

CRISIS AND REVIVAL OF MEIJI BUDDHISM

Frédéric GIRARD

Introduction

The Meiji Era 明治時代 (1868–1912) was often considered to be an age of enlightenment, because it came after a long period of isolation. Japan opened itself to the Occident, which was considered synonymous with modernization. Japan believed itself progressive when it adopted and wholeheartedly accepted the epistemology and knowledge, as well as the technologies and sciences, that came from the West. The conscious steps towards modernization also included disciplines in the humanities, that

⁰ Frédéric GIRARD, professor of Intellectual History of Japan, Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient EFEO in Paris and Tokyo.

were previously unknown in Japan. New methodologies in the fields of philology, comparative religious studies, critical philosophy, logic and historiography came to be used in parallel with those already extant in the Japanese tradition.

In the religious context, the concepts of enlightenment, modernization and progress are problematic due to their hierarchical view of culture. However, during the Meiji Era, Buddhism hoped to benefit from modernization. The concepts of secularization and religious freedom were introduced during a time of persecution of Buddhism and the consolidation of State Shintō. The first part of this article sheds some light on this period by introducing the activities of the Rinzai monk, DOKUEN Shōshu 独園承珠 (1819–1895). The dialogues of Émile GUIMET (1936–1918) with Buddhist priests around the same time add to the historical picture. The institutional perspective is complemented by a discussion of the position of religion as defined by the Meiji Constitution from 1889. In the second part, some scholarly reactions of Meiji Buddhism to Western academia are outlined.

I. Institutional Problems

In Japanese Buddhism, a parishioner system was first established in the 15th century and was then reinforced by the repression of Christianity during the 17th century.¹ This was a system whereby the lay population was organized into donors of their respective temples. During the Tokugawa Period (1603–1867), Buddhism was a strong economic force and repeatedly criticized by Confucian officials and Shintō priests for being a kind of State within the State. Despite the repression of Buddhism at the beginning of the Meiji Era (1868–1912), the parishioner system still exists today. In regard to the years of repression, TAKAKUSU Junjirō 高楠順次郎 (1866–1945) distinguished between a phase of aggression against Buddhism that lasted until 1872 and a phase of governmental measures regulating Buddhism from 1872 onwards. Takakusu recollected in 1933 that while the violence against Buddhism (i.e., 廃仏毀釈) only had an effect on the outer forms of Buddhism, the change to the legal status of the clergy resulted in a demise from within:

The history of repression of Buddhism in Meiji era can be roughly divided into two periods. The first one begins in the first year [1868] and ends in the fifth year [1872] of Meiji era. It can be seen as the mere counterpart of the emergence of Shintō ideology, so that it is a great mistake to see directly in it

¹ TAMAMURO Taijō 玉室諦成. 『喪式佛教』 [Funeral Buddhism] (Tokyo: 大法輪, 1963).

a measure to destroy Buddhism. [...] The first period of repression of Buddhism moved only in the direction of destruction of [outer] forms. [...] From the fifth year of Meiji era (1872), we observe a change towards a preparation to destroy Buddhism from the inside.²

The measures to destroy Buddhism from within, which Takakusu refers to, were the abolition of the clergy's legal privileges, the legalization of meat-eating and marriage, the permission to wear ordinary clothes, the obligation to adopt common names, and the prohibition to receive alms or donations. In addition the year 1872 saw the establishment of the Great Doctrine Institute 大教院.

A. The Institute of the Great Doctrine

The Great Doctrine Institute was an attempt by the newly founded Teaching Ministry 教部省 to mobilize all Buddhist institutions as instruments for State doctrine.³ Buddhism became subordinated to State Shintō, whose ideas were very much influenced by the ideas of HIRATA Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776–1843). Although Buddhism's parishioner system was initially attacked by the new government, it quickly became integrated in the nation-wide system of Small Institutes of Doctrine 小教院.⁴ In particular, the great temples such as, Kan'ei-ji 寛永寺, Zōjō-ji 増上寺, Nikkō-zan 日光山, Myōhō-in 妙法院 or Mii-dera 三井寺, were not affected by the attacks on Buddhism. In this way, the institutional structure of Tokugawa Buddhism was largely perpetuated. An eloquent testimony of the situation at that time is given by DOKUEN Shōshu 独園承珠 (1819–1895), a priest of the Rinzaï sect of Zen Buddhism.⁵ He was head monk of Shōkoku Temple 相国寺 when Émile GUIMET visited Kyōto in 1876. The same year, in September, the Japanese government guaranteed freedom of faith, whereupon Dokuen established his own temple as an institute for Rinzaï doctrine at Kagoshima 鹿児島 (Kyūshū). Dokuen was lucky to survive when he was considered a spy by members of the Satsuma Rebellion around SAIGŌ Takamori [Nanshū] 西郷隆盛 [南洲] (1828–1877) in 1877.

² TAKAKUSU Junjirō 高楠順次郎. 「明治佛教の大勢」 [General trend of Meiji Buddhism], in 『現代仏教』 [Contemporary Buddhism] 105: 7–8. TANIGUCHI Jō 谷口穰. 「明治維新と佛教のイメージ」 [The Restoration of Meiji and the image of Buddhism], in 『近代国家と佛教』 [Modern State and Buddhism] (2011), 15–16.

³ For the following see OGAWARA Masamichi 小河原正道. 『大教院の研究』 [Studies on the Institute of the Great Doctrine] (Tokyo: Keio University, 2004).

