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Theosophy and Buddhist Reformers in the Middle of the Meiji Period An Introduction



In this introduction I focus on the hidden, or “occult” side of the internationalization of Japanese Buddhism during the Meiji Period. The success of Olcott’s trip to Japan, on the one hand, made the Buddhism revival visible, but, on the other hand, gave Japanese Buddhism too much self-confidence and pride to continue dialogue with Buddhists abroad. Olcott dreamed of a non-sectarian and all-inclusive form of Buddhism, while Japanese Buddhist sects needed him as “a white Buddhist” only to show their superiority to Christianity. As their objectives and strategies were so different, they were doomed to part with each other from the beginning. But there were some Japanese Buddhists who listened to “Buddhists” abroad. They were intellectuals well versed with Western thoughts and languages, and acted as Buddhist reformers who opened the way to reform movements. Among them, Nakanishi Ushirō, Hirai Kinza and Suzuki Teitarō took a rationalistic view of religion during the middle of the Meiji Period, while Furukawa Rōsen and Taoka Reion took an experience-oriented approach to religion.

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1. Meiji Buddhism: An Overview

In 1959 Yoshida Kyūichi 吉田久一 published his ground-breaking work on Meiji Buddhism. It is important because it focused neither on the history of sects nor on the history of dogmas, but on the history of Buddhism in general, from *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈 (the abolition of Buddhism) to *seishin shugi* 精神主義 (Spiritualism) or *Shin Bukkyō* 新仏教 (New Buddhism). According to this book, the history of Meiji Buddhism can be divided into three periods. The first period is from Meiji 1 (1868) to 18 (1885), because in 1886 Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858-1919) began to publish his influential books on Buddhism, which opened the new era. (Yoshida 1959: 1-16) The second period was from Meiji 19 (1886) to 32 (1899), and the third from Meiji 33 (1900) to Meiji 45 (1912). In 1889 the Japanese

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Imperial Constitution was issued. The first Sino-Japanese War occurred in 1894. As these historical events show, Japan started to become an imperial power during the second period. In the third period the consolidation of capital and industrialization was in progress. Modernized forms of Buddhist movements started also in this period. (Yoshida 1959) This division helps to get an overall view of Meiji Buddhism. Using Yoshida's division rather freely, in this section we will have a glimpse of Meiji Buddhism in its historical process from the internationalization attempts in Meiji 20s (a decade since 1887) to the reform movements in Meiji 30s (a decade since 1897).

The first period was a time of drastic change from a closed feudal country to a nation state open to the world. The new government tried to build a state religion by using Shintō as its basic ideology. First the government tried to "purify" Shintō from Buddhism and ordered *shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離 or the separation of Buddhism and Shintō. This caused the tumult of *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏棄釈 from 1867 to 1871. Many monks were forced to become lay-persons, and temples suffered severe financial or physical damages. Next, the government established Daikyō-in 大教院 (Great Teaching Institute) to propagate three nationalistic creeds published in 1871. Daikyō-in had to employ Buddhist and Shintō priests as lecturers. But this Institute was dissolved in 1875 because Buddhists, especially Shimaji Mokurai 嶋地黙雷 (1838-1911), a high-ranking priest of Nishi Hongan-ji, severely criticized it. Although the government's plan to construct a state religion failed, Buddhism experienced further adversities as the Westernization of the society advanced. Natural science and technology were imported, and the public educational system was Westernized. English proficiency became an essential skill for intellectuals instead of reading and writing proficiency of Chinese literature. The change of authoritative knowledge from Chinese to English, and from literature and history to science and technology, gave Buddhism the appearance of an outdated 'superstition,' whereas Christianity enjoyed the privilege of being the religion of civilization. Furthermore, Japan's sovereignty was limited by the unequal treaties with Western countries, because it was regarded as a "half-civilized" country. During the latter half of Meiji 10s, the government adopted the policy of *ōka shugi* 歐化主義 (Westernization) in order to show that Japan was a "civilized" country. One of its side effects was the increase of converts to Christianity among young descendants of the ex-samurai class (*shi-zoku* 士族).

