



TEMPLE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE BOARD

*Title of Dissertation.* ZEN AND JAPANESE MILITARISM: A CRITICAL INQUIRY INTO THE ROOTS OF "IMPERIAL WAY-ZEN"

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Date submitted to Graduate Board 01 December 1995

Accepted by the Graduate Board of Temple University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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(Dean of Graduate School)

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A Dissertation  
Submitted to  
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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by  
Brian Andre Victoria  
May, 1996

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## ABSTRACT

Title: ZEN AND JAPANESE MILITARISM: A  
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Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Temple University, 1996

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In Imperial Japan of the 1930s, a loosely organized movement arose within the Sōtō and Rinzai Zen sects which was known variously as "Imperial Way-Zen," "Imperial State-Zen," or "Imperial Military-Zen. The thrust of this movement was to place meditation power (J. *zenjō-riki*/ 禪定力), coupled with the spirit of self-discipline and self-sacrifice derived from Zen training, at the disposal of Japan's armed forces.

"Imperial Way-Zen" was itself only a subset of a larger pan-Buddhist movement known as "Imperial Way-Buddhism." This latter movement was supported by all of the sects composing institutional Buddhism. Its doctrinal foundations rested on the

twin pillars of total subservience to the state in the person of the Emperor and the identification of war as an act of Buddhist compassion.

This dissertation examines both of these movements with particular emphasis on "Imperial Way-Zen" and seeks to explain how it was possible that Buddhism, a religion with non-violence as one of its fundamental precepts, could have been interpreted so as to support the war policies of Imperial Japan.

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## PROLOGUE

### Chapters Two Through Four

It is a central thesis of this dissertation that the historical roots of both "Imperial Way-Zen" and "Imperial Way-Buddhism" can be clearly traced back to at least Japan's Meiji period and the reaction of institutional Buddhism's leaders to both the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars. The first four content chapters of this dissertation are designed to support and validate this claim.

Chapter Two, "The Attempted Suppression of Buddhism," begins with a brief introduction to the general state of Buddhism as this religion entered Japan's modern period, starting with the Meiji Restoration of 1868. It produces evidence to show that, ironically, the semi-official suppression of



Buddhism that accompanied the Meiji Restoration was responsible for the first overt institutional Buddhist support for the new government and its expansionist and anti-Christian policies. That is to say, Buddhist leaders hoped that by identifying themselves with the nationalistic aspirations of the new government they would not only escape continued persecution but benefit, once again, from official favor. After a number of false starts, their efforts did in fact gain them at least a modicum of such favor. The cost of this favor, however, was incorporation into a government-sanctioned, and State *Shintō*-dominated, religious hierarchy.

Chapter Three, "Early Buddhist Social Ferment" outlines the attempt by Buddhist leaders to come to grips with the implications of Japan's emergence on the world stage, especially Buddhist responses to the

religious and secular challenges of the West as well as the ongoing criticisms of domestic voices. On the one hand, Buddhist leaders "rediscovered" their historical commitment to social philanthropy. Their efforts were, however, often of a type designed to win official favor by assuaging some of the worst social effects of Japan's rapid industrialization, thereby lessening the danger of rebellion from the lower classes.

Farsighted Buddhist leaders also responded to the need to adopt the "scientific attitude" of Western learning, even with regard to the study of Buddhism itself. Here, too, however, the motivation was, at least in part, defensive in nature, for the Buddhist leadership recognized that without embracing Western learning they would be unable to counter the intellectual threat

posed by now legalized Christian missions with their attendant educational and philanthropic activities.

The need to counter perceived threats from abroad was most clearly demonstrated by the Buddhist leadership's near unanimous support for the Sino-Japanese War and especially for the Russo-Japanese War. The latter war in particular brought forth one of the first recorded attempts on the part of Zen sectarian leaders to employ both their doctrine and practice in the war effort. The seeds of "Imperial Way-Zen" are clearly shown to date back at least to this era.

As Chapter Four, "Uchiyama Gudō - Radical Sōtō Zen Priest" demonstrates, the preceding comments do not mean there was total unanimity within Buddhist (or Zen) ranks with regard to the leadership's pro-government and pro-war positions. On the contrary, the involvement in the High Treason Incident of 1910

of a number of Buddhist priests of various sects, chief of whom was Sōtō Zen priest Uchiyama Gudō, reveal that a small but active number of Buddhists at the grass-roots level were opposed to their leaders' unreserved support for the government's expansionist policies.

As Chapter Five, "Institutional Buddhism's Rejection of Progressive Social Action," reveals, it was the perceived threat posed by these grass-roots "anti-government" and "unpatriotic" Buddhists that caused the Buddhist leadership to become even more enthusiastic and unconditional in their support of the government's policies. Buddhist leaders, it will be shown, were determined that their religion would never again be subject to persecution for being "un-Japanese" or either unwilling or unable to contribute to the development of Imperial Japan.

## Chapters Six Through Nine

Chapters Six through Nine are designed to demonstrate the second major proposition of this dissertation, i.e. that the "Imperial Way-Zen" movement was neither an independent nor isolated entity but, rather, was the Zen version, or subset, of a broader pan-Buddhist movement known as "Imperial Way-Buddhism." It does this, however, within the context of continuing the chronological narrative that was begun in the first four content chapters.

Chapter Six, "The Incorporation of Buddhism into the Japanese War Machine (1913-1930)," reveals the way in which institutional Buddhism became ever more tightly interwoven with, and supportive of, the government's ongoing expansionist policies on the Asian continent, especially in Korea and northern China. This chapter reveals the increasing role played by

leaders of both the Rinzai and Sōtō Zen sects within institutional Buddhism in justifying the identification of Buddhist doctrine and practice with a martial spirit and warfare.

In addition to the pro-war doctrinal interpretations, Chapter Five also includes a discussion of the purpose and scale of the continental "missionary" efforts undertaken by all of Japan's major Buddhist sects, Zen included. What becomes clear is the manner in which these ostensibly religious efforts were in reality merely one aspect of the Japanese government's attempt to win the allegiance and acquiescence to its rule of its colonial subjects. The manner in which the Zen sects readily accepted their role in this pan-Buddhist effort is a harbinger of their later role in the "Imperial Way-Buddhism" movement.

Chapter Seven, "Buddhist Resistance to Japanese Militarism," demonstrates that there was still resistance at the grass-roots level to institutional Buddhism's collaboration with the government's war policies. While the organized resistance was, numerically speaking, stronger than that at the time of the High Treason Incident, it was no more effective than its predecessor.

Once again, its leaders were ostracized by the institutional Buddhist hierarchy and imprisoned by the government, effectively destroying all organized resistance. What little individual resistance that lingered on was, by its very nature, easily suppressed.

Chapter Eight, "The Emergence of 'Imperial Way-Buddhism'," details the emergence in the 1930s of the pan-Buddhist movement by the same name. It describes the doctrinal foundations of this movement which

rested on the twin pillars of the total and complete subservience of the *Buddha Dharma* to the state in the person of the Emperor and the identification of war as an act of Buddhist compassion. According to the authors of this movement, many of whom were Zen-affiliated, Japan had the responsibility as the most advanced, if not the world's only, truly Buddhist country to lead backward and ignorant Asian countries like China out of the darkness in which they were enveloped. If violence and warfare were necessary to accomplish this, *Mahāyāna* Buddhism supported such acts as both just and compassionate.

The final chapter in this group is Chapter Nine, "The Emergence of 'Imperial State-Zen'." While, as will be seen, the title of this chapter is a more historically accurate term than "Imperial Way-Zen," the essence of this movement as a Zen-based subset of the larger



"Imperial Way-Buddhism" movement is clear. That is to say, it shares all of doctrinal positions of the latter movement while stressing some unique attributes such as the identification of Zen doctrine and practice with the warrior ethos.

The identification of Zen as the animating spirit of the traditional Japanese warrior is offered as the normative standard to which Japan's Imperial soldiers should aspire. Thus do men steeped in Zen training like Captain Sugimoto Gorō come to be eulogized as the epitome of the alleged unity between Zen and war. Thus do Zen masters of both the Rinzai and Sōtō sects exert themselves to the utmost to place meditation power (J. *zenjō-riki*/禪定力), coupled with the spirit of self-discipline and self-sacrifice derived from Zen training, at the disposal of the Imperial military, especially its officer corps. In fact, Zen leaders attempt

to inculcate both civilians and soldiers alike with the warrior spirit which they claim as their own.

### **Chapters Ten Through Twelve**

With Japan's surrender in August 1945 both the "Imperial Way-Buddhism" and "Imperial Way-Zen" movements came, formally at least, to an end, for there was no longer any need to support a failed war effort. Thus, the three final chapters may be viewed as a "Postscript" to the dissertation proper. In adding these, the author looks at the question of how Japanese Buddhist leaders, particularly Zen leaders, viewed, in retrospect, their pro-war interpretations of Buddhism and Zen.

Chapter Ten, "The Post-War Japanese Responses to "Imperial-Way Buddhism," examines the responses by a number of Buddhist leaders and sects to the general question of Buddhist war responsibility. As might be

expected, the statements of individual Buddhist leaders run the gamut from those like D.T. Suzuki who blame *Shintō* for having created the concept of a "sacred war," to those who condemn wartime Buddhism for having abandoned what they identify as its pacifist tenets. In this regard, the war-related statements of three other (non-Zen) sects of institutional Buddhism which are included in this chapter are more consistent in that they all express deep regret for their wartime complicity.

Chapter Eleven, "The Post-War Japanese Responses to 'Imperial State-Zen'," begins with an examination of the post-war statements made by a number of Zen Buddhist leaders, all of whom, to some degree or other, were personally involved in Japan's war effort. Not surprisingly, the greater the wartime leadership role of the personalities involved was, the

more they attempt to find "some good" in Japan's war efforts. In terms of an in-depth discussion of Zen and Buddhism's war responsibility, however, it is only Ichikawa Hakugen who attempts to employ the tools of scholarly analysis.

In light of this dissertation's thesis, what is significant about Ichikawa's critique, and that contained within the Sōtō Zen sect's 1992 Declaration of War Responsibility, is that both recognized the historical roots of Buddhist war complicity reaching back at least to the Meiji period. Furthermore, they both recognized Zen's connection to this effort as one part of a larger pan-Buddhist movement. Ichikawa, however, went even further back in Japanese history to search for the origins of Buddhism's subservience to the state, while, at the same time, examining Buddhist doctrines and practices that allegedly promoted that subservience.

In Chapter Twelve, "Issues Awaiting Further Research," the author reiterates that this dissertation represents no more than the first step in attempting to come to grips with Japanese Buddhism's (and Zen's) complicity in Japan's war policies. He suggests areas of research which should, if followed, shed further light on the historical and doctrinal origins of this phenomenon and challenges future students to build on this work.

## CHAPTER 1: METHODOLOGY

### Approach

This dissertation is a historical study of a Buddhist movement in Japan which existed during the 1930s and early 1940s. This movement, known by a variety of names, was most commonly referred to as either "Imperial State-Zen" (J. *Kōkoku-Zen* /皇国禪) or "Imperial Way-Zen" (J. *Kōdō-Zen* /皇道禪).

The historical approach used in this dissertation is based upon the methodological principles of two noted historians, David Hackett Fischer and George Boas. In his book, *Historians' Fallacies*, Fischer describes the historian as "someone (anyone) who asks an open-ended question about past events and answers it with selected facts which are arranged in the form of an explanatory paradigm" (x v).