⁴ See KAWAMURA Kakushō 川村覺昭. 『島地黙雷の教育思想研究-明治維新と異文化理解』 [Research on the educational thought of Shimaji Mokurai: The Meiji Restoration and his understanding of foreign culture] (Kyoto: 法藏館, 2004), 67–75.

⁵ Biography in 『續禪林僧寶傳』 [Precious biographies of Zen monks: sequel] vol. 2, no. 415, ed. by Zenbunka Kenkyūjo 禪文化研究所 (Hanazono University, 2002), 143–155.

Since the year 1869, Dokuen was conscious of the crisis of Buddhism and professed to "suppress heretical doctrines and establish the True Law" 破邪顯正 (*haja ken-shō*). When in 1872 the Great Doctrine Institute was established in Zōjō Temple, Dokuen became a teacher at the Institute. The next year he was promoted to become director of the Institute and head of the three branches of Zen Buddhism, namely Sōtō 曹洞, Ōbaku 黄檗 and Rinzaï 臨濟. Although Dokuen held a prominent position, he still considered Buddhism in the new system the slave of Shintō and was concerned that he could not preach his own religion freely. The Great Doctrine Institute had established Three Doctrinal Principles 「三條教則」 which had to be taught in any public instruction before the teacher was allowed to preach the lore of his own sect:

1. To respect divinities and love the nation.
2. To bring to light the Heavenly Principle and the Human Way
3. To serve the emperor and respect his orders.

Through complaints to the governor of Kyōto MAKIMURA Masanao 榎村正直 (1834–1896), Dokuen finally succeeded in receiving recognition of the right to teach his own doctrine. He considered the right to preach freely a necessity for all Buddhist sects. Dokuen also opposed the prerequisite of aristocracy for gaining a leading position in the order. Moreover, he was politically active to improve the financial situation of Buddhism. The confiscation of property and the abolition of the donor system had resulted in a critical financial situation for many temples. Dokuen protested against this situation with twenty five petitions to the governor, in which he demanded the restitution of confiscated domains and the permission to receive donations.

Dokuen was not the only Buddhist opposing the Great Doctrine Institute. SHIMAJI Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838–1911), who was a Shinshū 真宗 (True School) monk of the Hongan-ji Branch 本願寺派, visited England and France where he learned about the European concepts of "secularization," that is, "separation of politics and religion" 政教分離, and "freedom of faith" 信条の自由. Based on these European ideas, he tried to emancipate the Buddhist sects from the dominance by the Great Doctrine Institute. For this initiative against the intolerant governmental policy, Mokurai is generally credited with the eventual abolition of the Institute in 1875 and the Ministry of Doctrine in 1877. The question remains, however, as to how well he understood the ideas of secularization and freedom of faith.⁶

⁶ YOSHIDA Kyūichi 吉田久一. 「大教院分離運動について—島地黙雷を中心に」 [The separation movement from the Great Doctrine Institute: about Shimaji Mokurai], chap. 2 in 『日本近代仏教史研究』 [Research in the history of Japanese modern Buddhism] (Tokyo: 吉川弘文館, 1959), 81–149. OGAWAHARA Masamichi 小

The repressive politics against Buddhism was just one wave of assault, which eventually gave Buddhism the chance to restore itself. Even though State Shintō dominated the educational system, Buddhism was not evinced from it entirely. Its integration in the Great Doctrine Institute and the enforced secularization of the clergy triggered the Buddhist Church to organize and orientate itself towards the lay population. The marginal public status enabled Buddhism to act more freely. This is a similar situation to the unintended outcome of the Tokugawa policy against the preachers of Shingaku 心学 (Heart Learning).⁷ Overall though, the institutional structure of Tokugawa Buddhism was largely perpetuated in the modern period. However, the process of the clergy's secularization was set irreversibly in motion and eventually led Buddhism to new ways of life.

B. Japanese Buddhism as Seen by Guimet

European specialists of Buddhism tend to follow the same methodology irrespective of their specialization. Like Christian studies, Buddhist scholars begin with philological investigations of the original texts. They start out from studies on Indian languages and philosophy in order to gain a general understanding of Buddhism. From this point the research moves from India to China and then to Japan. The problem with this method is that it fails to examine locally specific thoughts and beliefs. Therefore, even specialists of Japanese Buddhism often neglect the actual state of Buddhism in Japan. The French scholar Émile GUIMET can be seen as a pioneer of a more comprehensive approach in religious studies.⁸

Guimet traveled to Japan in the autumn of 1876. During his sojourn he had important intellectual exchanges with Shintō priests and Buddhist monks. He recorded the answers to his questions and documented religious ceremonies. He was also fortunate to collect many pieces of fine art and books that were almost thrown away by the clergy at that time. Guimet believed that Japanese Buddhism was the only existing religion with a living culture of ceremonies and rituals, a faithful population, preserved temples, meaningful iconography, a competent clergy and sacred texts. His idea was to

川原正道. 「大教院の崩壊—島地黙雷の大教院分離運動」 [The collapse of the Great Doctrine Institute: the separation movement of Shimaji Mokurai], chap. 4 in 『大教院の研究』 [Research about the Institute of the Great Doctrine] (Tokyo: Keiō University [1999] 2004), 143–177.

⁷ KAWAMURA 川村. 『島地黙雷の教育思想研究』 (see note 4), 76–88.