In the second period Buddhism began to gain ground by using the rhetoric of connecting Buddhism with nationalism against Christianity. The anti-Christianity popular movement of this time is called *haja kenshō* 破邪顕正 (destroying the heresy, demonstrate the right), which was supported by the patriotic zeal of lay-persons and monks. In 1890 the Kyōiku Chokugo 教育勅語 (Imperial Rescript of Education) was issued. This rescript was used in public schools to force students to worship the emperor and be loyal to the nation. In 1893 a "conflict between religion and education" took place, when Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1856-1944), professor of

philosophy at the Imperial University (now Tokyo University), who was indignant at Uchimura Kanzō 内村鑑三 (1861-1930), a most influential Christian, who had refused to bow in front of the rescript, began to attack Christians for their anti-nationalism. Inoue caused a big sensation in the media supported by Buddhist writers.

During this period, also Inoue Enryō played an important role as a Buddhist reformer. Inoue was a priest of Higashi Hongan-ji 東本願寺, but it would be more accurate to call him a pioneering scholar of Western philosophy and the founder of Tōyō University (Tōyō Daigaku 東洋大学). After having studied philosophy at the Imperial University, from 1885 on Inoue Enryō began to publish articles and books, such as *Shinri konshin* 真理金針 (Golden needle of the Truth) or *Bukkyō katsuron* 仏教活論 (Real treatise on Buddhism), in which he used Western philosophy to prove how irrational Christianity was and how scientific Buddhism was. He borrowed the authority of the “West” in order to legitimize Buddhism. His books became an instant success. They gave a theoretical framework to *haja kenshō*. Buddhism could recover its pride by showing itself as being “true,” “nationalistic” and “civilized.”

Also, Buddhists began to publish their own media and to establish Westernized schools. Tokutomi Sohō 徳富蘇峰 (1863-1957), a famous Christian journalist, had started his successful journal *Kokumin no tomo* 国民の友 (Friend of the citizens) in 1887. Christian missionaries had already opened English schools. Buddhist denominations began to publish their own periodicals (see Akai's article in this issue of *Japanese Religions*) around 1887, and also smaller trans-sectarian Buddhist groups which were organized throughout Japan began publishing their journals. As for the educational system, the first attempt to modernize it was made by Nishi Hongan-ji. It opened the Futsū Kyōkō 普通教校 (the normal school) in Kyoto in 1885, where not only traditional subjects of Buddhism were taught, but also Westernized education was offered. In the same year, a Buddhist activist and teacher of English, Hirai Kinza 平井金三 (1859-1916) opened the Oriental Hall in Kyoto, a private school for Buddhists, which would publish a short-lived Zen Buddhist journal, *Katsuron* 活論 (Living Argument) in 1890. These two schools would become the centers for the movement of young Buddhists in Kyoto.

During this second period, one important movement began in the Futsū Kyōkō. It was Hansei-kai 反省会 (The Temperance Society) formed by its students and teachers in 1886. It was more than a temperance society attached to Nishi Hongan-ji. Educated and progressive young Buddhists published their articles in its journal, the *Hansei-kai zasshi* 反省会雑誌. The zeal and ideals of the reform movement of Hansei-kai during the Meiji 20s was passed down to the reform movements in the Meiji 30s. As we will see later, the most important link between Hansei-kai and the Buddhist activists in Meiji 30s was Furukawa Isamu 古河勇.

Following Inoue Enryō, some authors began to write about the reform of Buddhism. The most influential writer next to Inoue was Nakanishi Ushirō 中西牛

郎 (1859-1930), a lay-person educated in traditional and Western style schools, who once taught at Bungaku-ryō 文学寮, a college of Nishi Hongan-ji. His treatises on *Shin Bukkyō* 新仏教 (New Buddhism) were read widely by young Buddhists. (See Hoshino's article in this issue of *Japanese Religions*) But Nakanishi's plan to reform and modernize the Buddhist sects was not realized. Yoshida (1959: 11) pointed out that the discourse of the reformers of this period, such as Nakanishi, remained in the realm of the media and could not cause a new movement.