In formulating the question this historical study seeks to answer, the author accepts the basic premise that the

Buddhist religion in its most basic formulation, i.e. the Four Noble Truths and Holy Eightfold Path, neither condones nor advocates either violence or warfare. The author finds support for this position in the words of the noted Buddhist scholar, Walpola Rahula. In his book, *What The Buddha Taught*, Rahula wrote:

Buddhism advocates and preaches non-violence and peace as its universal message, and does not approve of any kind of violence or destruction of life. According to Buddhism there is nothing that can be called a 'just war' - which is only a false term coined and put into circulation to justify and excuse hatred, cruelty, violence, and massacre (84).

As this thesis will demonstrate, the Buddhist movement in question did in fact approve of both violence and the destruction of life in the name of a Japanese "holy war." Thus, the question this thesis seeks to answer is simply this - how did the Zen Buddhist leaders of this movement justify their support for the war policies of their government during the Pacific War period (1931-45)? That is to say, in

light of the fundamental Buddhist prohibition against the taking of life, how were these leaders able to convince themselves, let alone others, that their support of Japan's war policies was in accordance with the teachings of their faith?

In seeking to answer the preceding question, the author has adopted a narrative approach to his subject matter. In selecting this approach he has been guided once again by Fischer who wrote: "Narration is . . . one of the more common and most characteristically historical forms" (131). Thus, he will address the question at hand by telling a story, for as Fischer continued:

Most historians tell stories in their work. Good historians tell true stories. Great historians, from time to time, tell the best true stories which their topics and problems permit (131).

This author is under no illusion that he is a "great historian." Yet, he does seek to provide the reader with a



clear, straightforward, and understandable explanation of the Zen Buddhist movement in question, especially its doctrinal positions and interpretations which facilitated its support of the Japanese government's war policies. This said, it should be noted that, as Fischer stated: "A story explains how and what - not why" (130).

In any historical study, especially one dealing with a controversial topic, it is tempting for the author to explain not only "what" some person or group of persons did or said, but to speculate "why" they did or said it as well. The author has sought to avoid this slippery slope, for as Fischer noted:

Historians have often used motivational explanations in their work. Almost always, they have used them badly. Problems of motive in academic historiography tend to be hopelessly mired in a sort of simple-minded moralizing which is equally objectionable from an ethical and an empirical point of view (187).

If the author can claim to have avoided the temptation to speculate on the motives of the leaders of the movement in question, he does not claim to have escaped from all the "historians' fallacies" Fischer cautioned against. In spite of the author's best intentions, this dissertation is clearly guilty of having committed a number of such fallacies. Of those of which the author is aware, the following three are of particular note:

1) **The Telescopic Fallacy.** Simple stated, this is the fallacy which "makes a long story short" (147). As has already been noted, this dissertation is fundamentally about the historical relationship of Buddhism and Zen to violence and warfare. Of the more than 2,500 years of Buddhist social history, this dissertation covers less than 100 years, i.e. 1868-1945, in only one nominally Buddhist country. To look at this period in isolation from its historical antecedents is to suggest that such phenomena as "Imperial

Way-Zen" can be explained by the events of the Meiji period and thereafter. At its worst, it is to suggest that these phenomena were no more than momentary aberrations of either modern Japanese Buddhism or its leaders. In any event, this dissertation is only one small part of a very long and complex historical relationship that will require far more research before the 'whole story' can reasonably be said to have emerged.

2). **The Reductive Fallacy.** This is the fallacy which "reduces complexity to simplicity, or diversity to uniformity, in causal explanations" (172). It occurs, as Fischer noted, when "causal explanations . . . are constructed like a single chain and stretched taut across a vast chasm of complexity" (172). In trying to illuminate the emergence of the preceding phenomena it is deceptively easy to look at only those events and persons who appear to be in a direct and unbroken chain of causal precursors.

Historical events, let alone human beings, are far more complex than a dissertation like this one can do justice to. In an attempt to show some of the complexity of the Buddhist response to Japan's military actions, this dissertation contains sections on both Buddhist resisters as well as collaborators. On which ever side of the line these Buddhists found themselves, their motivations were far more complex than can be presented here. Furthermore, their lives and accomplishments should be evaluated on more than simply their relationship to violence and warfare. Due to the focus of this dissertation, however, such a holistic evaluation of these leaders is missing.

**3) The Fallacy of Ethnocentrism.** This is the fallacy "committed by a historian who exaggerates the role of his own group in its interaction with other groups" (226). The author is painfully aware of the ease with which the inhabitants of English-speaking countries condemn Japanese

"militarism" if not "fascism." Thus, simply to identify Buddhist leaders as supporters of Japan's military effort is to identify them as incarnations of "evil." The hidden assumption in all of these definitions is that those who were opposed to Japan's military actions represented truth and justice, freedom and democracy.

Were that the case, how can one explain the fact that at time of the Pacific war's expansion in 1941, numerous Asian (and African) countries had long been reduced to the status of colonies of Western countries. This status was, of course, achieved through the use or threat of violence against the native peoples. The question must be raised as to what role the various religious leaders of these Western countries played in their own country's "imperialistic aggression." Were those Western Christian leaders who either openly or tacitly supported imperialism "evil persons"? Furthermore, is the phrase under which so many

Western wars have been fought, i.e. "For God and Country," an accurate representation of the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth?

As interesting as would it would be to explore questions like the above, they are far beyond the purview of this dissertation and must be put aside for consideration in future studies. As already noted, the author began this dissertation with a question. Yet as Fischer pointed out, while a historian must begin his or her research with a question:

There can be no questioning in a sophisticated sense without hypothesizing, and no systematic testing of hypotheses without the construction of hypothetical models which can be put to the test (3).

In as much as the author is himself a Buddhist, the first hypothesis put forward in the course of his research was particularly attractive. This initial hypothesis assumed that those clerical and academic leaders of the movement in question represented some kind of "radical fringe" who were

not representative of the whole of Japanese Zen leadership at that time. In the course of research into the background of this movement, however, this hypothesis had to be discarded, for, as will be seen, there is overwhelming evidence that the war-condoning principles of this movement enjoyed the overwhelming, even total, support of the clerical and academic leadership of Japan's two major Zen sects, i.e. the Rinzai and Sōtō sects.<sup>1</sup>

The second hypothesis tested was that the movement in question was still in some sense a "radical fringe" movement in that its war-condoning policies were limited to the two major Zen sects alone. That is to say, that the Zen tradition in Japan, with its long historical connection to the premodern Japanese warrior class, had in some way, or at some time, departed from the teachings of the other major Japanese Buddhist sects of the day. Once again this hypothesis had to be abandoned in the light of massive

evidence which indicated that the leadership of all of Japan's major Buddhist sects condoned their government's war policies.

Was, then, the support for Japan's war policies exhibited by a whole range of Japanese Buddhist leaders a phenomenon limited to the Pacific War period alone? Once again, the author's research forced him to disavow this hypothesis, for he found firm evidence that the roots of the Buddhist leadership's support for policies of war reached back at least as far as the Meiji period (1868-1912) and the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95. There is also evidence which suggests that the roots of this phenomenon reach even further back in history, though an investigation of this question is beyond the confines of this dissertation.

With this background in mind, the author is now ready to state the thesis of this dissertation. Namely, that the 1930s phenomenon known as "Imperial Way-Zen" (et. al.)



was in the first instance representative of a broad, even unanimous, base of support for Japan's war policies not merely by the clerical and academic leaders of the Zen tradition itself, but by the leadership of all of Japan's traditional Buddhist sects. In other words, the "Imperial Way-Zen" movement was neither an independent nor isolated entity but, rather, was the Zen version, or subset, of a broader pan-Buddhist movement known as "Imperial Way-Buddhism" (J. *Kōdō-Bukkyō*/ 皇道仏教). Furthermore, the roots of both movements may be clearly traced to at least Japan's Meiji period and the Buddhist leadership's reactions to both the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars.

In asserting the above thesis, it is necessary for this dissertation to investigate not only the "Imperial Way-Zen" movement itself but the larger pan-Buddhist movement, i.e. "Imperial Way-Buddhism," of which it was a part. Furthermore, it is equally necessary to investigate the

modern historical roots of these movements in Japan's Meiji period. As Fischer has observed, "Narrative involves the idea of connectedness among relevant events" (162).

It would take many volumes to write a complete history of all the events associated with "Imperial Way-Zen" let alone the larger movement of which it was a part. Thus, the "relevant" events for this dissertation are those which help to answer the question posed at the beginning of this section, i.e. how did the Zen Buddhist leaders of this movement justify their support for the war policies of their government during the Pacific War period (1931-45)?

The focus of this dissertation, then, is on the ideas espoused by the leaders of the two movements in question with added reference to their modern historical precedents. In that sense this dissertation may be described as "a history of ideas." Here the phrase "a history of ideas" is taken to mean, as per George Boas' definition, "the history of beliefs,

assertions of either fact or policy" (20). Boas further pointed out that ideas may also be "plans of action" (7). That is to say, "they are ideas of something that is intended, which, it is hoped, will be realized in the future. They thus are allied to ideas of policy" (7).

Certainly the ideas expressed by Buddhist/Zen leaders during Japan's long modern period of recurring wars may well be viewed as ideas of "intent" and "hope" to be "realized in the future." Furthermore, this dissertation will demonstrate that the ideas of these leaders were closely "allied to ideas of policy," i.e. government war policies. For this reason their ideas were necessarily both descriptive and normative in content.

The author is further indebted to Professor Boas for two additional comments. The first of these is as follows.

It is clear that before one can write the history of an idea one must disentangle it from all the ambiguities that it has acquired in the course of time. One must

expect to find it appearing in contexts that vary from age to age. One must not be puzzled to find it used as a basis for praise and blame (22).

In the author's opinion, it would be appropriate to add the following sentence to the above: "Nor should one be puzzled to find it used as a basis for distinguishing good from evil, or right from wrong."

In appreciation of Boas' comments, the author has begun this dissertation with a lengthy introduction to those political and societal pressures in modern Japan which aided in the formation of the then dominant ideas concerning the relationship of Buddhism/Zen/religion and warfare. As the final portions of the dissertation make clear, however, this exercise in "disentangle[ment]" could (and ideally should) have started far earlier than the beginning of the Meiji Restoration of 1868. As already noted, the relationship between Buddhism, violence and warfare has a very long history, spanning some 2,500 years. Limitations of space,

let alone the author's expertise, simply make it impossible to disentangle all that needs disentangling. It is to be hoped, however, that it represents at least the first step in the process.

A second reason underlining the lengthy, and rather broad, introduction is, as stated in the dissertation's thesis, the assertion that the ideas expressed by Zen leaders of the 1930s and 40s were, on the whole, not unique to that school of Buddhism. The dissertation's narrative will show that while there may have been certain unique aspects to the ideas expressed by Zen leaders of that era, they were, in their broadest formulations, very similar to those expressed by the leaders of institutional Buddhism as a whole.

In the author's opinion, there has long been a tendency in some circles of Buddhist scholarship, especially in the West, to see Zen Buddhism as somehow having transcended

the limitations of time and place, or having transcended questions of moral choice and responsibility. This dissertation makes it clear that modern Zen leaders have transcended none of these things.

The author is also indebted to Boas for the following comment:

The Olympian objectivity which would be the ideal for the historian of ideas is seldom achieved. Indeed there is ground for thinking that it cannot be achieved, for if one is dealing with an idea that has stirred up men's souls, one is bound to have taken sides, to have shared to some extent in the emotions stimulated (23).

The ideas expressed by Zen/Buddhist leaders in this dissertation have clearly "stirred up men's souls." To give but one example, even now the question of moral, let alone legal, responsibility for Japan's wartime actions continues to be a source of deep and often bitter dissension both inside and outside Japan, even now - fifty years after the war's conclusion. The 1993 "Statement of Repentance,"

issued by the headquarters of the Sōtō Zen sect and introduced later, is but one example of the ongoing "stirring up" going on within Japanese Buddhist circles.