⁸ See Anthony BOUSSEMART. "Un temple bouddhiste au cœur de Paris," in Françoise CHAPPUIS, Francis MACQUIN. *D'Outremer et d'Orient Mystique: Les itinéraires d'Emile Guimet* (Suilly-la-Tour: Findakly, 2001). *Clémenceau, le Tigre et l'Asie*, Catalogue de l'exposition sous la direction de Aurélie SAMUEL, Matthieu SÉGUÉLA, Amina Taha HUSSEIN-OKADA (Paris: Snoeck, 2014), 186–191.

curate a museum where all these materials could be preserved, and the preaching and ceremonies would be performed by appropriate specialists. Together with other scholars, like Albert RÉVILLE (1826–1906), he became the founder of religious studies in France. In 1880, the "Revue de l'Histoire des Religions" was published by the Guimet Museum and a chair of the history of religion at the Collège de France was created. From Guimet's perspective, Japan itself was a museum of religions and his museum was nothing other than a transplantation of what he had observed in Japan onto French soil. This approach was very different from the comparative linguistics of Max MÜLLER (1823–1900) undertaken at the same time in Oxford. For Müller, the analysis of religious language and symbols was equal to the analysis of the structure of the human mind, which he believed to be the very object of religious studies. For Guimet instead, the urgent task was to collect Japanese religious materials because he believed that Japan was likely to be the last country in the world where a living religion could be observed in all its facets.

The interests of Guimet were numerous but an important part of his research into Buddhism was to find solutions to social questions that Christianity faced in Europe at that time. The religious failing of Christianity was attributed to its monotheist character. It was thought that Buddhism, which did not admit one supreme ruling deity and had expanded successfully all over Asia, could help to unlock social problems in Europe. For this reason, the interviews Guimet had with Japanese monks were different to the doctrinal struggles of the past between Buddhists and Christians, but were also different from the intellectual exchange that Max MÜLLER had with his Japanese students, which we will introduce later. There was a significant interest in Buddhism in French republican and socialist circles, notably from Jean JAURÈS (1850–1914) and Georges CLÉMENTEAU (1841–1929), who were both friends of Guimet.

The monks that Guimet met in Japan were almost all affiliated with the Great Doctrine Institute. Although the Institute had been dissolved one year before, in the letters from these monks to Guimet they indicated their status as teachers of the Institute. Moreover, it is noteworthy that in their answers about the relationship between Buddha and the divinities, there are no signs of animosity towards Shintō. The only slight exception is SAITŌ Ryūkan 齋藤龍觀 (1831–1892), a monk from the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, who answered that he had no faith in the gods. In his temple, the lay donors gave money to the Shintō gods just as if they were paying a formal tax to the government. Guimet thought that the idea of his Buddhist interlocutors about retribution of good and bad deeds without the hypothesis of a ruling Deity was a very rational conception. Guimet was so impressed by the innocence and naivety of the Japanese people

that we can see his influence on the drawings of his friend and companion, Felix RÉGAMEY (1844–1907), who sketched Guimet's interview partners in an inimitable way.⁹

C. Religion in the Meiji Constitution

With the promulgation of the Imperial Constitution of Great Japan in 1889, the concept of freedom of faith and the idea of secularization were implemented at the constitutional level. We cannot go into detail here about the legal foundations of religion, however, Itō Hirobumi's 伊藤博文 (1841–1909) commentary on the constitution gives a good impression of how fundamentally the Meiji reforms effected the relation of religion and the State.¹⁰ Itō stated that the constitution meant a new chance to accomplish peace and happiness. It provided liberal rights and duties for the population of a country unified by an emperor who incarnates the spiritual heritage of the ancestors. The commentary moreover asserts that the emperor has inherited his throne from the imperial ancestors and will bequeath it to posterity. Herein lay the legitimation of imperial power. According to Itō, the constitution was not an innovation, but the restoration of an original ideal state.

Paragraph 28 of the second Chapter of the constitution guarantees freedom of faith on the provision that public peace and order are upheld and civic duties fulfilled. To grasp the significance of this article, the European background of these concepts must be understood. In the European Middle Ages, when religion and politics were not separated, religion had a great influence. This became the cause of bloody religious wars that occurred on a huge scale and killed large amounts of people. Measures to have so-called heretic and superstitious creeds eliminated were enacted by severe legislation and threat of punishment. The freedom of cult and creed in Europe aimed to end religious struggle and civil war, which had been going on for four centuries in France. It was after the French Revolution and the Independence of the United States that this freedom was first officially recognized. But in many countries, Christianity had developed into a State religion and was taught in governmental education. That went along with privation of the civil rights of religious minorities. For instance, in Germany Jewish citizens had no political rights until 1848. From this perspective, the advent of

⁹ See Frédéric GIRARD, *Emile Guimet, Dialogues avec les religieux japonais, textes établis, traduits et introduits par Frédéric Girard* (Paris: Editions Findakly, avec le concours du musée Guimet, 2012).

¹⁰ Itō Hirobumi (Marquis) 伊藤博文, *Commentaries on the Constitution of the Empire of Japan*, trans. by (Baron) Iro Miyoji, 2nd ed. (Tokyo: Chūō Daigaku, [1889] 1906), 58–61.

the freedom of cult and faith is a grand accomplishment of modern culture. It was through difficult struggles across several centuries that liberty of consciousness and belief were won. Faith belongs to the subjective realm and hence cannot be regulated by decrees of the State. To have a religion imposed by force on a whole population is according to Itō not only opposed to the intellectual development of the individual but also pernicious to the progress of the sciences. From this perspective, the Meiji Constitution appears to be rather progressive or liberal.