In the third period, the fever of *haja kenshō* calmed down, an atmosphere of tolerance arose, and dialogue began between Buddhists, Shintoists, and Christians, which was a result of the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. For example, Shaku Sōen 釈宗演 (1860-1919), who had attended the Parliament, planned the *Shukyōka kondan-kai* 宗教家懇談会 (Consultation of religionists) with Christians in 1896. (Suzuki 1979: 232-249) Another important change in this period was the appearance of a group of young Buddhist reformers. Most of them were born around the time of the Meiji Restoration and were educated at Western style schools. They were mainly lay-persons or, when they were priests, they often lived secular lives as students or teachers.

In 1894 young Buddhists who were critical of the sectarianism in Japanese Buddhism gathered to establish a new society called *Kei-kai* 経緯会 (*kei-i* literally means length and breadth, and also means the progress of a case). This society included Sugimura Kōtarō 杉村廣太郎 (alias Sugimura Sojinkan 杉村楚人冠, or Sugimura Jūō 杉村縦横, 1872-1945), Ōkubo Kaku 大久保格 (dates unknown), and Furukawa Isamu 古河勇 (alias Furukawa Rōsen 古河老川, 1871-1899), Sakaino Satoshi 境野哲 (alias Sakaino Kōyō 境野黄洋, 1871-1933), Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭 (1872-1933), Suzuki Teitarō 鈴木貞太郎 (alias Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙, 1870-1966), Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 (1866-1945), and so on. This group severely criticized the Buddhist sects through the journal *Bukkyō* 仏教 (Buddhism). Although this group was dissolved in 1899, in the same year some of its members gathered to form another group, the *Bukkyō Seito Dōshi-kai* 仏教清徒同志会 (Fellows of Puritan Buddhism, or Buddhist Puritan Society), which later was changed to *Shin Bukkyō Dōshi-kai* 新仏教同志会 (Fellows of New Buddhism). This group began publishing its own journal titled *Shin Bukkyō* 新仏教 (*New Buddhism*). Its members claimed the necessity of a sound faith, the betterment of society, free discussion over religious matters, and the annihilation of superstitious practices.

There was another movement of young Buddhists called *seishin shugi* 精神主義 (Spiritualism). This was started by Kiyozawa Manshi 清澤満之 (1863-1903) in 1899. Kiyozawa was a priest of Higashi Hongan-ji, who had studied philosophy at the Imperial University like Inoue Enryō, his senior in the same branch of Jōdo Shin-shū. Kiyozawa tried to reconstruct Buddhist faith on the relationship between the ego and the absolute. His philosophical and existential reinterpretation of the

teachings of Jōdo Shin-shū 浄土真宗 exerted a long influence on the teachings of Higashi Hongan-ji.

Shin Bukkyō Dōshi-kai emphasized the importance of social activities and criticized severely the reactionary policies of the government, which sometimes caused their journals to be banned by the government. *Seishin shugi* stressed the importance of a reflexive attitude toward one's own mind and tried to build a modernized type of "faith" on an intellectual basis. Both movements had a significant influence on religious-minded lay-persons of the educated class. They both contributed to the establishment of the new forms of Buddhism.

2. Reformers in the Meiji 20s and Meiji 30s

Yoshida's historical model is based on the development of political and economic systems as well as on the transformation of Buddhism itself. The three steps of decline, revival, and reformation seem still to be a useful model as a starting point to investigate the history of Meiji Buddhism. But did his "modern Buddhism" cover all of Meiji Buddhism? Yoshida's research mainly focused on Buddhist intellectuals, at least during the latter half of the Meiji Period. His exemplary "modern Buddhism" seems to consist of only movements for or by intellectuals in the Meiji 30s. Such an approach does not seem to lessen the importance of his historical perspective, but it seems to indicate the characteristics of modernized Buddhism in Japan. It is lay-person centered, intellectual, moralistic, contemplative or socially conscious, and not irrational. But then again, there remains the question where these movements in the Meiji 30s came from. One person worthy of mentioning here is Furukawa Rōsen.