The author confesses that he, too, has had his "soul stirred" by the ideas expressed in this dissertation. In as much as he is an ordained Sōtō Zen Buddhist priest within the *Mahāyāna* school of Buddhism, his personal faith is rooted not only in the Four Noble Truths and Holy Eightfold Path of fundamental Buddhist doctrine, but also in the *Mahāyāna* ideas of *Bodhisattvahood* as expressed in the "Four *Bodhisattva* Vows."<sup>2</sup> For the author, the essence of Zen Buddhism is expressed in Zen Master Dōgen's (J. 道元, 1200-53) famous dictum from his masterwork, the *Shōbōgenzō* (J. 正法眼藏). He wrote:

To study the Way is to study the self,  
To study the self is to forget the self.  
To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things.  
To be enlightened by all things is to remove the  
barriers between one's self and others (Yokoi 5).

In the above formulations of Buddhism, the author finds nothing which would support Buddhism's endorsement of either warfare or violence. In fact, as mentioned at the outset of this section, basic Buddhist doctrine points to the very opposite position. Thus, the author must confess to a deep personal abhorrence of the war-condoning doctrinal interpretations issued by Japan's modern Buddhist leaders up through 1945. Inevitably, then, the question of possible personal bias raises its ugly head.

Recognizing the possibility of such bias infecting this dissertation, the author has taken the somewhat unusual step of placing extended quotations from the Buddhist leaders in question in the dissertation proper. This is done in the first instance to assure the reader that the quotation has not been taken out of context. As Fischer has stated,



The meaning of any empirical statement depends upon the context from which it is taken. No historical statement-in-evidence floats freely outside of time and space (63).

Secondly, as stated above, the author does accept a responsibility to explain to the reader exactly how the Buddhist leaders in question justified their support for Japan's war policies. By allowing them to speak at length, in their own words (in translation), the author also hopes to avoid what Fischer identified as the "historian's fallacy," i.e. "the error of assuming that a man who has a given historical experience knows it, when he has it, to be all that a historian would know it to be, with the advantage of historical perspective" (209). As author, it would have been a simple exercise to offer a personal interpretation, and/or summary, of the alleged meaning of the remarks of the Buddhist leaders in question. Had he done so, however,

what guarantee would the reader have that such interpretations or summaries were valid?

A further issue in this regard was a statement made to the author in 1971 by Professor Yokoi Kakudō (横井覚道, d. 1972) a professor of Buddhist Studies at Komazawa University. He stated, "Historical phenomena, especially those charged with emotion, cannot be adequately judged until a hundred years, at least, has elapsed after the event." The truth of this statement would seem to be born out, as mentioned above, by the ongoing inability of both the lay and scholarly communities to come to anything approaching a unified judgement of the Pacific War, let alone W.W.II as a whole. At this point in time, the author believes no one is better qualified to interpret and/or judge the remarks of the Buddhist leaders in question than the reader.

In addition to the lengthy quotations included in this dissertation, the reader will also find quotations from a

wide variety of Buddhist leaders, both within and without the Zen tradition, over a period spanning more than one hundred years. These wide ranging quotes are offered as evidence for the author's thesis concerning the historical depth and pan-Buddhist breadth of the support offered by Japan's Buddhist leaders for their nation's war policies from the Meiji period up through 1945. In the interest of both historical accuracy and fairness, however, reference is also made to those pockets of resistance to war that did exist, as least momentarily, among small groups of lay and clerical Buddhists. The existence of these short-lived, peripheral groups, however, in no way weakens the thesis concerning the war-condoning thought and actions of Buddhism's leadership at the time. If anything, the very weakness of the Buddhist voices of opposition serves to underscore the near, if not total, war-condoning unanimity of the then Buddhist leadership.

## Orthographic Comments

On a more pragmatic note, the reader should be aware that specialized Buddhist and Japanese terminology has been used only to a limited degree, when it seemed important for understanding. Japanese names are written in the traditional Japanese way, family name first and personal name last. Further, in line with standard practice, all Japanese words, including family and personal names, have been romanized with a macron indicating a long vowel, e.g. Sōen. The only exceptions to this are those few words, e.g. Tokyo, that are best known in English writing without this sign.

Because so many of the persons described in this dissertation are Buddhist priests, the author has chosen not to identify each and every one with such titles as "Reverend" or "Venerable." However, when their priestly status is relevant, it will be identified in the text.

Furthermore, after having been introduced for the first time, they are normally identified in the text by only their priestly name, rather than their family name. Thus, someone like Ōmori Zenkai becomes simply Zenkai after he has been introduced the first time. On the other hand, a person known to have no priestly status, e.g. Tōjō Hideki, will become Tōjō after the first reference.

With regard to Chinese terms, the modern *pinyin* romanization has been used throughout except for those few terms, e.g. *Ch'an*, that are more commonly known to English readers in the Wade-Giles system of romanization. Sanskrit terms have been transliterated according to the standard system used by Indologists, with two exceptions for those diacritic marks that were not in the author's word-processing software, i.e. "sh" is used instead of "s," e.g. Shākyamuni, and the dot under "m" has been added manually, e.g. *Samgha*.

## Acknowledgements

In his 1991 book *The Japanese Art of War*, the noted Buddhist scholar and translator, Thomas Cleary, makes the following observation:

It may seem odd . . . that in spite of the widely acknowledged influence of Zen on Japanese culture and personality, virtually no critical study of Zen in modern Japan has ever been made (116).

The author of this dissertation believes that Cleary was, and remains, correct in his assessment, especially when it comes to materials available in English. This said, there have been, of late, partial attempts to address this problem. These include such works as Christopher Ives' *Zen Awakening and Society*, published in 1992, and Winston King's *Zen and the Way of the Sword*, published in 1993. Neither of these books, however, claims to be a critical study of modern Zen.

The recently released work, *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School & the Question of Nationalism*, edited by James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo, does touch on relevant issues in that it is a collection of some fifteen articles focusing on the relationship between the Zen-influenced, but independent, Kyoto School of Philosophy and Japanese nationalism. Its narrow focus, however, means that it, too, is not a general critical study of the type Cleary discussed.

The closest thing approaching the type of critical work Cleary has in mind is, in fact, not a book on Zen at all. It was written by James Keetalar and published in 1990 under the title, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan - Buddhism and its Persecution*. As its title suggests, it is pan-Buddhist in nature. It does, however, contain very valuable information on early modern Zen history during the Meiji period (1868-1912). This said, its focus is on the early years of the Meiji period when all of institutional Buddhism, including the Zen

sects, was subject to quasi-governmental suppression. In spite of its relatively narrow focus, it has been of major assistance to the early parts of this dissertation. This assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

The author would also be remiss if he did not mention an article by Robert Sharf which appeared in 1993 in the journal, *History of Religions*. Entitled, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," Sharf focused on the roles of Suzuki Daisetz and the Kyoto School of Philosophy in developing and expressing modern Japanese nationalism, especially to the West. Although I find his study historically limited, I am nevertheless indebted to him for a number of insights which might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Returning briefly to Cleary, he also goes on to explain why, at least in his mind, these critical studies on modern Zen have not been done. He writes:



A review of academic and sectarian work on Zen Buddhism quickly brings to light one central fact: that the stock of direct information on this subject is extremely limited and fragmentary. This information gap, furthermore, does not exist only in the realm of the classics, but even in what can be learned about modern Japanese Zen from easily accessible sources where the language barrier is considerably less than that presented by the classics. Some reasons for this are not far to seek, being visible in the narrow scope of sectarian and academic specializations (116).

With regard to these comments, the author can attest from personal experience as to the extremely limited and fragmentary nature of the direct information available. Part of this is due to the nature of Japan's modern history. That is to say, masses of materials were lost due to the fiery conflagrations in which Japan's major cities were engulfed as a result of wartime bombings. Added to this is the fact that due to wartime shortages there was not only a shortage of written materials, but what was printed was done so on paper of inferior quality that simply disintegrated over the intervening years.

Over and beyond the above was the ever present reality of government censorship. As this dissertation will demonstrate, the Japanese police were ever ready, beginning as early as the Meiji period, to ban or destroy those writings by any organization, Buddhist included, that did not adhere to or promote the government's policies. Thus, the written record that does exist is, for the most part, a reflection of what was politically acceptable. In the postwar years it was exactly this political correctness that became a source of embarrassment to some Buddhist organizations, and once again materials were destroyed.

Despite this background, the author of this dissertation has been fortunate in a number of ways. The first is that he had the opportunity over a period spanning some twenty-five years to search for the necessary background materials, especially in the second-hand Buddhist-oriented bookstores of Tokyo's Kanda district. Secondly, he was

given generous access to the library collections at both Komazawa University (affiliated with the Sōtō Zen sect) and Hanazono University (affiliated with the Rinzai Zen sect). In the case of the Sōtō sect, this included access to a book that had been banned by the sect's headquarters as late as 1993.

By far the greatest source of assistance to the author has been that provided both directly and indirectly by the late Professor Ichikawa Hakugen of Hanazono University. While Prof. Ichikawa was yet alive, the author had the opportunity to personally discuss with him many of the issues covered in this dissertation. More than any other single individual in Japan, before or since, he had amassed a repository of materials dealing with Buddhist - State relations in general, and Zen - State relations in particular, from as early as the Tokugawa period.

Before his death Prof. Ichikawa managed to publish a great deal of the material he had gathered over the years. This material in turn has only recently been reprinted in the form of his collected works. As the latter part of this dissertation will demonstrate, Prof. Ichikawa was much more than just a cataloguer of information. He neither avoided making normative judgements when he believed they were called for nor failed to raise thoughtful and provocative questions about Zen's past and future. This dissertation would have been much more difficult, if not impossible, without Prof. Ichikawa's tangible and intangible contributions, both in life and in death.

This dissertation concerns an era which is difficult to examine; for, in hindsight, the foibles of the principals are so glaringly visible. Yet, the author recognizes that this statement may well be true for any era. That is to say, those who come later will always be left to wonder how

their predecessors could have possibly believed and acted as they did. In the end one can only express the hope that we are willing to learn from the past, while honestly acknowledging our own present-day potential for moral failure.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>According to Dale Saunder's book, *Buddhism in Japan*, published in 1964, the Sōtō Zen school had nearly 15,000 temples populated by close to 16,000 priests and more than 6.7 million adherents. By comparison, the Rinzai sect, divided into eight major sub-sects, had a total of approximately 5,000 temples with nearly the same number of priests and 2.2 million adherents. Finally the Ōbaku sect had only just over 500 temples with some 700 priests and 100,000 adherents. Although this latter sect is not specifically covered in this dissertation, there is no evidence to suggest that it acted any differently towards the Japanese government's war policies than its larger cousins (297-98).

<sup>2</sup>The four *Bodhisattva* Vows are as follows:

1. Although sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them all.

2. Although the passions are endless, I vow to uproot them all.
3. Although the entrances to the *Dharma* are manifold, I vow to master them all.
4. Although nothing can surpass the Way of the *Buddha*, I vow to realize it.

## CHAPTER 2: THE ATTEMPTED SUPPRESSION OF BUDDHISM

### Introduction

*Every religion seeks to proclaim a truth which transcends the world, but is enmeshed in the very world it desires to transcend. Every religion seeks to remake the world in its own image, but it is always to some extent remade in the image of the world. This is the tragedy of religion. (Bellah 196)*

Buddhism is a religion which has a history of approximately 1500 years in Japan, having first been introduced from Korea in the middle of the sixth century. By the Tokugawa era (1600-1867), Buddhism had become "the established religion of the State" (Anesaki 260). This meant that each and every household in the country was required to affiliate itself with one or another nearby Buddhist temple. The result was an explosive growth of Buddhist temples, from only 13,037 temples during the



Kamakura period (1185-1333) to 469,934 during the Tokugawa (Kitagawa 164).