Faith and religious conviction are noetic operations with a spiritual dimension. Therefore it is only the outer forms of religion, that is, the practice of preaching, the patterns of diffusion and the formation of religious associations, that can be the object of legal measures. Every individual, who has a certain faith or is dedicated to a deity, has no right to entertain his religion if he does not fulfill his duty towards the State or if he operates outside the legal framework. Insofar as religion concerns only the spiritual life, freedom can be recognized without condition. Insofar as religion implicates external acts and social life, for instance in the form of cult, rituals, public offerings, religious declarations and the like, it has to be regulated by laws. The Meiji Constitution shows an awareness of this link between religion and politics by granting religious freedom under the condition that public order is preserved and civil duties are not neglected. A similar reservation can be seen in paragraph 29, which grants freedom of speech, publication, assembly and association within the limits of law. Speaking, publishing, assembling, and associating are all political means to influence society and politics. Constitutional systems allow these activities as long as they do not endanger security and public order. If the rights are used in an illegal way, warnings or punishments become necessary. Paragraph 30, however, gave Japanese citizens the right to appeal to the emperor and lodge complaints. As a precedence for this right, Itō mentions the box for complaints established by Emperor Kōtoku 孝徳天皇 (596–664) in the middle of the 17th century.

In general, European countries had only one prevailing religion. That was Christianity, which often acquired the character of a State religion. But in the course of the 19th century, the co-existence of several faiths in one country, especially in France after the Revolution, created the need to find a new *modus vivendi* between religion and the State. Due to fanatical tendencies, it was impossible to recognize religions as moral agents at the constitutional level. The secular State had to confine religion to the private sphere. In Japanese religions, on the other hand, mutual acceptance of sects and a relative absence of fanaticism seem to have a long history. The European concepts of religious freedom and secularization, as advocated by SHIMAJI Mokurai, were therefore

significant during the short period of intolerance at the beginning of Meiji Era. The Meiji Constitution contained the same ideas in the form of legal principles and yet, at the same time, contradicted the separation of religion and state by implementing a sacred emperor as the pivot of the nation. Therefore, it is doubtful whether the European ideas were properly understood during the early Meiji years.

II. Scholarly Reactions

During the 19th century, new scholarly fields, such as comparative religious studies and comparative mythology, emerged in Europe, which created new perspectives on the relationship between various world religions. An evolutionary framework came about whereby the so-called primitive religions like animism, totemism, and shamanism were placed at the bottom, then in the middle was placed polytheism and theism as relatively developed religions, followed by State and universal religions representing the highest forms. Western scholars identified native Japanese religion as animism and positioned it at the primitive end of the scale. Moreover, philological research very much changed the perspective on the universal religions. Mythological elements in the canonical texts were isolated and identified as structural elements of religion in general. The biblical story about the Garden of Eden as a sinless and blissful original state of mankind was related to mythological motifs of a Golden Age in other traditions. Typological similarities were found in the hagiography of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Māyā, the mother of Buddha. Religious stories were no longer read in their literal sense, but analyzed in their metaphorical meaning. The sacred texts of universal religions such as Buddhism and Christianity were studied in various critical, philological, and historical perspectives.

Motivated by these new perspectives on their own religion, Meiji Buddhist scholars went to Europe to study the critical academic approach to religious texts. They used the methods of critical Bible studies for establishing a relative chronology of the different literary strata of Buddhist texts before they attempted to hypothesize about an absolute chronology. Yet, these methods were not uncontested because they often contradicted orthodox doctrines. For example, if it was found that the Buddha Amida was not of Indian and Buddhist origin, but instead has Persian roots, what consequences has this for the authenticity of Pure Land texts? If the Nāga King's submarine palace and the Bodhisattvas were only myths, what will be the value of the Mahāyāna scriptures which were believed to have been deposited by Mañjuśrī in the Nāga King's palace? To explain these discrepancies it was necessary to go beyond the literal meaning of the

texts and propose new interpretations, which were not immediately popular and needed time to become accepted. Several Meiji Buddhist scholars considered the Mahāyāna Buddhist text as apocryphal and in some way opposed to the original Buddhist doctrines.

However, these new scientific approaches should not be considered the leading cause of the modernization of Buddhism. In pre-modern times there already existed an awareness among Japanese Buddhists of the apocryphal status of texts, interpolations of passages, and the fabrication of authorities. Indeed, during the Medieval and early modern age these issues were already the focus of accurate philological examinations and doctrinal struggles in schools and sects.¹¹ Examinations to ascertain the scriptural authenticity are part of the internal logic of traditions based on canonical texts. That applies to Buddhism in the same way as, for example, pre-modern philology of the Nativist School 国学. What can still be asserted is that the large-scale importation of occidental sciences and methods had long-term stimulating effects. However, Japanese Buddhist scholars not only copied science and method but also conducted research in original ways.

A. Max Müller

Several Japanese scholars went to Europe to study Sanskrit with the charismatic Friedrich Max MÜLLER (1823–1900), a renowned orientalist, linguist and specialist of comparative religions. Max MÜLLER was born in Leipzig and was the son of the poet, Wilhelm MÜLLER. Max was naturally talented in languages and literature and was therefore directed towards academia; at the age of eighteen he studied classics at the University of Leipzig. His lecturers were the philosophers Christian H. WEISSE (1801–1866) and Rudolf LOTZE (1817–1881). This was the starting point of his interest in religious studies and in the languages of Arabic and Sanskrit. He attended the lectures by the famous philosopher Friedrich SCHELLING (1775–1854), at the same time as translat-