Furukawa was born in a temple belonging to Nishi Hongan-ji, and entered Futsū kyōkō in 1886, where he was an active member of Hansei-kai. After he had left the school for Tokyo in 1889, he became an editor of the journal *Bukkyō* which was independent from the sects and radically criticized "old" Buddhists. Furukawa also studied Chinese literature at the Imperial University from 1892 to 1895. Suzuki Teitarō was also studying philosophy there during the same years, and both of them practiced Zen under Shaku Sōen. Furukawa died young at the age of 28, but he was one of the foci of young Buddhists' networks. Although he was not a founding member of Shin Bukkyō Dōshi-kai, he wrote about the importance of the social activities of Buddhists and acted as an ideological leader of this movement. He played an important role as an ideological starter of the new movement, but then again, his ideas of Buddhist reform were in fact influenced by Nakanishi's *Shin Bukkyō*.¹ Also

1. See Furukawa's article "24 nen igo no Nidai-kyōto 二十四年以後の二大教徒 (Buddhists and Christians after 1891) which appeared in *Hansei-kai zasshi* 反省会雑誌 (January-June) 1891. (Sugimura 1901: 17-42)

Furukawa emphasized the necessity of Buddhist propagation abroad, therefore he watched closely Hirai's tour in America. He was one of the few authors who wrote about Hirai's success at the World's Parliament of Religions in the media.

However, Furukawa was never an ideological imitation of Nakanishi Ushirō. In 1894, Furukawa published an article titled "Kaigi jidai ni ireri 懷疑時代に入れり" (Entering a Skeptical Age) in the journal *Bukkyō* (January 1894) (Sugimura 1901: 106-111) in which he described how the academic study of Buddhism put in doubt the authorship of Mahayana Buddhist sutras. Inoue Enryō and Nakanishi Ushirō had taken for granted the truth of Mahayana Buddhism, whereas Furukawa had to give up such an optimistic belief of his seniors and face the historical problem whether Mahayana Buddhism was really taught by Buddha. So he and his generation had to reconstruct the meaning of Buddhism as a religion. Still, Nakanishi's and Hirai's influence on Meiji Buddhism should not be overlooked.

3. Meeting Foreign "Buddhists"

Besides the activities of such reformers in the Meiji 20s, one more important historical fact has not been discussed enough by researchers, that is the exchange between Japanese Buddhists and foreign "Buddhists" in the Meiji 20s. Japanese Buddhists and Western "Buddhists" got in contact through personal encounter, as with Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907) during his tour through Japan, or through mail or media, like in the case of Philangi Dasa. But who were those "Buddhists"?

Thomas A. Tweed (1992: 48-77) identified three ideal types of "Buddhists" in America in the late Victorian era, namely esotericists, rationalists, and romantics. For example, the art historian Ernest Francisco Fenollosa (1853-1908) belongs to the type of romantics, who were interested in Buddhist culture as a whole, such as its artworks or architecture. Rationalists consider Buddhism as a rational and ethical teaching to be superior to Christianity. The most influential person of this type is Paul Carus (1852-1919), whose books including *Gospel of Buddha* (1894) or *Religion of Science* (1893) were translated and published in Meiji. (As for Carus and D.T. Suzuki, see the article by Nagao in this issue of *Japanese Religions*) And esotericists were those who were interested in the occult side of nature, namely the Theosophists or the esoteric Swedenborgians. The most famous example of the former was Henry Steel Olcott, president of the Theosophical Society, and an example of the latter was Philangi Dasa, a Swedenborgian Buddhist, whose real name was Herman C. Vetterling (1849-1931). Dasa was the editor and publisher of the first Buddhist journal in America titled *Buddhist Ray*. In fact most of the "Buddhists" abroad were Theosophists or esotericists. Hence, those who became interested in Japanese Buddhism were those with certain preconceptions about Buddhism.