There were, however, a number of hidden costs associated with Buddhism's establishment as a state religion. First of all, as Bellah has pointed out, "this [mandatory temple affiliation] implicated a large part of the Buddhist clergy in the social structure of the Tokugawa state, and made membership in a sect a matter of political obligation rather than religious conviction" (51). This is hardly surprising since the original catalyst for establishing Buddhism as a *de facto* state religion in the first place was the Tokugawa regime's determination to both expel Christianity from Japan and insure that indigenous religious institutions, like all other institutions in society, were firmly under its control.

Institutional Buddhism was itself brought under control by the government through such policies as dividing the

powerful Shin (True Pure Land) sect into two branches, popularly known as the Nishi Honganji and Higashi Honganji after their respective head temples. The Tokugawa regime further made sure that every temple in the land, no matter how humble, was made subservient to a higher grade temple in a pyramidal fashion, with an all powerful central temple (*honzan*/本山) at the top. While sectarian differences were allowed, each sect was held responsible for the actions of both its lay and clerical adherents.

A second, and perhaps more severe, hidden cost to institutional Buddhism was what Bellah has described as the "general lethargy and uncreativity of Buddhism in the Tokugawa period" (51). Anesaki was even less flattering when he wrote: "The majority of the Buddhist clergy were obedient servants of the Government, and in the long period of peace they gradually became lazy, or else effeminate intriguers" (260).

This same theme was further developed by Kitagawa when he pointed out: "While some of the clergy, living in richly endowed temples, turned their energy to learning, many took advantage of their semi-political prerogatives to suppress their helpless parishioners" (165). After describing some of these corrupt priestly activities, Kitagawa goes on to note, somewhat ominously, "the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of established Buddhism inevitably brought criticism and rebellion from within and without" (166). Clearly the day of reckoning for Buddhism was approaching.

### **Government Measures Directed Towards Buddhism**

On January 3, 1868 the young Emperor Meiji issued a proclamation announcing that he was resuming the reins of government though, as Hugh Borton has pointed out, "only very limited power had actually been restored to the throne" (80). Nevertheless, a scant three months later, on April 6,

1868, the Emperor promulgated the Charter Oath, a document consisting of five articles which clearly expressed the anti-feudal aspirations of the new government.

The Charter Oath states:

1. Councils widely convoked shall be established, and all affairs of State decided by public discussion.
2. All measures, governmental and social, shall be conducted by the united efforts of the governing and the governed.
3. The unity of the Imperial and the feudal governments shall be achieved; all the people, even the meanest, shall be given full opportunities for their aspirations and activities.
4. All absurd usages of the old regime shall be abolished and all measures conducted in conformity with the righteous way of heaven and earth.
5. Knowledge shall be sought for all over the world, and thus shall be promoted the imperial polity (Anesaki 331).

Though the preceding seems, as far as Buddhism is concerned, to be innocuous in its content, Article 4 was a harbinger of the impending storm. What, exactly, were the "absurd usages of the old regime" that were to be "abolished"?

The answer was not long in coming, for only a few days later the first of the "Separation Edicts" (*shinbutsu hanzen-rei*/神仏判然令), designed to separate Buddhism from *Shintō*, were issued by a newly established governmental bureau known as the Office of Rites (神祇局). This first edict stated that all Buddhist clerics of any type were to be removed from *Shintō* shrines throughout the nation. Henceforth, only bona fide *Shintō* priests were to allowed to carry out administrative duties related to shrines.

In a second edict, issued less than two weeks after the first, the use of Buddhist names for *Shintō* deities (*kami* / 神) was prohibited. Not only that, Buddhist statuary could no longer be used to represent *Shintō* deities, or, for that matter, even be present in a shrine compound. Whatever their original intent may have been, these edicts were often interpreted at the local and regional levels as meaning

that anything having to do with Buddhism could and should be destroyed.

In his highly detailed, and well-researched book on this period, *Of Heretics And Martyrs In Meiji Japan*, James Ketelaar points out that these separation edicts "necessarily included as an integral part of their formulation a direct attack on Buddhism" (9). This is because, first of all, nearly every member of the Office of Rites was an active proponent of "National Learning" (国学). This school of thought taught that while both the Japanese nation and throne were of divine origin, this origin had been obscured and even sullied by foreign accretions and influences, especially those coming from China. Adherents of this school believed one of the first and most important jobs of the new government was to cleanse the nation of these foreign accretions, Buddhism first and foremost.

Just how effective this "cleansing" was can be seen in Ketelaar's reference to the closing of over 40,000 temples nationally, coupled with the destruction of countless temple artifacts and the forced laicization of thousands of priests (7). Once again, however, it should be noted that the enforcement (and interpretation) of the Separation Edicts was, in general, left up to the regional authorities. Hence, those areas where there was the greatest support for National Learning among local and regional officialdom were also those areas where the greatest destruction occurred.

In the former Satsuma domain (present-day Kagoshima, southern Miyazaki, and Okinawa), whose leadership had played a leading role in the Restoration movement, Buddhism had almost disappeared by the end of 1869. That is to say, approximately 4,500 Buddhist temples and halls had been eliminated (Ketelaar 65). The priests housed in these temples were returned to lay life, with (former)

priests between the ages of eighteen to forty-five being immediately drafted into the newly formed Imperial Army. Those over forty-five were sent to become teachers in domainal schools while those under eighteen were sent back to their families (Ketelaar 57).

### **Institutional Buddhism's Response**

In the face of these very real threats to its continued existence, it did not take some elements of institutional Buddhism long to initiate a series of countermeasures. One of the first of these was undertaken primarily by the Higashi Honganji and Nishi Honganji branches of the Shin sect. On the surface, at least, it was a rather surprising measure, i.e. lending substantial amounts of money to the then cash-starved Meiji government. As Ketelaar has noted, however, these two branches "hoped to bring about a relation with the government that would be less hampered by bannings and restrictions" (71).



The same two branches also took the lead in the summer of 1868 in forming the Alliance of United [Buddhist] Sects for Ethical Standards (*Shoshū Dōtoku Kaimei*/諸宗道德会盟). This was an unprecedented action for institutional Buddhism since under the previous Tokugawa regime all Buddhist trans-sectarian organizations had been banned. This new organization pledged itself, first of all, to work for the unity of Imperial Law (*Raja Dharma*/王法) and Buddhist Law (*Buddha Dharma*/仏法). Secondly, it called for Christianity to be not only denounced, but expelled from Japan.

As Kishimoto pointed out in his book, *Japanese Religion in the Meiji Era*, Buddhist leaders "planned to revive their faith by aligning themselves with the increasing nationalistic sentiment" (146). They perceived that one way of demonstrating their usefulness to the nation's new nationalist-inclined leaders was to support an anti-Christian

campaign which came to be known as *hajakensei* (i.e. refuting evil [Christianity] and exalting righteousness [破邪顯正]).

As early as September 17, 1868 the new Ministry of State responded to the above noted "positive actions" on the part of Buddhist leaders by sending a private communique directly to the Higashi Honganji and Nishi Honganji branches of the Shin sect. Ketelaar points out that this letter contained a condemnation of those members of the Imperial court who wrongfully, and in contradiction to Emperor Meiji's will, were persecuting Buddhism. The letter further notes, that in so doing, these "foul mouthed rebels... antagonize the general populace" (13).

Just how antagonized the general populace had become is shown by the strong protest actions that arose in opposition to the repressive, anti-Buddhist measures of local authorities. These protests started in Toyama in late 1870, and were followed by two riots in Mikawa (present

Aichi prefecture) and Ise (present Mie prefecture) in 1871. In each of the following two years there were also two major protests in widely scattered parts of the country.

Kitagawa points out that the 1873 protests in three counties of Echizen (present Fukui prefecture), "developed into a large-scale peasant revolt, which had to be quelled by government troops" (226). Ketelaar maintains that it was these protests which finally forced the central government, out of their "deep fear of the power of an enraged peasant population," to pay serious attention to the plight of Buddhists (7). Anesaki comments on this period by saying, "some [members of the Government) realized that an entire suppression of Buddhism was neither desirable nor possible" (335). A solution had to be found.

## Resolution of the Conflict

### The First Attempt

The first major change in the Meiji government's policy toward Buddhism came in early 1872. It was at this time that what was then known as the Ministry of Rites (神祇官) was transformed into the Ministry of Doctrine (教部省). This new ministry was given administrative responsibility for such things as the building or closing of both *Shintō* shrines and Buddhist temples, the approval of all priestly ranks and privileges, etc. By far its most important function, however, was to propagate the "Great Teaching" (*daikyō*/大教) which had been developed the previous year. Anesaki identifies the three principles of this teaching as follows:

1. The principles of reverence for the (national) Deities and of patriotism shall be observed.
2. The heavenly Reason and the Way of Humanity shall be promulgated.
3. The Throne shall be revered and the authorities obeyed. (335).

Charged with promulgating these principles, the Ministry of Doctrine created the position of Doctrinal Instructor (*Kyōdōshoku*/教導職). These Instructors were to operate through a nation-wide network of Teaching Academies (*Kyōin*/教院) which would be established in both Buddhist temples and *Shintō* shrines. The significance to Buddhism of this development is that for the first time Buddhist priests were given permission to serve in this State-sponsored position, together, of course, with *Shintō* priests and scholars of "National Learning."

Ketelaar pointed out that "the creation of the position of [Doctrinal] Instructor was a thinly veiled attempt by the state to create, in fact, a *de facto* state priesthood; those uncertified by the state were barred from any public lecturing or ceremonial duties, as well as from residence in any shrine or temple." Nevertheless, as Yoshida commented: "Buddhists . . . eagerly took advantage of this new opportunity

as a way of escaping from their miserable condition" (*Bukkyōshi* 83).

How successful Buddhists were in taking advantage of this opportunity can be seen in the fact that eventually more than 81,000 of a total of some 103,000 officially recognized Doctrinal Instructors were Buddhist priests. Shin-sect affiliated priests numbered nearly 25,000 and were the largest single group (Ketelaar 105).

Inclusion into a new state religion, however, carried a heavy price for Buddhists, for this new state religion was clearly *Shintō* inspired and controlled. Thus, all Doctrinal Instructors were expected to wear *Shintō* robes, recite *Shintō* prayers, and perform *Shintō* rituals. Further, although the famous Pure Land sect temple of Zōjōji (増上寺) in Tokyo was chosen as the administrative center, i.e. the Great Teaching Academy, for the national doctrine system, it was required to be extensively renovated for its new role.

Zōjōji's 'renovation' included replacing the statute of *Buddha Amida* on the main altar with four *Shintō* deities (*kami*/ 神) and building a *Shintō* gate (*torii*/鳥居) at the entrance to the temple. Yoshida noted that the Buddhist leadership was so anxious to support this new scheme that they even arranged to have their subordinate temples pay the renovation costs (*Bukkyōshi* 87-88).

In spite of this auspicious beginning, however, Kitagawa pointed out that "inevitably, friction arose between Buddhist and *Shintō* elements [within the national doctrine system] and as the anti-Buddhist movement began to subside the Buddhist leaders aspired to be emancipated from *Shintō* domination" (229).

An additional cause of this friction was an announcement made on April 25, 1872 by the Ministry of State (太政官). This announcement, known as Order No. 133, stated that Buddhist priests could, if they so desired, eat meat, get

married, grow their hair long, or wear ordinary clothing. Although this decision neither prohibited anything, nor ordered anything, it was seen by many Buddhist leaders as another attack on Buddhism. They understood, as Ketelaar made clear, that Order No. 133 represented an extension of the earlier separation of *Shintō* and Buddhism, that is to say, "to include the separation of Buddhism from the state itself" (6).

