, he argued, had a common base in the Pali *āgamas*. Kimura also translated into Japanese major works of *abhidharma* literature, including

<sup>16</sup> Cited in Nakamura Hajime and Takeda Kiyoko, eds., *Kindai Nihon tetsugaku shisōka jiten* (Tokyo: Tokyo shoseki, 1982), p. 555.

the *Abhidharma-mahā-vibhāṣā-śāstra*, the *Abhidharma-kośa-śāstra*, and others. Between 1925 and 1930, Ui Hakuju published his six-volume masterpiece, *Indotetsugaku kenkyū*, for which he won the prize of the Tokyo Imperial Academy, tracing the development of Indian thought from pre-Buddhist religions up through Hinayana and Mahayana teachings. These men and their colleagues, in the space of two decades, raised the level of Japanese studies of Indian Buddhism above those of Europe, and at the same time contributed greatly to the systematization of Buddhist thought.

In the interwar period, the search for a fundamental truth expanded to include not merely a truth common to all Buddhist teachings but one that could unify even different religions, and perhaps the whole of human philosophy and culture. One sees evidence of this trend, for example, in the preface to Kimura Taiken's *Genshi bukkyō yori daijō bukkyō* (From original Buddhism to Mahayana Buddhism), where, in summing up the conviction informing his works, he states:

Were I to describe my view of the human being, I would have to say mine is a philosophy of emancipation (*gedatsu shugi*), based on the eternal as the ideal. All things are in the process of moving toward emancipation in the eternal, and in directing everything toward liberation in the eternal, we find our value as human beings—that is my conviction. . . . Of course, given my position, a number of my essays [stemming from this conviction] deal with Buddhism, but among them are more than a few that I have developed from the standpoint of philosophy or religion in general.<sup>17</sup>

Attempting to reconcile divergent or even contradictory teachings on the basis of some greater truth forms an ancient part of the Buddhist tradition itself. In the interwar period, however, this trend was additionally fostered by specific intellectual currents of the time. During the Taishō period, an interest in democracy and its accompanying concerns for human rights and independence, the need for internal liberation from the past, confusion arising from rapid economic change, and the unease following World War I combined to awaken in intellectual circles a growing preoccupation with such questions as what is the human being, what is life, and how should it be lived. In pursuit of answers, intellectuals turned their eyes toward religion. But not the unscientific, divisive, confining religions of the past—rather, a cry was raised for “religious reformation.” The religious focus that pervades thought and culture in the Taishō period was not the religion of a specific sect, or even necessarily religion in the sense of Buddhism versus Christianity, but a universal truth, in short,

<sup>17</sup> Kimura Taiken, preface, *Genshi bukkyō yori daijō bukkyō* (Tokyo: Sagi-no-miya shobō, 1968), p. 1.

religion stripped of its charismatic elements and virtually equated with humanism. Kurata Hyakuzō's 1917 drama *Shukke to sono deshi* (The priest and his disciples), mentioned in Thomas Rimer's essay, marked the beginning of a new wave of literature reflecting Buddhist themes or religious themes in general. Also for the first time, attempts were made to integrate Western philosophy and Buddhist thought, as represented by the works of Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945) and Watsuji Tetsurō (1889–1960).

The tendency in the Taishō period to modernize and “aestheticize” religion has since been criticized as a trend that robbed religion of the true power of faith and made it the toy of literary salons<sup>18</sup>—probably a valid criticism in some respects. It would seem however, to have aided the academic Buddhist movement considerably in its effort to transcend the bounds of sectarian *kyōgaku* or doctrinal studies, absorb the ideals and methods of modern Western scholarship, and integrate Buddhism into a single systematic framework.

For example, the demand for “religious reformation” and the humanizing of religion, aided by the influence of new studies in Europe and America, led to attempts to interpret Japanese religion or religion in general from historical and psychological perspectives. A pioneering work in this area was historian Hara Katsurō's *Tōsei no shūkyō kaikaku* (Religious reformations of East and West) published in 1911, among the first in a wave of publications comparing Eastern and Western religious thought. Drawing parallels between the Kamakura period of Japanese history and the European Renaissance, Hara interpreted the Kamakura Buddhist movement as a reformation and compared the accomplishments of Hōnen and Shinran to those of Luther and Calvin—interpretations that won instant favor and have only recently begun to be challenged.<sup>19</sup> New attention was focused on the Kamakura period of Japanese Buddhist history, and a tendency emerged to view the leaders of that move-

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Tamura Yoshirō, *Nihon bukkyōshi nyūmon* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 1969), p. 217.

<sup>19</sup> Kinoshita Naoe also compares Shinran to Luther in *Hōnen to Shinran* (1911), but not, as Hara did, from the standpoint of a historical specialist.