¹¹ For example, there were discussions about the authenticity of the *Treatise on the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* 『大乘起信論』 (*Dàchéng qǐxìn lùn*) during Antiquity, and between HAYASHI Razan 林羅山 and MATSUNAGA Teitoku 松永貞徳, in the 17th century, in chapter 14 of their *Dialogues on Confucianism and Buddhism*. ŌKUWA Hitoshi 大桑齊, MAEDA Ichirō 前田一郎 ed. 『羅山・貞徳『儒仏問答』註解と研究』 [Razan-Teitoku «Dialogues on Confucianism and Buddhism»: Commentary and study] (Tokyo: ペリカン社, 2006), 124–140. About the doctrinal and formal basis of the authenticity of Buddhist texts, see Etienne LAMOTTE. "La Critique d'authenticité dans le bouddhisme," in *Mélanges offerts à Mgr Etienne Lamotte* (1980), trans. "The Assessment of Textual Authenticity in Buddhism," *Buddhist Studies Review* 1 (1983–1984): 1–15. Etienne LAMOTTE. "La Critique d'interprétation dans le bouddhisme," in *Mélanges Henri Grégoir*, trans. "The Assessment of Textual Interpretation in Buddhism," *Buddhist Studies Review* 2 (1985): 4–24.

ing Indian classics (particularly the *Upaniṣad*) and learning Persian. He became convinced that the *Rig-veda* was more important than the *Upaniṣad* and debated this with Arthur SCHOPENHAUER (1788–1860), who accorded primacy to the latter. It was with this debate in mind that he went to meet the famous Sanskritist Eugène BURNOUF (1801–1852) in Paris. Burnouf had done a marvelous translation of the *Saddharmapūṇḍarīka-sūtra* (Lotus-Sutra), which even today remains a model of the genre. Müller used the manuscripts of the *Rig Veda Saṃhita* that the French scholar possessed for study and editing. This became the preeminent work of his life, which he pursued between 1849 and 1874.¹²

Müller moved to Oxford in 1846 and became a British citizen in 1855. After being professor of Modern European Languages, he inaugurated the field of Comparative Philology at the University of Oxford in 1868. His hypothesis was that all Indo-European languages had a common ancestor. Based on the link between thought and language, he also established the study of comparative mythology. This made him a pioneer of what has become known as "religious studies" in England and Germany. The lecture he gave in 1870, "Introduction to the Science of Religion," at the Royal Institution, prefigured the creation of this discipline ten years later in France by personalities like Émile GUIMET (1836–1918) and Albert RÉVILLE (1826–1906). Müller also debated his humanist and liberal beliefs with his friend and contemporary in Berlin, Albrecht WEBER (1825–1901), who was a strictly scientific thinker. Müller's academic activities, which covered religious studies, philosophy, philology, linguistics, and philosophy of religion, were in some sense as broad as his ambitious humanist views.¹³

Müller's first Japanese students were NANJŌ Bun'yū 南条文雄 (1849–1927) and KASAHARA Kenju 笠原研壽 (1852–1883), who were sent to Europe in 1876 as missionaries of the Higashi Hongan Temple 東本願寺 of Shinshū Buddhism. They became close disciples of Müller, who in turn was greatly inspired by his talented Japanese students. Bun'yū is well-known as the editor of the *Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka, the Sacred Canon of the Buddhists in China* (also *Nanjō Catalogue*) in 1883, which is based on the Míng 明 canon and is nowadays obsolete. Another important student of Müller was TAKAKUSU Junjirō 高楠順次郎. Müller donated

¹² MAX MÜLLER. *Rig Veda Saṃhita. The sacred Hymns of the Brahmanas, together with the commentary of Sayanacharya*, 7 vols. (London, 1849–1975).

¹³ MÜLLER wrote: *Buddhism and Buddhist Pilgrims* (1857); *The Meaning of Nirvāṇa* (1857); *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (1859); *Lectures on the Science of Language* (1861); *A Sanskrit Grammar for Beginners* (1866); *Einleitung in die vergleichende Religionswissenschaft* (1874); *The Origin and Growth of Religion* (1878); *The Dhammapada, Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 20 (1881); *Biographies of Words* (1888); *Natural, Physical, Anthropological and Psychological Religion* (1888–1893); and *Contribution of the Science of Mythology* (1897).

several books from his personal library to University of Tokyo. His influence in Japan can be measured by the great number of his disciples in the field of Buddhist studies, but also more subtly through the introduction of humanist ideals. However, it is not certain whether the encounter between Müller and the Japanese scholars can be called a true intellectual exchange. On one hand, we have Müller who held romantic views of religion and mythology inspired by German idealism, while on the other hand, we have Japanese scholars who were in Europe with missionary intentions.

B. Historical Critique

MURAKAMI Senshō 村上專精 (1851–1929), although never a visitor of Europe, was one of the first modern scholars to argue against the traditional view that the Mahāyāna was taught by the historical Buddha. During the third decade of the Meiji Era, MURAKAMI Senshō opposed MAEDA Eun 前田惠運 (1857–1930) and INOUE Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919), who both argued for the orthodox doctrine of the authenticity of the Mahāyāna scriptures. Murakami's position was later confirmed by the famous scholar MOCHIZUKI Shinkō 望月信亨 (1869–1948). In Murakami's view, Śākyamuni Buddha was a mortal man and the Bodhisattvas are merely allegories. He wrote, "One arrives at a negation of the existence of a preacher of the Mahāyāna." Murakami's argument is threefold:

1. The Śākyamuni Buddha of the Mahāyāna texts cannot be the human-being Śākyamuni.
2. The Bodhisattvas who preach the Dharma instead of Śākyamuni are not human personalities but are only names denoting ideas. Therefore, their partner, Śākyamuni, also loses his concrete character as a person of flesh and bones.
3. The legend that the texts were born from the inspiration of the Bodhisattva Maitreya and conserved in Nāga's Palace was created as a substitute because the appearance of the Mahāyāna texts could not be explained.¹⁴