The strong Buddhist opposition to this measure included numerous sectarian protest meetings and petitions criticizing the Ministry's decision, at least one of which was signed by over two hundred Buddhist priests. Some angry priests even went directly to the Ministry's offices to express their opposition. Ironically, as Richard Jaffe has noted, Order No. 133 was one directive that had been taken at the request of a Buddhist, the influential *Sōtō* Zen sect priest *Ōtori Sessō* (鴻雲爪/1814-1904) (471).



Ōtori was in a unique position to make his views known since, at the time the new Ministry of Doctrine was created, he had been asked to serve as a representative of Buddhist clerics (though he himself was required to return to lay life during the duration of his government service). Ōtori's overall goal was the ending of the government's anti-Buddhist policies. Like his Buddhist contemporaries he believed that the best way of achieving this goal was to demonstrate Buddhism's usefulness to the state, specifically through the promulgation of the Great Teaching.

Ōtori recognized that because, then current regulations to the contrary notwithstanding, a large number of Buddhist priests were already married (and therefore technically, at least, criminals) they were in no position to become either Doctrinal Instructors or effectively fight Christianity. In his mind, "by lifting the ban against marriage [et. al.], the Buddhist clergy would be free to render their services to

the nation" (Jaffe 473). Protests or not, Ōtori was successful in this reform effort, and the new law remained.

In light of their defeat, Buddhist leaders came to realize that they had to free themselves not only from *Shintō* control but government control as well. Once again the Shin sect played a leading role. It was leaders of this sect, particularly in the person of Shimaji Mokurai (島地默雷/1838-1911), who led the movement for change. Mokurai was particularly well suited to the challenge, not least of all because he had personally led troops in support of the Restoration movement.

As early as 1872, Shimaji wrote an essay while in Paris critical of the three principles contained in the Great Teaching. His basic position was that there was a fundamental difference between governance (*sei*/政) and religion (*kyō*/教). As Ketelaar has written, it was this essay that "sparked

what came to be called the movement for the Separation of Religion and Rule *seikyō bunri* / 政教分離)" (125).

It would be some years before Shimaji and those who agreed with him would have a discernable impact on the Ministry of Doctrine. Eventually, however, at the beginning of 1875, "the Shin (True Pure Land) sects of Buddhism were permitted to leave the Great Doctrine movement, and shortly afterward the entire institution of the Great Doctrine itself was abolished" (Kitagawa 229). A new solution had to be found.

## **The Second Attempt**

The Buddhists were not the only religious group to benefit from changing government policy. As Kitagawa noted, as early as 1871 a diplomatic mission sent to the West, headed by Senior Minister Iwakura Tomomi (1825-83), had recommended that if Japan were to successfully revise

its treaties with the Western powers it would have to adopt a policy of religious freedom (212).

The Western powers were, of course, most concerned about the ongoing prohibition of Christianity in Japan. Thus did the government, in 1873, reluctantly abolish this prohibition, resulting in a rapid increase in the numbers of both Western Christian missions and missionaries entering the country. Even as they continued their own struggle to free themselves from government control, however, many Buddhist leaders took this occasion to renew and deepen their earlier attacks against Christianity. In so doing, they allied themselves with *Shintō*, Confucian and other nationalist leaders (Kitagawa 229).

Shintoists, too, were undergoing changes at this time. As Ketelaar mentions, *Shintō*'s strongest supporters, i.e. the proponents of National Learning, had demonstrated to Meiji political leaders that they were "too religious to rule"

(130). This, in turn, led to a reduction in their political power as evidenced by the 1872 changes in the government's religious policy toward Buddhism. Yet, key members of the government were still dedicated to the proposition that one way or another the emperor system, as an "immanent theocracy" with roots in the ancient state, should be used to legitimate the new government. The question was, in the face of earlier failures, how could this be accomplished?

Part of the answer came in 1882 when the government 'divided' *Shintō* into two parts, one part consisting of cultic (Emperor-related) practices and the other so-called 'religious' practices. While the religious side of *Shintō*, i.e. Sect *Shintō* (*Kyōha Shintō*/ 教派神道), received nothing from the government, the cultic side of *Shintō*, which came to be known as "State *Shintō*" (国家[的]神道), received both

financial subsidies and various other governmental privileges.

The government maintained this policy was justified because cultic practices relating to the Emperor were patriotic in nature, not religious. Even today there are some Japanese Buddhist scholars who support this position. Professor Shibata Dōken of Sōtō Zen sect-affiliated Komazawa University, for example, maintains that "given the fact that Japan is a country consisting of a unitary people, with shared customs and mores, the assertion that [State] *Shintō* was not a religion can be sanctioned, at least to some degree" (195).

Kitagawa, however, asserted that "'State *Shintō*' was essentially a newly concocted religion of ethnocentric nationalism" (213). In a similar vein, Helen Hardacre provided a more detailed description. She referred to:

State Shinto as a systemic phenomenon that encompassed government support of and regulation of shrines, the emperor's sacerdotal roles, state creation and sponsorship of Shinto rites, construction of Shinto shrines in Japan and in overseas colonies, education for schoolchildren in Shinto mythology plus their compulsory participation in Shinto rituals, and persecution of other religious groups on the grounds of their exhibiting disrespect for some aspect of authorized mythology (6).

Irrespective of how it is evaluated, it is clear that the creation of State *Shintō* served as a mechanism to facilitate the government's recognition of what Ketelaar termed, "a necessary ideological plurality" within Japanese society (131). That is to say, with a powerful 'non-religious' legitimization of the new order in hand, the leaders of the Meiji government could now address the question of 'religious freedom,' something which was implied in the call by Shimaji and others for the Separation of Religion and Rule.

The final, formal resolution of the religious question appeared in the Meiji Constitution of 1889. Chapter Two, Article Twenty-Eight read as follows: "Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief" (Italics mine) (Matsunami 136). It appeared that "within limits" Buddhism, Christianity et. al. would now be free of government interference or suppression. As will be seen in the next chapter, however, appearances can indeed be deceiving.



## CHAPTER 3: EARLY BUDDHIST SOCIAL FERMENT

### Introduction

With regard to Article Twenty-Eight of the Meiji Constitution, Ketelaar gave this harsh assessment: "[It] in fact guarantees nothing; during this period there is, I suggest, a prominent emphasis on knowledge over belief, duty over faith, and education over religion" (132). Kitagawa is only somewhat less harsh when he stated that the Meiji government had given religious freedom a "nominal guarantee" (213).

Kitagawa went on to explain that in having created an artificial concept called "State *Shintō*" and then identifying it as a cult of national morality and patriotism, applicable to all religions, the Meiji government's religious policy was "nothing but an ingenious (and dangerous) attempt at superimposing 'immanent theocracy' on the constitutional guarantees of religious freedom" (213).

Ketelaar pointed out that there were still many influential people both within and without government who believed, as did Professor Inoue Tetsujirō (井上哲次郎/1855-1944) of Tokyo University, that "religion *by its very nature* is 'prejudicial to peace and order,' and those who practice it will *necessarily* be 'antagonistic to their duties as subjects" (132). Yoshida added that it was Inoue's writings which laid the philosophical groundwork for the Meiji government's 1890 "Imperial Rescript on Education" (*Kyōiku chokugo*/教育勅語), a document which proclaimed loyalty to the Throne and filial piety to be the cardinal virtues to which all Imperial subjects should adhere (*Bukkyō shakaishi* 178).

It was under these circumstances that Japanese Buddhists, with their newly won religious freedom, limited though it was, attempted to develop what came to be known by the late 1880s as "New Buddhism" (*shin bukkyō*/新仏教).

New Buddhism was designed to answer the anti-Buddhist critique of the early and middle years of the Meiji period. That is to say, it set out in the first instance to show that priests and temples could make a valuable contribution to the nation's social and economic life. Further, although it was "foreign-born," Buddhism could still effectively promote loyalty to the Throne, patriotism, and national unity. And lastly, though sometimes masked in mythological terminology, its basic doctrines were not mere "superstition" but, on the contrary, were fully compatible with Western science and technology, then being so rapidly introduced into the country.

Bearing this in mind, the following will serve as a brief introduction to this New Buddhism, a movement Notto Thelle has compared with the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation of Christianity (195). To the extent that this analogy is valid, however, it should be noted that many of

the activists in this movement were moderate reformers loyal to their respective sects, though there were others whose radical views would eventually lead them to break with traditional institutional Buddhism.

### **Buddhist Responses to the West**

The early Meiji period critique of Christianity, which continued on through the end of the era, may be considered one of institutional Buddhism's first responses to the West. It was, however, certainly not the only response. For example, reference has already been made to Shimaji Mokurai's visit to the West in 1872, a visit which also included a pilgrimage to the holy sites of both Christianity in Jerusalem and Buddhism in India. Anesaki remarks that "this was the first instance of a Japanese Buddhist visiting the original home of his religion" (337). He was accompanied on his tour, the first of many such priestly study tours to

the West, by four other priests from the Nishi Honganji branch of the Shin sect.

What drew these priests to the West was a general desire to better understand what had by then become one of Meiji society's principal goals, namely "cultural enlightenment" (*bunmei kaika*/文明開花). As Ketelaar made clear, however, they also had more mundane aims, one of which was "immediately usable tools for the critique of Christianity in Japan" (126). In the fall of the same year the Higashi Honganji branch, anxious not to fall behind its rival, also sent its own contingent of priests to Europe.

It was a Higashi Honganji priest by the name of Nanjō Bun'yū (南条文雄/1849-1927) who became a pioneer in studying Buddhism in accordance with Western academic standards. In 1876 he went to Oxford to study Sanskrit under the famed "Orientalist," Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900). Nanjō would subsequently publish a number of scholarly works on

Buddhism including the 1883 *Catalogue of the Chinese Translations of the Buddhist Tripitaka*.

As increasing numbers of Japanese Buddhists pursued their study of Buddhism in the West, they encountered a new form if not of persecution then at least of discrimination.

That is to say, as Robert Sharf has noted:

The early generation of European "Orientalist scholars . . . all too often held "true" and "pure" Buddhism to be "early Buddhism," which they implicitly or explicitly believed to be long dead in Asia. Specifically, early Buddhism was identified with the Buddhism of the Pali Canon, and the prevailing tendency among Western scholars was to view the Mahayana [school] of East Asia as degenerate, syncretic, and corrupt (18).

Faced with this situation, it is not surprising that "Japanese Buddhism . . . set out to recast the terms by which it had been defined in the West" (Ketelaar 163). One example of this effort is provided by Daisetz T. Suzuki (鈴木大拙/1870-1966). Although he would later become best known for his writings on Zen, one of his first major works

in English was entitled, *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*, published in 1908. Robert Sharf characterized this work as:

A rambling and highly idealized introduction to Mahayana doctrine - a curious blend of scholarship and apologetics. . . . Suzuki insists that Buddhism is not a dogmatic creed but rather a 'mysticism' that responds to the deepest yearnings in man and yet remains in full accord with the findings of modern science (19).

Suzuki's work as an apologist for *Mahāyāna* Buddhism is not surprising in view of his earlier scholarly activities, the majority of which were dedicated to the promotion of this school of Buddhism and its sub-branches in both the English and Japanese languages. In fact, Suzuki's first scholarly effort had been the translation into English of the Ven. Shaku Sōen's (釈宗演 / 1859-1919) address to the World's Parliament of Religions convened as part of the 1893's World's Fair in Chicago, Illinois. Sōen, abbot and head of the Engakuji branch of the Rinzai Zen sect, was very much a New Buddhist in that he had determinedly set out to acquire

a modern Western education following completion of his traditional Zen training.