There were two key persons in Kyoto who played the important role of connecting Japanese Buddhists and Theosophists. One is Matsuyama Matsutarō 松

山松太郎 (dates unknown), an English teacher of Futsū Kyōkō. In 1887, he happened to begin corresponding with William Q. Judge, the president of the American branch of the Theosophical Society. In his letter Judge introduced himself as a Buddhist, and asked Matsuyama to send a preacher of Buddhism to America, as people there wanted to learn it. Through Judge Matsuyama received letters from other Theosophists, and from the Ceylonese Buddhist activist, Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933). Matsuyama edited and published these letters in the column *Ōbei tsūshin* 欧米通信 (Correspondence from America and Europe) which appeared in the first issue of *Hansei-kai zasshi* (1887). High ranking priests of Nishi Hongan-ji, like Akamatsu Renjō 赤松連城 (1841-1919) and Shimaji Mokurai, as well as members of Hansei-kai were surprised and inspired by these letters because they provided valuable information about the religious situation in America and Europe. As a result a new society was formed in Futsū Kyōkō called Kaigai Senkyō-kai 海外宣教会 (Buddhist Propagation Society), which began to publish the journal *Kaigai Bukkyō jijō* 海外仏教事情 (News of Buddhism Abroad) in 1888. In this way “Buddhists” abroad first appeared in the Japanese media. Theosophical writings were translated and published first in *Hansei-kai zasshi* and then in *Kaigai Bukkyō jijō*. (See Akai’s Bibliography in this issue of *Japanese Religions*) In 1889 *Jōdō kyōhō* 浄土教報, a periodical of Jōdo-shū 浄土宗, followed their example. But it was after Olcott arrived in Japan that Theosophical writings came out in a torrent.

The second key person for the exchange with Theosophists is Hirai Kinza. (See Nozaki’s article in this issue of *Japanese Religions*) In 1887, he received a charter from Olcott to open a lodge of the Theosophical Society. There might have been a feeling of rivalry between Kinza and Matsuyama. The following year Matsuyama edited and published the English newspaper the *Bijou of Asia* from Hansei-kai, whereas Hirai opened an office to invite Olcott to Japan because the latter was known for helping revive Buddhism in Ceylon. Already in 1886, the Japanese translation of Olcott’s international best-seller *Buddhist Catechism* had been published with the support of Akamatsu Renjō. Hirai and his collaborators planned to ask Olcott for help in the revival of Japanese Buddhism. Thus, it seems, in making contacts with Theosophists, Japanese Buddhists had two purposes in mind, namely to propagate Buddhism abroad and to start a revival at home.

Olcott arrived in Kobe on February 9, 1889 together with Anagarika Dharmapala. From the first day until his departure in May, Olcott visited 33 towns and delivered 76 addresses with a total audience of 87,500 people. (Olcott 1910: 164) With financial help from the Buddhist sects, and with support from Hansei-kai, Oriental Hall and other Buddhist societies, his tour became a great success. Olcott was welcomed by people everywhere, and he talked with local leaders and governors, as well as with the prime minister. Olcott’s tour was the peak of Japanese Buddhist revival in a visible form.

But this boom of Theosophy in Japan lasted only for a short time. In the following year, Olcott's name was mentioned much less in the media. When he again visited Japan two years later (1891), most Buddhists were not informed, and the few Buddhists who knew it were not necessarily glad to see him again, because this time he tried to build a common platform to unite Northern and Southern Buddhism. He wanted to have fourteen fundamental Buddhist propositions signed by the representatives of the major Japanese Buddhist denominations. The November 1891 issue of *Dendō-kai zasshi* 伝道会雑誌, a journal of a Nishi Hongan-ji affiliated organization, which on his first visit to Japan had admired him with expressions of the highest praise, now blamed him for his fourteen propositions because Mahayana Buddhism was like a big brother to Southern Buddhism, therefore it was impossible to build up such an equal platform. But other denominations seemed to be indifferent to this proposition. It was ironical that Nishi and Higashi Hongan-ji which at first took his proposal seriously refused to sign the document while other denominations which did not care so much were willing to sign it, though in the end there was no actual outcome.