Murakami's critique of the Mahāyāna, however, did not end with a complete rejection. Instead Murakami believed his argument to be consistent with the viewpoint that the Mahāyāna scriptures have valuable doctrinal contents and are in fact an advanced form

¹⁴ The idea that the works of Asaṅga were inspired by but not composed by Maitreya was also advocated by Paul DEMÉVILLE (1894–1979). "La Yogācārabhūmi de śaṃgharākṣa," *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* 44.2 (1951): 376–387.

of Buddhism. The later developments not only demonstrate the truth of original Buddhism, but also reveal its quintessence. The evolution from primitive Hinayāna Buddhism to advanced Mahāyāna Buddhism represents a deduction from the truth revealed in Śākyamuni's Enlightenment and an interpretative deepening of his teachings. The Hinayāna gives primacy to the interpretation of the phenomenal world, whereas the Mahāyāna teachings focus on the interpretation of the noumenal world of Enlightenment, which they consider beyond linguistic expression. Nonetheless, for Murakami these distinctive and eventually opposite tenets cannot obliterate the fact that they belong to the same religion.¹⁵

The Pure Land monk **ANESAKI Masaharu** 姉崎正治 (1873–1949) studied in Germany where he met Eduard von HARTMANN (1842–1906) and studied with famous scholars like Albrecht WEBER (1825–1901), Paul DEUSSEN (1845–1919), Hermann OLDENBERG (1854–1920), Richard von GARBE (1857–1927), and Ernst WINDISCH (1844–1918). He spoke and wrote easily in English and published some best selling books. He gave lectures on the history of Japanese religions at the Collège de France, and received a doctorate honoris causa from the University of Strasbourg. Anesaki is generally credited for having founded the discipline of religious studies in Japan despite the fact that INOUE Enryō had used the term "religious studies" 宗教学 earlier than Anesaki. However, Enryō's idea of religious studies still lacked the solid historical method that is fully developed in Anesaki.

For Anesaki, who was familiar with the European evolutionary approach, there exists a necessary progression from natural religion to monotheism, through to a transcendental monism. These developments occurred parallel in Christianity and Buddhism. As an example, Anesaki cites the deification of the Buddha: from the man Śākyamuni the idea emerged of an original Buddha separate to his historical body. This resulted in the notion of a Dharma-Body, which then became the object of religious faith. Based on these evolutionary concepts he wrote a *Treatise on the Sacred Texts of Buddhism* 『佛教聖典史論』 in 1899. This book was inspired by the ideas of TOMINAGA Nakamoto 富永仲基 (1715–1746) in *Discourse after Emerging from [Phantasms in] Meditation* 『出定後語』 (1744) and *Critical Research on the Canonical Gospels* (1847) by the German protestant theologian Ferdinand C. BAUR (1792–1860) of Tübingen.¹⁶ Baur followed the textual critical hypothesis about a consecutive compilation of sacred

¹⁵ MURAKAMI Senshō 村上專精. 『大乘佛說論批判』 [Critics on the thesis that Buddha preached Mahāyāna] (Tokyo: 光融館, 1903), 189–192, 198, 212, 221–234.

¹⁶ Ferdinand Christian BAUR. *Kritische Untersuchungen über die kanonischen Evangelien, ihr Verhältniss zu einander, ihren Charakter und Ursprung* (1847).

scriptures. He admitted the conjunction of Jewish and Pauline elements in the formation of the New Testament.¹⁷ Anesaki read the Buddhist Scriptures with a Hegelian notion of reason that ascends through history. He describes his scientific method:

The thesis of the extinction of Buddhism nowadays is in fact related to the fact that Buddhist thinkers follow blindly irrational traditions, without reconsidering others. But science is the strongest power of modern culture, and scientific thought, which tries to explain all phenomena through the necessary relation of cause and effect, when applied to the humanities, becomes historical reason, insofar as historical reason is the product of modern scientific civilization. If the humanities, politics, economics or sociology, as well as the mental humanities, philosophy and morals, do not elucidate processes and relations in the historical development, our reason will not be able to understand these [academic matters]. [...] Moreover, modern thought explains all events and things as following causal relations and cannot cease till it has arrived at a natural development of the human mind.¹⁸

For Anesaki, the non-scientific character of Buddhist thought is apparent from the "teaching classifications" 判教 in Mahāyāna Buddhism. In China, the different schools were classified under the premise that only one's own sect possessed the ultimate truth; each school considered its own scripture as the fundamental one. Under such circumstances, the fossilization and degeneration of Buddhism is unavoidable. Like Murakami, Anesaki was convinced that the Mahāyāna is not part of the Buddha's original teaching. But that was not meant to be a criticism of the Mahāyāna as such, because the Mahāyāna has to be seen as the natural result of the religious evolution. For Anesaki, it was necessary to study the development of Buddhism as a historical evolution of its sacred scriptures. For example, the concepts of Buddha-Nature 仏性, Tathatā 真如 (Tality) or Bhūtatathatā (True Reality) are neither void nor imaginary but are born from the apperception of eternal truth within concrete history.¹⁹ However, in his historical criticism of Mahāyāna, Anesaki tended towards a kind of Buddhist fundamentalism.

¹⁷ His works include, *Christian Gnosis* (1835), *Saint-Paul, his life and his doctrines* (1845), *Critical research on the Canonical Gospels* (1847), and *Christianity until the 6th century*, (1835); (titles translated).