As Wayne Yokoyama has noted, Sōen's decision to attend the Parliament "had great consequences, for it set in motion the chain of events that would alter the religious consciousness of the Western world considerably" (131). His paper, entitled "The Law of Cause and Effect, As Taught by the Buddha," was read to the audience by the Parliament's chairman, the Rev. John H. Barrows.

It was not, however, Sōen's elucidation of the Buddhist doctrine of co-dependent origination which had such a great effect on both those in attendance and those who later read about it in the newspapers. Rather, it was the simple fact that such an event was taking place at all. As Thelle has written:

The parliament became a magnificent demonstration of the power of religion and of harmony between different faiths. For the first time in history



representatives of all the major religions were gathered under the same roof in peaceful conference (219).

Sōen, it should be noted, was only one of eight representatives of Japanese Buddhism, three of whom were, like himself, Buddhist priests affiliated with various sects while the others were interpreters and laymen. As Thelle further noted, however:

Behind the surface of religious sympathy, cooperation, and common fronts against common enemies, there existed a profound discord between the Western, generally Christian, and the Eastern, Buddhist and Hindu, delegates (220).

Yasubuchi Banryū (八淵幡龍/1848-1926), a Shin priest and delegate from Kumamoto, went so far as to state that in light of this underlying tension, the Buddhist delegates saw themselves engaged in a "peaceful war." A war in which Buddhism would emerge "having won the greatest victories and the greatest honor" (35-40, 44-45).

Given the strong Christian influence manifested in the overall conference, Yasubuchi's assertion may seem somewhat exaggerated, if not self-serving. Ketelaar, however, put it into a Japanese perspective when he pointed out:

The numerous post-Parliament press releases *in Japan* were characterized by an unbridled optimism as article after article asserted the joyous and unhindered promulgation of Mahayana Buddhism among Westerners saturated with material comforts but sadly lacking in the life of the spirit (152).

The Meiji Buddhists at the Parliament were not content with merely presenting conference papers. Though most of them had only rudimentary English language skills, they still went on to hold meetings, with the help of their interpreters, throughout Chicago (and later the U.S.) in public halls, coffeehouses, and churches, distributing literally tens of thousands of pamphlets discussing various aspects of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism.

"The 'formless form' of Eastern [i.e. *Mahāyāna* ] Buddhism, [the Japanese Buddhist delegates] determined, was precisely the universal principle needed to recast Buddhism as a world religion" (Ketelaar 163). Writing only a few years later, in 1899, Anesaki Masaharu (姉崎正治/1873-1949), one of the most noted Buddhist scholars of that period, would further develop this theme when he wrote:

"Our Nation [Japan] is the only true Buddhist nation of all the nations in the world. It is thus upon the shoulders of this nation that the responsibility for the unification of Eastern and Western thought and the continued advancement of the East falls" (*Bukkyō seiten shiron* 17).

### **Buddhist Responses to Domestic Critics**

The Buddhist delegates to the World's Parliament of Religions returned to Japan as conquering heroes. "They were feted and paraded and travelled the countryside giving speeches on the material marvels of the West and on their own equally marvelous successes in promulgating the

teaching of the Buddha" (Ketelaar 171). An observer of the time, Ōhara Kakichi (大原嘉吉), further applauded their efforts by stating that it was now possible for "Buddhism in Japan in the Far East to turn the wheel of the *Dharma* in America in the Far West" (5-6).

What particularly impressed domestic observers had been the ability of the Japanese delegates to not only hold their own against the far greater number of Christian participants, but to express the nationalistic aspirations of the Japanese people in the process. Hirai Kinzō (平井金三 /d. 1916), a lay Buddhist and the delegation's only fluent English speaker, provided the best example of what was possible in this regard.

Hirai's paper was entitled "The Real Position of Japan Toward Christianity." It began with a defense of the Tokugawa Shogunate's banning of Christianity in the seventeenth century as a legitimate response to the possibility of Japan's

being colonized by nations proclaiming themselves to be Christian. He went on to point out that once again in the Meiji period allegedly Christian nations threatened his country through their imposition of unequal treaties which unilaterally guaranteed these nations the rights of extraterritoriality and tariff regulations. In concluding, he invoked America's founding fathers and the preamble to the U.S. Declaration of Independence in defense of his call for true equality among nations.

Ketelaar noted that in his speech Hirai had "'out-Christianized' the Christians and 'out-Americanized' the Americans" . . . succeeding in driving home his point as few foreign delegates were able to do" (170). The fact that the predominantly American audience had cheered Hirai at the conclusion of his speech was used as further evidence in Japan to show just how effective Buddhists could be in advancing the nation's interests abroad.

Based on their success in America, the Buddhist delegates, especially Yatsubuchi Banryū, eagerly called for increased missionary work as they travelled and spoke throughout the country. Yatsubuchi emphasized the importance of both foreign language and secular education for aspiring missionaries, not to mention rigorous spiritual training. He advocated that such missionaries should first work among Japanese immigrants to other nations, but he also saw other uses for them, one of which was, significantly, to provide spiritual training for the Japanese military. "'Flashing like a sword and glittering like a flower' . . . the Imperial Army and Navy can, like the faithful Muslims who defeated the Russians in the Crimea, or the soldiers of the Hongan-ji who held back the armies of Nobunaga, face all trials and tribulations with confidence and strength" (Ketelaar 168).

Yasubuchi and his colleagues were not the first to call for Buddhist missionary work. Even in the darkest days of the repression of Buddhism in the early Meiji period, the Shin sect had actively participated in the Meiji government's effort to colonize the northern island of Hokkaidō, an area that was then only nominally under Japanese control. The Higashi Honganji branch initially despatched over 100 priests to this northern outpost and spent over 33,000 *ryō* in constructing roads. As Ketelaar noted, "The Hongan-ji temple complex . . . saw Hokkaidō as an opportunity to prove the worth of Buddhism to the nation and to that end lobbied aggressively for the right to participate in the colonization" (69).

Furthermore, based on the success of this 'internal' missionary work, the Higashi Honganji branch sent a group of priests headed by the Ven. Ogurusu Kōchō (小栗栖香頂) to establish a temple in Shanghai, China in June, 1876. Yet

another group headed by the Ven. Okumura Enshin (奥村円心) was sent to Korea in September of the following year. As Daitō Satoshi (大東仁, b. 1965) has noted:

"These missionary activities were carried on in close collaboration with the Japanese state, as part of Japan's policy in the Meiji period of advancing onto the [Asian] continent. . . . In fact, after the Sino-Japanese War [of 1894-95] these missionary efforts became so closely associated with Japan's continental policies that after each war [Japan fought] the missionary efforts expanded accordingly " (58).

Ogurusu, mentioned above, was not simply interested in missionary work abroad. In 1881 he wrote: "Priests of this sect should use aid to the poor as a method of propagating the faith" (*Meikyō shinshi*). Ogurusu, in common with many of his contemporaries, understood that the New Buddhism they aspired to had to become active in charitable works. Yoshida pointed out that this interest came as a result of the threat the Buddhists recognized from primarily Protestant-based charities. "While pointing out the



shallowness of their [Christian] teachings, [the New Buddhists] had to recognize the remarkable effectiveness of their philanthropy as a means of propagating their religion" (*Bukkyō shakaishi* 44).

Shaku Sōen was also active in this debate, arguing that Buddhists should overcome the practical superiority of Christianity by "establishing schools for the poor, charity hospitals, and reformatories; organizing work among soldiers and criminals; correcting the corruptions of society; and engaging in active work in every department of life (*Japan Evangelist* No. 3). Yet another advocate of this position was Inoue Enryō (井上円了/1858-1919), who was both a Buddhist scholar and reformer. Thelle noted that "Inoue . . . hoped to outdo the Christians by copying their educational institutions, hospitals and reformatories" (198).

Yet, for all their desire to emulate Christian social work, the New Buddhists did not change their overall

negative attitude toward Christianity. Inoue in particular was one of the most articulate of the anti-Christian Buddhists. In discussing Inoue, Kitagawa pointed out:

Inouye criticized the "irrationality" of Christianity and praised the "rationality" of Buddhism. His arguments were based on a simple comparison drawn between the theism of Christianity and the nontheism of Buddhism. The latter, according to Inouye, was in harmony with Western philosophy and science.

However, his so-called impartial comparison of [the] two religions was motivated by his objections to Christianity, the religion of the strong Western nations and inseparable from the political structures of these nations (230).

In January 1889 Inoue joined with other Meiji Buddhist leaders, including Shimaji Mokurai and the prominent Buddhist layman Ōuchi Seiran (大内青巒/1845-1918), to form a new popular Buddhist organization, the "United Movement for Revering the Emperor and Worshipping the *Buddha* " (*Sonnō Hōbutsu Daidōdan*/尊皇奉仏大同団). The organization's prospectus described its purpose as follows:

The goal of this organization is to preserve the prosperity of the Imperial Household and increase the power of Buddhism. The result will be the perfection of the well-being of the Great Empire of Japan. . . . The time-honored spiritual foundation of our Empire is the Imperial Household and Buddhism. The independence and stability of our Empire cannot be maintained if so much as the slightest injury is inflicted upon it. How can true patriots not be inspired and aroused to defend against such injury? (*Daidō Shinpō*).

In concrete terms the founders of this new organization hoped to exclude Christians from all positions of power in society, especially those connected with politics. Toward this end they worked to induce some 130,000 Buddhist priests throughout the country to become politically active and ensure the election of Buddhist candidates. As Yoshida has pointed out, however, some members, especially those living in regions where the Shin sect was strong, went so far as to violently disrupt religious services in local Christian churches (*Bukkyōshi* 188). In light of this Thelle stated:

With the establishment of *Sonnō Hōbutsu Daidōdan* the potential exclusionism and aggressive anti-Christian

character of Buddhist nationalism became manifest and was developed into a concrete strategy. . . . Even though its strategy [ultimately] failed, the politicization of the Buddhist-Christian controversy introduced a new stage in the relationship between the two religions, as violence increasingly dominated the political climate of this period" (107).

The disruptive and sometimes violent tactics of regional Buddhists resulted in both severe condemnation in the press as well as police intervention. It also turned out to be a political liability and was therefore relatively short-lived. Just as it died out, however, it was replaced by violence on a far, far greater scale. This time the violence was employed by the Japanese state itself, for the nation's leaders had decided to go to war.

## **Buddhist Responses to Japanese Expansion Abroad**

### **Sino-Japanese War (1894-95)**

The Sino-Japanese War formally began in August 1894. In discussing the war, Ienaga Saburō (家永三郎), a noted historian of modern Japan, wrote the following:

Government leaders . . . started the quest for glory by fighting China for hegemony in Korea. Domination of Korea became a national goal shared by successive administrations and the public at large (6).

The "public at large," of course, included Japan's Buddhist leaders. About them Kitagawa had this to say:

From the Sino-Japanese War . . . onward, the leaders of established Buddhist schools collaborated very closely with ethnocentric nationalism (231).

Kitagawa went on to note that by this time Inoue Enryō had turned into "a spokesman for the Imperial Way (*kōdō*/皇道)." One example of this is a book he published in 1893 entitled a "Treatise on Loyalty and Filial Piety" (*Chūkōkatsuron*). In this work Inoue wrote that due to the existence of the Imperial Household, Japan, its land and its people were, like the Emperor himself, all "sacred and holy" (61-66).