This is one reason why Japanese Buddhism severed its relationship with Theosophy. Another reason must have been the activities of an Englishman named Condor Pfoundes (dates unknown). After Olcott's first visit to Japan, another "white Buddhist" began sending letters to the Kaigai Senkyō-kai in 1889. It was Condor Pfoundes, who had lived in Japan since about the Meiji Restoration. He was not an esoteric type of Buddhist. Repeatedly he wrote in his letters that Theosophy was a pseudo-Buddhism and despised by the scholars of oriental studies. It seems that his letters caused Kaigai Senkyō-kai to distance itself from Olcott. Pfoundes opened the London Branch of Kaigai Senkyō-kai, probably with no other members. *Dendō-kai zasshi* praised him as a pioneer of Mahayana Buddhism in Europe, while blaming Olcott as a dogmatic believer in Southern Buddhism. In 1893 Pfoundes visited Japan for the purpose of studying Buddhism in some temples. However he turned out to be a problematic person. Soon he caused serious trouble, and finally he disappeared from the arena of the Buddhist media.

The stories of Pfoundes and Olcott shows that it was not important to most of the Japanese Buddhists whether the foreigner was a Theosophist or not. In fact, they understood Theosophy not as a Western spiritual thought, but misunderstood it as Theravada Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism, or eclectic Buddhism. What was important was the person being a Caucasian male, which was a "sign" of Western civilization. If even the "civilized" people of the Western world were interested in Buddhism, therefore Japanese should believe in Buddhism if they wanted to be "civilized." That was the message hidden in a "white Buddhist." It seems Olcott himself felt what was expected of him, so his speech was mainly about the superiority of Buddhism over Christianity; this matched well with the trend of *Haja*

kensho. However, Olcott had a Theosophical dream of the union of all religions, therefore his strategy came into conflict with that of Japanese Buddhists.

In 1889 many speeches of Olcott and even his portraits were published in many cities. People who were not able to attend his speeches could read them and see his picture in the media. Through pamphlets or portraits, people could “see” not only a white Buddhist but also the Buddhist revival itself. Buddhist revival in Japan did not originate with Olcott, but was made visible by him. It may be paradoxical, but the main reason why people soon forgot him was that his success was so perfect that there was no need of another white Buddhist.

Japanese Buddhism recovered its pride, but there was one important change after its encounter with Olcott. As is evident from the criticism of Olcott by the *Dendō-kai zasshi*, the division between Mahayana and ‘Hinayana’ had entered the discourse of Japanese Buddhists. From now on, they came to use it consciously and strategically.

Kaigai Senkyō-kai got less success with Pfoundes’ nominal London Branch than had been expected. In 1891 Shimaji Mokurai became the second president of Kaigai Senkyō-kai. Shimaji also had an optimistic opinion about this kind of propagation abroad. Since Theravada Buddhism prevailed among the Westerners at that time, he thought that the philosophically more sophisticated Mahayana Buddhism would be welcomed. He expected the World’s Parliament of Religions in 1893 to be a good chance to convey Mahayana Buddhism to the West, and he was sure that it would get an instant success, because Mahayana Buddhism was the truth in harmony with philosophy and science. He did not seem to know the fact that Mahayana Buddhism was regarded as a decadent form of Buddhism by the Orientalists in Europe. The World’s Parliament of Religions turned out to be a stage to show religious tolerance. Though Hirai succeeded in exposing the non-humanistic character of the unequal treaties with foreign powers, Shimaji’s dream to propagate Mahayana Buddhism came to nothing. *Kaigai Bukkyō jijō* stopped publication in 1894. It was no coincidence that Nishi Hongan-ji began propagation in the new territories of Imperial Japan such as Manchuria, Taiwan or Korea about this year.

As shown above, Japanese Buddhists misunderstood Theosophy, even though it worked well in the process of Buddhist revival. Also they did not understand that Mahayana Buddhism was not highly valued by the intellectuals of the West. But then we can ask the last question here, did those articles or letters from the Western “Buddhists” really leave no impact on Japanese Buddhists? What ideological influence, if any, did they receive from Theosophy?