¹⁸ ANESAKI Masaharu 姉崎正治. 『佛教聖典史論』 [Historical study on sacred scriptures of Buddhism] (Tokyo: 経世書院, 1899), 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 27–35.

TAKAKUSU Junjirō 高楠順次郎 (1866–1945) is maybe the most remarkable example of all the scholars returning from Europe. He left Japan in 1890 to study Indology and Sanskrit with Max MÜLLER at Oxford University. In 1894, he graduated in philology, Indian literature, philosophy and comparative religious studies. During the next year, he went to study at universities in Germany, France and Italy. He came back to Oxford in 1896, where he received a Master of Arts degree. Later he was also to become a member of the Royal Academy of England. The scholarly approach of Takakusu is evidently influenced by Western methodology. His understanding of scientific procedure was the movement from the general to the particular. In Buddhist studies that meant beginning with Sanskrit studies before a specialization in Buddhist scripture was at all possible.

It can be said that Müller and Weber taught almost all the Japanese scholars who went to Europe to study Buddhism and Linguistics.²⁰ Takakusu was, however, also especially acquainted with France. For example, he participated in the compilation of the *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du bouddhisme*²¹ and translated into French the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, a treatise of Sāṃkhya school of Indian philosophy by Īśvarakṛṣṇa and Kapila.²² Mochizuki's *Great Dictionary of Buddhism* 『佛教大辭』 evaluates Takakusu's achievements as follows:

From the 18th [*sic*] to the beginning of the 19th [*sic*] century, there were two central personalities in the academic world who were particularly brilliant. The first one is Max Müller in England, and the other one is Weber in Germany. Among the Japanese scholars who went to study with Müller are Nanjō Bun'yū and Kasahara Kenju. Takakusu Junjirō was probably Müller's last Japanese student. Those who studied with Weber were Anesaki Masaharu, Ogiwara Unrai [荻原雲來, 1869–1937], and Watanabe Kaigyoku [渡邊海旭, 1872–1937]. The high significance of Takakusu's studies in Europe was an increase in the study of Orientalism and Buddhism based on Sanskrit in Japan. Immediately after having returned to Japan, he was welcomed by the highest authorities, taught Sanskrit and became professor of linguistics. Later he established a university chair in Sanskrit and became its first professor. Takakusu was responsible for epochal change and development in the research of Sanskrit, Indian philosophy and buddhology in Japan.²³

²⁰ MOCHIZUKI Shinkō 望月信亨. 『佛教大辭』 [Encyclopedia of Buddhism], vol. 10: 614.

²¹ Hōbōgirin 法寶義林: *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du bouddhisme d'après les sources chinoises et japonaises* (1929).

²² TAKAKUSU Junjirō 高楠順次郎. "La Sāṃkhyakārikā étudiée à la lumière de sa version chinoise," *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* 2137 (1904).

²³ MOCHIZUKI Shinkō 望月信亨. 『佛教大辭典』 [Encyclopedia of Buddhism], vol. 10: 614.

C. Doctrinal Reform

Buddhism was first taught at the Tokyo University in 1879 in the form of Lectures on Buddhist Books 仏書講義 in the course of Japanese and Chinese Literature. The two Buddhist professors at that time were the Sōtō priest HARA Tanzan 原坦山 (1819–1892) and the Shinshū priest YOSHITANI Kakujū 吉谷覺壽 (1843–1914). Three years later, in 1882, the lectures were renamed "Indian Philosophy" and became part of the course in Oriental Philosophy in the newly established Philosophy Department. KATŌ Hiroyuki 加藤弘之 (1836–1916) and INOUE Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1855–1944) both considered Buddhism a "philosophy" 哲学 and not a "religion" 宗教. Both are responsible for the study of Buddhism being interpreted as a discipline that belonged to "philosophy" in the early years of Tokyo University. The approach for research was meant to be "scientific" rather than sectarian or religious in character. In this spirit, HARA Tanzan lectured on the *Treatise on the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* 『大乘起信論』 (*Dàchéng qǐxìn lùn*) as an Oriental equivalent to Western Philosophy. This trend created difficulties for the Shinshū scholars. During the early Meiji years, they subsumed their faith under the newly imported term "religion."²⁴ As we have seen, this classification allowed them to use the ideas of secularization and religious freedom to emancipate themselves from the control of the Teaching Ministry. In the academic context too, they considered themselves as representatives of religion and wanted to investigate their faith in a similar way to Christian theology. Thus, many controversies arose because of the newly introduced concepts and the respective academic fields. INOUE Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 and INOUE Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919), in particular, discussed the essence and relationship of philosophy and religion.

Another personality of note was **KIYOZAMA Manshi** 清沢満之 (1863–1903) who, like INOUE Enryō, belonged to the Higashi Hongan Temple 東本願寺 of Shinshū Buddhism. He opposed the uncritical identification of "profane truth" 俗諦 (*zokutai*) and "absolute truth" 真諦 (*shintai*) that was common in his sect. This interpretation of the Two Truth doctrine allowed the Shinshū followers to adjust to whatever social order (i.e., "royal law" 王法), because the profane truth of the political reality was ultimately identical with the absolute truth. The medieval Shinshū community thereby escaped repression by the authorities; formally, they paid homage to the feudal lord, but spiritu-

²⁴ Gerard C. GODARD, "«Philosophy» or «Religion»? The Confrontation with Foreign Categories in Late Nineteenth Century Japan," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69.1 (2008): 71–91.

ally they took refuge in Amida. The same stance was also employed during the Edo Period (1603–1868) by Catholic followers known as "Hidden Christians" (*kakure-kirishitan*).²⁵