Inoue went on to assert that in Japan, unlike China, let alone the West, loyalty (to the Sovereign) and filial piety were one and the same. This was because all Japanese

were offspring of the Imperial Family. Thus, the Imperial Family was the "head family" of all Japanese, which is to say, the Emperor and his subjects were all part of "one large family" (66-70). This led Inoue to conclude:

From ancient times, sacrificing one's physical existence for the sake of the Emperor and the country was akin to discarding worn-out sandals. . . . It is this unique feature of our people which has caused the radiance of our national polity and produced the supreme beauty of our national customs (71).

The following year Inoue published an article on the 'philosophy of war' which, not surprisingly, Kitagawa found to be "strongly militaristic in temper" (231).

With regard to the war itself, the Nishi-Honganji branch of the Shin sect was one of the first to comment. As early as 31 July 1894, the sect's headquarters issued the following statement. It read in part:

Since the occurrence of the recent emergency in Korea, the head of our branch has been deeply concerned about the situation, acting on the truth of repaying one's debt to the country through absolute loyalty to it in

accordance with the sect's teaching that the Law of the Sovereign is paramount. . . . Believing deeply in the saving power of *Buddha Amitābha*'s vow, and certain of rebirth in His Western Paradise, we will remain calm no matter what emergency we may encounter, for there is nothing to fear. . . . We must value loyalty [to the Sovereign] and filial piety, work diligently, and, confronted with this emergency, share in the trials and tribulations of the nation (*Honzan rokuji*).

For its part, the Jōdo (Pure Land) sect established, in 1895, the "Assembly to Repay [One's] Debt to the Nation" (*Hōkoku gikai*/報国義会). Its purpose was defined as follows:

The purpose of this assembly shall be, in accordance with the power of religion, to benefit both those in the military and their families, to conduct memorial services on behalf of fallen patriots, and to provide relief for their families and relatives (*Jōdo Kyōhō*).

As to the merits of the war itself, Yoshida pointed out that, among Buddhists, "there was almost no peace movement, for Buddhists, especially, lacked the social awareness necessary for a peace movement" (*Bukkyō shakaishi* 228). What Buddhist leaders did have, however, were various ways of justifying the war.

One line of reasoning was based on Japanese Buddhism's supposed preeminent position within all of Asian Buddhism. Thus, an editorial entitled "Buddhists During Wartime," which appeared in the 8 August 1894 issue of the newspaper *Nōjin*, pointed out that Japanese Buddhists had a duty to "awaken" Chinese and Korean Buddhists out of their indifference to the war, an indifference, the editorial alleged, which stemmed from the pessimistic nature of the Buddhism which existed in these two countries.

Only a few days later, in the 16-18 August issue of the same newspaper, Mori Naoki (森直樹) expanded on this theme in an article entitled "The Relationship of Japanese Buddhists to the Crisis in China and Korea." He identified both Indian and Thai Buddhists as being indifferent to the development of their own countries, once again because of the pessimistic nature of the Buddhism found there. Mori then went on to advocate that Japanese Buddhists consider the battlefield



as an arena for propagation of the faith, holding high the banner of "benevolence and fidelity."

Coupled with the above was the viewpoint represented in an editorial, entitled "Buddhism and War," appearing in the 25 July 1894 issue of the newspaper *Mitsugen Kyōhō*. This editorial began by acknowledging that the destruction of all weapons of war was the Buddhist ideal. It then went on to assert, however, that when a war was fought for a "just cause," it was entirely appropriate for Buddhists to support it.

Another proponent of this point of view was Shaku Unshō (釈雲照/1827-1909), a Shingon sect priest and pioneer of Meiji Buddhist charitable activities. In an article entitled "A Discussion On the Compassionate Buddhist Prohibition Against Killing," which appeared in the same newspaper as above on 25 January 1885, he stated that there were two types of war: a "just war" and a "lawless war" (*bōsen*/暴戦).

While Buddhists should oppose the second type of war, they should support, as in this case, a just war because such a war prevents humanity from falling into misery.

In ending this discussion of the Buddhist reaction to the Sino-Japanese War, it is noteworthy that despite all these assertions of Buddhist war support, it was actually Japanese Christians who took the lead in such practical activities as providing medical help for wounded soldiers and relief for families who had become poverty-stricken as a result of the war. Thelle states:

The patriotic fervor of the Christians naturally made a great impact on public opinion. . . . The Buddhists also expressed admiration for the strenuous efforts of the Christians, and gradually engaged in the work among the soldiers. Because of their slow and rather passive response, however, they were often criticized for poor patriotic spirit (171).

The fervent patriotism of Japanese Christians became the catalyst for not only a new (and positive) relationship

with the state but with institutional Buddhism as well.

Specifically:

Christian patriotism brought a new climate which promoted Buddhist-Christian cooperation, emphasized the spiritual solidarity with the East, and enabled both religions to "entrench themselves in the same citadel of nationalism" as it was expressed in an editorial in the Buddhist *Sōtō kyōhō* (Thelle 173-4).

Ironically, it was war-generated patriotism, and the death and destruction which it entailed, that provided the initial stimulus for a reconciliation between these two religions, religions which had for so long been bitter foes.

### **Russo-Japanese War (1904-5)**

Japan's victory over China brought with it not only increased power over affairs on the Korean peninsula, but the island of Taiwan, torn from China, became its first overseas' colony. Not all of Japan's territorial ambitions were met, however, due to the so-called Tripartite Intervention of 1895. That is to say, three Western powers,

led by Russia with the support of France and Germany, forced Japan to give up its newly won control of the Liaotung peninsula, in what would have been its first colony on the Asian mainland.

Japan regarded this intervention as a national humiliation and was more determined than ever to develop its military machine. For example, it added six new divisions to the regular army in 1896, thereby doubling its first-line strength. In addition, in 1898, it organized both cavalry and artillery as independent brigades, while at the same time establishing factories for the domestic production of modern armaments.

By 1903 Japan could also claim to have a modern navy with some seventy-six major war vessels, including four battleships, sixteen cruisers, and twenty-three destroyers. As Beasley pointed out: "The Triple Intervention . . . served

to rally Japan for another advance, despite the further measure of hardship that this entailed" (164).

In this atmosphere the need for continued support of the military was also recognized by Buddhist leaders. In 1898, for example, Higawagishi Kanichi (干河岸貫一) edited a book entitled *Proselytizing the Military* (*Gunjin Fukyō*/軍人布教). As Yoshida has noted, the purpose of this work was to forcefully advocate the usefulness of Buddhism in imparting courage to soldiers on the battlefield (*Bukkyō shakaishi* 230).

Just how seriously institutional Buddhist leaders would soon take their responsibility in this regard is attested to by the following comments:

The war effort of Buddhist leaders was appreciated by the government, as evidenced by the case of Ōtani Kōzui, chief abbot of the Nishi-Honganji . . . who was commended by the emperor for the important role he played in keeping up morale during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) [Kitagawa 231].

Before turning to the Russo-Japanese War itself, however, it is important to note that the short period of peace which lasted from 1896-1903 was also a time for Buddhist scholars to turn their attention to the theoretical side of the relationship between Buddhism, the state, and war. Interestingly, it was the twenty-six year old Buddhist scholar and student of Zen, D.T. Suzuki, who took the lead in this effort. In November 1896, just one month before having his initial enlightenment experience (i.e. *kenshō*/見性), he published a book entitled *A Treatise on the New [Meaning of] Religion (Shinshūkyō-ron/新宗教論)*.

In his book Suzuki covers a wide variety of topics, examining everything from the meaning of religious faith to the relationship of religion and science. He does, however, devote an entire chapter (Chapter 15) to "The Relationship of Religion and the State." If only because Suzuki's views in this area are so little known in the West, it is instructive

to take a careful look at his comments. Much more importantly, however, as will be seen in following sections, the views that Suzuki expressed parallel, with some variations of course, the rationale that institutional Buddhism's leaders would subsequently give for their support of Japan's war efforts up through the end of the Pacific War. For that reason alone, they deserve very close attention.

Suzuki begins his discussion with the statement:

At first glance it might be thought that religion and the state are in serious conflict with one another. For example, the state is built upon differentiation [or discrimination] while religion takes the position that everything is equal. Religion takes as its final goal the realization of a universal ideal while the ultimate goal of the state is to preserve itself. . . . (134).

Suzuki goes on, however, to state that categories like the above only appear to be in opposition to each other. For example, he claims that "equality without differentiation is 'evil equality', while differentiation without equality is

'evil differentiation'." From this and other examples he then concludes, first of all, that "religion and the state must necessarily support each other if they are to achieve wholeness." Secondly, "religion should, first of all, seek to preserve the existence of the state, abiding by its history and the feelings of its people" (136-37).

Professor Kirita Kiyohide (b. 1941/桐田清秀) of Kyoto's Rinzai Zen sect-affiliated Hanazono University recently wrote a monograph entitled "D. T. Suzuki and the State," which was included in the book, *Rude Awakenings*. As the title of his monograph suggests, Kirita reviewed Suzuki's ideas on the relationship between religion and the state and was disturbed by the last statement quoted in the preceding paragraph. He noted that the statement "seems to lead to an acceptance of state supremacy" (54).

Kirita also criticized further statements made by Suzuki in the same chapter. About these Kirita said: "His [Suzuki's]



rather 'Zen-like' approach to religion and his abstract notion of the way nations operate seem far too unrealistic" (54).

The statements Kirita referred to, as quoted in his monograph, are as follows:

The interests of religion and the state do not conflict but rather aid and support each other in a quest for wholeness . . . . The problem is easily resolved if one thinks of religion as an entity with the state as its body, and of the state as something developing with religion as its spirit. In other words, religion and the state form a unity; if every action and movement of the state takes on a religious character and if every word and action of religion takes on a state character, then whatever is done for the sake of the state is done for religion, and whatever is done for the sake of religion is done for the state (53-4).

In spite of limited criticisms of Suzuki's thought, Kirita went on, after introducing additional material, to come to the conclusion that "from his youth and throughout his life Suzuki never regarded the state as absolute and never placed the state above the individual" (66). A few pages later he

added: "[Suzuki] was not a nationalist or national supremacist" (72).

Leaving aside for the moment the question [to be revisited in Chapter Ten], of whether or not Kirita is correct in his conclusions, there remains the question of why he chose to avoid any discussion of the three seminal paragraphs which immediately follow his last quote from Suzuki's work. These two paragraphs, in their entirety, are as follows:

If we look at this [unified relationship between religion and the state] from the point of view of international morality, we see that the purpose of maintaining soldiers and encouraging the military arts is not to conquer other countries or deprive them of their rights or freedom. Rather it is done only to preserve the existence of one's country and prevent it from being encroached upon by obstreperous heathens. The construction of big warships and casting of giant cannon is not to enlarge one's personal gain and trample on the wealth and profit of others. Rather, it is done only to prevent the history of one's country from being disturbed by injustice and outrageousness. Conducting commerce and working to increase production is not for the purpose of building up material wealth in order

to subdue other nations. Rather, it is done only in order to develop more and more human knowledge and bring about the perfection of morality.

Therefore, if a lawless country comes and obstructs our commerce, or tramples on our rights, this is something that would truly interrupt the progress of all of humanity. In the name of religion our country could not submit to this. Thus, we would have no choice but to take up arms, not for the purpose of slaying the enemy, nor for the purpose of pillaging cities, let alone for the purpose of acquiring wealth. Instead, we would simply punish the people of the country representing injustice in order that justice might prevail. How is it possible that we could seek anything for ourselves? In any event, this is what is called religious conduct. As long as the state takes care not to lose this moral sense, one can anticipate the step by step advancement of humanity and the fulfilment of universal ideals.