4. Aftermath

The ideological influence of Theosophy or esoteric Swedenborgianism on Japanese Buddhists is rather difficult to trace. Matsuyama Matsutarō was an able interpreter of Theosophy, but I have not found his own thoughts clearly expressed

in his rudimentary articles. Nakanishi Ushirō was inspired by Olcott's writings and rediscovered the value of Buddhism before he started writing about Shin Bukkyō. In 1889 he traveled to America to see W.Q. Judge, but he could not meet him. Later he joined Unitarianism for a short while, and after that he became a conservative Buddhist. In his books Theosophical influences were obscured by other Western influences. It was the same with Hirai Kinza. In one newspaper article "Mahayana and Hinayana" published in *The Los Angeles Herald* (May 9, 1892) Hirai wrote about the idea of creating one perfect religion by comparing world religions, where he explained that this ideal was from Theosophy. He also joined Unitarianism after returning to Japan. Judging from these facts as well as from Suzuki Teitarō's devotion to Paul Carus' "scientific religion" before going to America in 1897, a strong tendency toward a "rationalistic" interpretation of religion was seen among young Buddhist activists. But not all of them were thinking in such a way.

There is an interesting article titled "Yunitarian-kyō to shinchi-gaku" ユニテリアン教と神智学 (Unitarianism and Theosophy), which appeared in *Hansei zasshi* 反省雑誌 (9th year, no. 5, May 1894). Its author, Ōkubo Kaku, was a graduate of Futsū Kyōkō and an active member of Keii-kai. In this article he compared Unitarianism and Theosophy, pointing out five merits common to both movements, like the non-sectarian attitude, religious tolerance, principle of fairness, free discussion, and high morality, though he seemed to be in favor of Theosophy as it searched for the occult truth in psychic phenomena in Buddhism.

Not only Ōkubo, but at least two more young intellectuals mentioned Theosophy in the latter half of Meiji 20s; they tried to reconstruct the foundation of Buddhism on "mystical" experiences or, in other words, to give it a more concrete basis. One is Furukawa Rōsen. As I wrote above, he admitted that the present was an age of skepticism. But later he came to think that the way to escape from skepticism should be sought in mystical experiences. He wrote two related articles, one of which is "Saizō bukkyō no tanken" 西藏仏教の探検 (Explorations to Tibetan Buddhism) in the *Shingi Shingon-shū* journal, *Mitsu gon kyōhō* 密厳教報 (March 1895) (Sugimura 1901: 180-186), and the other is "Yunitarian, shin bukkyō, oyobi zen" ユニテリアン、新仏教、及び禪 (Unitarian, New Buddhism and Zen) in the *Rinzai* journal *Zen-shū* 禪宗 (November 1895). (Sugimura 1901: 253-257) He wrote that Theosophy prospered in Europe, because people there tried to gain religious faith through mysticism. Japanese Buddhists also needed to learn a spiritual method to gain such experiences, but such a method had already been obscured in Japan, so one had to look for it in Tibetan Buddhism, by which Theosophy was much influenced. Although Furukawa himself was a Jōdo Shin-shū priest (Nishi Hongan-ji) by birth, he practiced Zen under Shaku Sōen like many other university students in those days.

The second young intellectual mentioning Theosophy was the literary critic Taoka Sayoji 田岡佐代治 (alias Taoka Reibun 田岡嶺雲, 1871-1912). He had also

studied at the Imperial University and was a friend of Furukawa. They changed their opinions about Buddhism and religion. Taoka was disappointed with Zen and got satisfaction from reading Schopenhauer. During the latter half of the Meiji 20s, he wrote some articles about mysticism, which were not systematic but are interesting to read still today. He regarded mystical experiences achieved through “concentration” as the basis of all religions, including Zen. He also expressed the opinion that Western civilization was at a turning point from a material to a spiritual society, and that Theosophy, Swedenborgianism and Spiritualism were spearheading this trend. According to an article titled “19-seiki seiō ni okeru tōyō shisō” 十九世紀西欧に於ける東洋思想 (Eastern Thoughts in West Europe in the Nineteenth Century) (Nishida 1973: 259-270), Taoka stated that hypnotism, vegetarianism and cremation entered Europe together with Indian thought, which the Theosophical Society conveyed from the East. He did not question whether the East was also “civilized” and on an equal level with the West. He predicted, however, that the fusion of the Western/material and the Eastern/spiritual worlds would bring forth the new civilization of the twentieth century.