The notion of Kamakura Buddhism as a reformation also found its way into a number of English sources. For example, this idea is affirmed in Stanley Weinstein, “The Concept of Reformation in Japanese Buddhism,” *International Conference on Japanese Studies Report* (Kyoto, 1972), 1:603–14; employed for comparative purposes in Robert N. Bellah, “Religious Evolution,” in William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, eds., *Reader in Comparative Religions: An Anthropological Approach* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 73–87; used in Whalen Lai, “After the Reformation: Post-Kamakura Buddhism,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 5, 4 (December 1978):258–84; and finally challenged and dismissed in James H. Foard, “In Search of a Lost Reformation: A Reconsideration of Kamakura Buddhism,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 7, 4 (December 1980):261–91.

ment—Hōnen, Shinran, Eisai, Dōgen, and Nichiren—not so much as the founders of sects but rather as the teachers of mankind.

These new trends in the interpretation of religion also appeared in the world of formal academic Buddhist studies. One sees evidence of a new sociohistorical orientation, for example, in the preface (and title, for that matter) of Anesaki's classic, *History of Japanese Religion, With Special Reference to the Social and Moral Life of the Nation*.<sup>20</sup>

The author in no way cherishes the idea of being an apologist or a propagandist, but has ever been eager to be a scientific historian, whose function it is to weigh the balance of data and to obtain truthful insight into the movements of the human soul. Any degree of success he achieves, in carrying out this ambition, the author owes to his predecessors and teachers in this new branch of the science of religion and religious history. On the other hand, if there be any trace of undue estimation or reverence toward the religious leaders treated of in the book, he asks the reader's generosity to tolerate it, while critically weighing the circumstances, as it comes from the author's own religious heritage.<sup>21</sup>

Comparative religious studies also began to appear frequently in the realm of Buddhist scholarship, headed, among others by Takakusu Junjirō, who early on had begun to explore such themes as "God and Buddha" and "the Pure Land and Heaven," contrasting parallel concepts in Buddhism and Christianity. Takakusu eventually concluded that the West had tended to view the world in terms of matter and principles, and the East, in terms of the intuitive experience of living beings; the nation that could unite the two, he suggested, would support the future of the world. A quick glance at the titles of some of this influential scholar's works during the interwar period reveals some of the new directions emerging in Buddhist scholarship: *Bukkyō kokumin no risō* (The ideals of a Buddhist nation, 1916), *Uchū no koe toshite no bukkyō* (Buddhism as the voice of the universe, 1926), *Jinbun no kichō toshite no bukkyō* (Buddhism as the basis of civilization, 1929), *Ningengaku toshite no bukkyō* (Buddhism as the study of man, 1932), *Tōhō no hikari toshite no bukkyō* (Buddhism as the light of the East, 1934), and so on.

Such, briefly, were some of the major developments in Japanese Bud-

<sup>20</sup> Anesaki was a pioneer in this area. As early as 1905 he notes, in the preface to his *Nichiren, the Buddhist Prophet* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916) a debt to William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* in enabling scholars to approach charismatic religious leaders from a psychological, rather than a doctrinal, viewpoint; to the psychological portraits of such figures done in the West, he now contributed a similar study of a major religious figure of Japan.

<sup>21</sup> Anesaki, preface, *History of Japanese Religion, With Special Reference to the Social and Moral Life of the Nation* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1930; reprint ed. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1963), p. vii.

dhist studies in the interval between the wars.<sup>22</sup> Vast amounts of research remain to be done in this area, but even this brief preliminary survey suggests that an examination of these trends may cast fully as much light on Japanese cultural assumptions during this period as on the history and teachings of Buddhism itself.

<sup>22</sup> In passing, a few other new developments in Buddhist studies of the interwar period should be noted. Archaeological studies marked a new endeavor for Japan: Outstanding in this area was the intrepid Tokiwa Daijō (1870–1945), a pupil of Murakami Senshō and scholar of Chinese Buddhist history at Tokyo Imperial University. Insisting that textual research alone formed an insufficient basis for proper study, he made five trips to the Chinese mainland between 1920 and 1929 to investigate Buddhist ruins. His field studies, along with his voluminous works on Chinese Buddhism, had a major impact on Japanese understanding of Chinese thought and of the history of Chinese culture and its influence upon Japan.

Also at this time Japanese Buddhist scholars, most notably Anesaki Masaharu, were beginning to write in English in an attempt to gain wider understanding of Japanese Buddhism in the world academic community. Academic exchange was also initiated. The noted French Buddhologist Sylvain Lévi visited Japan in 1923, and Anesaki and Takakusu went abroad: Anesaki lectured at Harvard, the University of Chicago, and Yale in 1913–15, occupying the chair of Japanese literature and life at Harvard during those years; at the University of California in 1918; and at the Collège de France in 1919; and Takakusu taught as visiting professor at the University of Hawaii from 1938 to 1939. His lectures during that period were compiled as *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy* (Honolulu: Office Appliance Co., 1956; reprint ed., Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973), Takakusu's only major original work in English.