However, Manshi opposed such pernicious confusion between the two levels of reality because it made an authentic religious standpoint impossible. Manshi stressed that the only *raison d'être* of profane truth was to lead to the absolute truth as represented by the Tathāgata Amida. The reason for this strict distinction between the profane and the religious was because religion has a salvation level and philosophy does not. In this respect, philosophy is unable to understand the twofold truth. In religion, where the adept has to pass through the empirical level to a supernatural state, the distinction must necessarily be established.²⁶

YABUKI Keiki 矢吹慶輝 (1879–1933), like Anesaki a monk of the Pure Land Sect, was interested in social problems. He used scholarly means to shed light on the social vision of Buddhism. He studied philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University, before he went with Anesaki to America, England, France, Germany, Holland, and Russia in order to study social movements and welfare activities. In his huge doctoral thesis, *Studies in Third Stage Buddhism* 『三階教の研究』 (1923), he used the methods of religious studies and historiography to examine religion and its relation to economics, finance and social problems. The French scholar, Jacques GERNET, used Yabuki's research in his study of Dūnhuáng documents about economic aspects of Buddhism in China from the fifth to the tenth centuries.²⁷

Yabuki tried to give new interpretations to Buddhist concepts by applying them to the modern situation. People of any period, he believed, applied what is preached in canonical scriptures to their own problems. In this perspective, Mahāyāna Buddhism is an expression of the vitality of the Buddhist Law in adapting to its social environment. Yabuki was interested in the social changes of advanced countries, the capitalist societies of the twentieth century. From a moral perspective, scientific and social problems were to be solved with reference to individual liberty and human talents. Yabuki believed that religious societies could gain coherence by stressing "solidarité," in the

²⁵ FUTABA Kenkō 二葉憲香. 『日本仏教の課題、もう一つの文化の構築に向けて』 [The task of Japanese Buddhism, towards the construction of another culture] (Tokyo: 毎日新聞社, 1986), 42–43.

²⁶ See KIZOZAWA Manshi 清沢満之. 『宗教的道德「俗諦」と普通道徳との交渉』 [Intercourse between religious morals (conventional truth) and everyday morals], in AKEGARASU Haya 暁烏敏, et al. 『清沢先生臨末の御教訓講話: 暁烏敏先生還暦記念講話』 [The doctrinal lectures of the late Master Kiyozawa: Memorial lectures on the occasion of Master Akegarasu Haya's 60th birthday] (Kyoto: 香草舎, 1937), 14–31.

²⁷ Jacques GERNET. *Les Aspects économiques du bouddhisme en Chine dans la Société chinoise du Ve au Xe siècle* (Saigon: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1956).

sense of Émile DURKHEIM (1858–1917).²⁸ As the title of his thesis indicates, Yabuki proposes three steps in the evolution of religion which were inspired by Francis G. PEABODY (1847–1936): a religion of authority, a religion of metaphysics and a social religion. Whereas past religions focused on death, contemporary religion could focus on the attainment of life, work and happiness. As an example for such a religion of life, Yabuki mentions socialism inspired by Christianity. The equivalent Buddhist ideal may be found in the Four Great Vows, the Six Perfections and the Transference of Merits. These values had to be combined with the ideas of social harmony and mutual service which are equally elements of the Great Vehicle. Yabuki interpreted the concept of "impermanence" 無常 not in the degenerative sense of death, but rather as a progressive force. He understood the idea of non-self as communitarian solidarity, and the "inexhaustible treasury" 無尽藏 as progressive realization of an eternal ideal. Accordingly, the Mahāyāna was not an individualistic religion, but aimed at social harmony and peace.

Conclusion

The tasks of Meiji Buddhism were manifold. The state of religion was under question, not only for Buddhism in Japan but also for Asia in general. New and appropriate ways had to be found in order to survive as religious organizations in modernity. Although the parishioner system was slowly vanishing, Buddhism gained a certain degree of economic independence as "funeral Buddhism" 葬式仏教. Meanwhile, the secularization of the clergy led to new forms of social activities answering the needs of lay people, society and politics. Thanks to the fast assimilation of Western scholarship, the clergy was able to reinterpret Buddhist doctrines in accordance with the contemporary world. However, it was not only in philosophical reformulations of doctrine where we find noteworthy results, the Meiji Period also saw the emergence of modern historical Buddhist studies, which is an academic field that Japan excelled in during the 20th century.

In the years 1921–1923, the French scholar of Indian and Buddhist studies Sylvain LÉVI (1863–1935) came to Japan to become director of the Maison Franco-Japonaise (an academic institution established by the French ambassador Paul CLAUDEL (1866–1955)). Sylvain LÉVI, who later became the first director of the French Institute of Japanese Studies at the Sorbonne, was a distinct scholar whose influence is still diffi-

²⁸ YABUKI Keiki 矢吹慶輝, 「神学の改造」 [Restructuration of theology], 『日本読書協会会報』 2 (1921). Idem. 「社会的宗教」 [Social religion], 『哲学合大辞典』, suppl. (同文館, 1926). Idem. 「社会生活と回向」 [Social life and retroversion of merits], 『安田同人会誌』 95 (1933).

cult to measure. During his stay in Japan, he cooperated with TAKAKUSU Junjirō to compile the *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du bouddhisme*. Lévi observed that the heritage of Meiji Buddhism was in danger of disappearing. He encouraged his Japanese student TOMOMATSU Entai 友松圓諦 (1885–1973) to found the Archive of Meiji Buddhism 明治仏教資料館 at Kanda 神田 in Tokyo. Thanks to this major collection, more research about the rich landscape of Meiji Buddhism can be expected in the future.