Against the opinions of Ōkubo, Taoka and Furukawa, Sugimura Jūō contributed an article titled “Shin bukkyō-to no jissai-teki hōmen” 新佛教徒の實際的方面 (Practical Side of New Buddhists) to the journal *Bukkyō* (February 1895). He wrote that one cannot judge the value of a religion depending on texts. It was useless to discuss historical problems, but one must use the result of one’s faith in the actual events of society. He stressed the necessity of social engagement for Buddhists. Sugimura’s article, which implicitly criticized Furukawa’s change of viewpoint from rational to mystical, seemed to have some influence on his fellow young Buddhists. Following Sugimura’s opinion, members of Shin Bukkyō Dōshi-kai defined their movement as a socially conscious and anti-superstitious movement. Sugimura later came to know an English person named Edward Stanley Stephenson (1871?-1926). He was a member of the Theosophical Society at Point Loma, San Diego, and stayed in Japan as a teacher of English. Sugimura wrote a short article about this Stephenson in the first issue of *Shin Bukkyō*. It is titled “Tō-zai-nan-boku” 東西南北 (Sugimura 1900: 32-35), in which he described amusingly how Stephenson believed in the supernatural power of the “true” Buddhist (i.e. Theosophist) and criticized the decay of Japanese Buddhism. This article probably led to the negative opinion of Theosophy by the members of Shin Bukkyō Dōshi-kai.

In this way Theosophy came to be forgotten and abandoned by Japanese Buddhists. In the Meiji 30s (after 1897) Shin Bukkyō Dōshi-kai often co-operated with Unitarians. Hirai Kinza himself took part in the Unitarian movement. But it is interesting to note that in 1903 Takeuchi Nanzō 竹内楠三 (dates unknown), an ex-Unitarian and an old friend of Sugimura, published a book on hypnotism which caused a craze throughout Japan. Tsunashima Eiichirō 綱島栄一郎 (alias Tsunashima Ryōsen 綱島梁川, 1873-1903), then a famous religious scholar, and Anesaki

Masaharu 姉崎正治 (1873-1949), the first professor of religious studies at the University of Tokyo, published articles and books on mysticism which were read by young students and intellectuals. In the Meiji 40s Suzuki Teitarō, a member of Shin Bukkyō Dōshi-kai, began to translate Swedenborg's books, and Hirai Kinza would start a small group of psychical research after leaving Unitarianism. Stephenson opened a Theosophical lodge in Zushi, Kanagawa, and published H. P. Blavatsky's *Key to Theosophy* (1890) as *Reichi gaku kaisetsu* 靈智学解説 in 1910. Although Theosophy would continue to be forgotten, a tendency toward "spiritual," "experience," or "occult" would be conspicuous among religious intellectuals after Meiji 40 (1907), just as Furukawa predicted.

Conclusion

As I outlined in this introduction, the meeting between Japanese Buddhists and foreign "Buddhists" in the Meiji 20s influenced the way of Buddhist revival and reform. Nakanishi and Hirai were certainly influenced by their encounter with foreign "Buddhists." However, the next generation of Buddhists like Furukawa, Taoka or Suzuki, who had all studied at the Imperial University at about the same time, while being influenced by these forerunners (Nakanishi and Hirai) and the foreign "Buddhists," contemplated the meaning of Buddhism or religion in general in a deeper way. Before "new" Buddhist movements rose during the Meiji 30s, there was an historically important decade of trial and error as well as a time of new possibilities in the Meiji 20s.

Except for Snodgrass (2003), Yoshinaga *et al.* (2007) and Satō (2008), there has not been enough research on the Meiji 20s and the internationalization of Japanese Buddhism during these years. In this special issue of *Japanese Religions* we publish three articles and one bibliography which deal with a hitherto unknown side of Meiji Buddhism. This publication is the first collection of articles to discuss the relationship between Japanese Buddhists and foreign "Buddhists" of esoteric and rational types. We hope that this publication will serve as a contribution to a discussion of these interactions at a crucial point of Japanese history in terms of its modernization and Westernization, and that it will help to open the way to a more dynamic understanding of modern Buddhism from a global point of view.

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