The morality of the individual toward the state is similar to this. That is to say, in peacetime one works diligently, day and night, seeking to promote the advancement of [such endeavors] as agriculture, manufacturing, commerce, art and science, and technology. In so doing, one must not forget that the purpose of these many endeavours is the advancement of all humanity. This is what is called "peacetime religion." However, at the time of the commencement of hostilities with a foreign country, then marines fight on the sea and soldiers fight in the fields, swords flashing and cannon smoke belching, moving this way and that. In so doing, our

soldiers regard their own lives as being as light as goose feathers while their devotion to duty is as heavy as Mt. Taishan [in China]. Should they fall on the battlefield they have no regrets. This is what is called "religion during a [national] emergency." This religion doesn't necessarily have to be described by [the words] "*Buddha*" or "God." Rather, if one simply discharges one's duty according to one's position [in society], what action could there be that is not religious in nature? (139-140, Italics mine)

Kirita's conclusions notwithstanding, Suzuki's integrated and unified view of the state and religion meant that even in war with "swords flashing and cannon smoke belching," the state, "fighting obstreperous heathens," could be doing the work of religion. Even if the preceding were taken as representing no more than Suzuki's "theoretical" position, historical events would soon reveal just how seriously his theory was taken by Meiji Buddhist leaders.

Shaku Sōen was one of the Meiji Buddhist leaders who subsequently demonstrated just how easy it was to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Shortly after the

beginning of the Russo-Japanese War in February 1904, Sōen went to the battlefield as a Buddhist chaplain attached to the First Army Division. As to why he did so, he stated:

I wished to have my faith tested by going through the greatest horrors of life, but I also wished to inspire, if I could, our valiant soldiers with the ennobling thoughts of the Buddha, so as to enable them to die on the battlefield with the confidence that the task in which they are engaged is great and noble. I wished to convince them of the truths that this war is not a mere slaughter of their fellow-beings, but that they are combating an evil, and that, at the same time, corporeal annihilation really means a rebirth of [the] soul, not in heaven, indeed, but here among ourselves. I did my best to impress these ideas upon the soldiers' hearts (*Zen for Americans* 203).

While on the battlefield Sōen even found time to compose a number of poems. Representative of these is the following:

Here, marching on Nan-Shan,  
Storming its topmost crest,  
Have thousands of brave men  
With dragon valor pressed.  
Before the foe my heart  
Is calmed, composure-blessed,

While belching cannons sing  
A lullaby of rest (*Zen for Americans* 203).

Sōen also had a very clear idea of the relationship of Buddhism to war. Again, because of its seminal content, it is quoted extensively, though not completely, here. Sōen wrote:

Buddhism provides us with two entrances through which we can reach the citadel of perfect truth. One is the gate of love (*karunâ*) and the other the gate of knowledge (*prajnâ*). The former leads us to the world of particulars and the latter to realm of the absolute. By knowledge we aspire to reach the summit of spiritual enlightenment; by love we strive to rescue our fellow-creatures from misery and crime. View the vicissitudes of things from the unity and eternity of the religious standpoint, the Dharmadhatu, and everything is one, is on the same plane, and I learn to neglect the worldly distinction made between friend and foe, tragedy and comedy, war and peace, samsâra and nirvâna, passion (*kleṣa*) and enlightenment (*bodhi*). A philosophical calm pervades my soul and I feel the contentment of Nirvâna. For there is nothing, as far as I can see, that does not reflect the glory of Buddha. . . . In this world of particulars, the noblest and greatest thing one can achieve is to combat evil and bring it into complete subjection. The moral principle which guided the Buddha throughout his twelve years of preparation and in his forty-eight years of religious wanderings, and which

pervades his whole doctrine, however varied it may be when practically applied, is nothing else than the subjugation of evil. . . . War is an evil and a great one, indeed. But war against evils must be unflinchingly prosecuted till we attain the final aim. In the present hostilities, into which Japan has entered with great reluctance, she pursues no egotistic purpose, but seeks the subjugation of evils hostile to civilization, peace, and enlightenment. She deliberated long before she took up arms, as she was aware of the magnitude and gravity of the undertaking. But the firm conviction of the justice of her cause has endowed her with an indomitable courage, and she is determined to carry the struggle to the bitter end.

Here is the price we must pay for our ideals - a price paid in streams of blood and by the sacrifice of many thousands of living bodies. However determined may be our resolution to crush evils, our hearts tremble at the sight of this appalling scene. . . . Were it not for the consolation that these sacrifices are not brought for an egotistic purpose, but are an inevitable step toward the final realization of enlightenment, how could I, poor mortal, bear these experiences of a hell let loose on earth? (*Zen for Americans* 199-203) (Italics mine).

The significance of the individual soldier in this "hell let loose on earth" became, as might be expected, a recurrent theme in Buddhist discussions on warfare from this time onwards. About this Sōen had the following to say:

There is but one great spirit and we individuals are its temporal manifestations. We are eternal when we do the will of the great spirit; we are doomed when we protest against it in our egotism and ignorance. We obey, and we live. We defy, and we are thrown into the fire that quengeth not. Our bodily existences are like the sheaths of the bamboo sprout. For the growth of the plant it is necessary to cast one sheath after another. It is not that the body-sheath is negligible, but that the spirit-plant is more essential and its wholesome growth of paramount importance. Let us, therefore, not absolutely cling to the bodily existence, but, when necessary, sacrifice it for a better thing. For this is the way in which the spirituality of our being asserts itself.

This being the case, war is not necessarily horrible, provided that it is fought for a just and honorable cause, that it is fought for the maintenance and realization of noble ideals, that it is fought for the upholding of humanity and civilization. Many material human bodies may be destroyed, many humane hearts be broken, but from a broader point of view these sacrifices are so many ph[o]enixes consumed in the sacred fire of spirituality, which will arise from the smouldering ashes reanimated, ennobled, and glorified. . . . We Buddhists are not believers in fiction, superstition, or mythology. We are followers of truth and fact. And what we actually see around us is that the departed spirits are abiding right among ourselves, for we have the most convincing testimony of the fact in our inmost consciousness which deceives not. They descend upon us, they dwell within us; for are we not being moved by their courage,



earnestness, self-sacrifice, and love of country? Do we not feel supernaturally inspired and strengthened in our resolution to follow them and to complete the work they have so auspiciously started? . . . . I am by no means trying to cover the horrors and evils of war, for war is certainly hellish. Let us avoid it as much as possible. Let us settle all our international difficulties in a more civilized manner. But if it is unavoidable, let us go into it with heart and soul, with the firm conviction that our spiritual descendents will carry out and accomplish what we have failed personally to achieve. . . . Mere lamentation not only bears no fruit, it is a product of egoism, and has to be shunned by every enlightened mind and heart (*Zen for Americans* 211-14).

In evaluating Sōen's words as expressed above, it should be borne in mind that, at least in the Rinzai Zen tradition, they represent the thought of a fully enlightened Zen master. That is to say, Sōen had completed his Rinzai-style Zen training, based on the meditative use of *kōan* (公案), at the unusually early age of twenty-four. He had therefore received *dharma* transmission in the form of *inka shōmei* (印可証明), signifying his complete enlightenment, from his master, Imagita Kōsen (今北洪川/1816-92).<sup>1</sup> Further, if there

seems to be an echo of Suzuki's thinking in Sōen's words, it should be noted that Suzuki was not only the latter's disciple, but he was also the translator of the above passages.

One passage of Sōen's that Suzuki did not translate comes from a somewhat surprising source, the great Russian writer Leo Tolstoi. Because of his own pacifist views, Tolstoi had hoped to enlist the aid of a noted Japanese Buddhist leader to join with him in condemning the war between the two nations.

He had therefore requested Sōen to join him in this effort, only to receive the following reply which read in part:

Even though the *Buddha* forbid the taking of life, he also taught that until all sentient beings are united together through the exercise of infinite compassion, there will never be peace. Therefore, as a means of bringing into harmony those things which are incompatible, killing and war are necessary (*Heimin shimbun*, No. 39).

Sōen was not, of course, the only Buddhist priest to go to the battlefield. All of the major Buddhist sects assigned not only chaplains but also medics to accompany the troops abroad. Similarly, Sōen was not the only Buddhist leader to justify the war from what purported to be a Buddhist viewpoint. Inoue Enryō, for example, had this to say shortly before the formal outbreak of hostilities:

Buddhism is a teaching of compassion, a teaching for living human beings. Therefore, fighting on behalf of living human beings is in accord with the spirit of compassion. In the event hostilities break out between Japan and Russia, it is only natural that Buddhists should willingly fight, for what is this if not repaying the debt of gratitude we owe the *Buddha* ?

It goes without saying that this is a war to protect the state and sustain our fellow countrymen. Beyond that, however, it is the conduct of a *Bodhisattva* seeking to save untold millions of living souls throughout China and Korea from the jaws of death. Therefore Russia is not only an enemy of our country, but it is also the enemy of the *Buddha*.

In Russia state and religion are one, and there is no religious freedom. Thus, religion is used as a chain in order to unify the [Russian] people. Therefore, when

they [the Russian people] see Orientals, they are told that the latter are the bitter enemies of their religion. It is for this reason that on the one hand this is a war of politics and on the other hand it is a war of religion. . . . If theirs is the army of God, then ours is the army of the *Buddha*. It is in this way that Russia is not only an enemy of our country but of the *Buddha* as well. The peoples of China and Korea are also Orientals, the same "Mongolian" race as ourselves. Thus, these golden-[hued] peoples are our brothers and sisters, for we are one family. Our religions, too, have been one from the beginning. Therefore, putting Russians to death in order to save our family members is not only our duty as citizens, but as fellow Buddhists. . . . The reason that Buddhism is still in existence in our country today is due to the protection offered by the emperors down through the ages, starting with Prince Shōtoku.

Buddhism would not exist [in Japan] without the devotion of the Imperial family. When looked at from this viewpoint, it is only natural for Buddhists to fight to the death in order to repay the debt of gratitude they owe to the *Buddha* and the Emperor (*Enryō kōwashū* 299-302) [Italics mine].

With regard to Inoue, Miyamoto Shōson (宮本正尊/1893-1983), a noted contemporary Buddhist scholar and professor emeritus of Tokyo University, had this to say:

Inoue Enryō . . . was an innovative Buddhist scholar who devoted himself to the modernization and edification

of Buddhism. He was also a theoretical thinker and activist . . . who first uttered the phrase "protect the nation and love the truth" (*gokoku airi*/護國愛理) [229].

In contrast to this positive evaluation, it will be recalled that Kitagawa noted that by the 1890s Inoue had "turned into a spokesman for the Imperial Way" (231). Further, Kitagawa added in a footnote: "Inouye's Buddhist apologetics reflected the nationalistic aspirations of the people during the 1880s" (230). Perhaps he should have added, "and thereafter."

Ketelaar offered perhaps the most penetrating analysis of the preceding Buddhist priests and scholars when he wrote:

This trend among late Meiji sectarian Buddhists toward what we can call yet another attempt to *unite religion and politics* (*seikyō itchi*), this time based upon a new scientism of cooperative global evolution, carried with it consequences . . . radically in opposition to some of the fundamental tenets of Buddhism. This new *seikyō ichi* is, distinct from the early Meiji attempt legislated by the government, initiated by the Buddhists themselves and all the more lasting because of it (172).

By the end of the Russo-Japanese War in September 1905, the foundation had been laid for what would become institutional Buddhism's basic themes relating to Japan's ongoing military activities. They may be summarized as follows:

- 1) Buddhist participation in Japan's wars is entirely appropriate because these wars are being fought for a "just cause." Japan's wars are, in fact, expressions of Buddhist compassion.
- 2) The enemies of Japan, the "obstreperous heathens" as Suzuki calls them, are the enemies of the state, the *Buddha*, human progress, peace, enlightenment et. al.. Fighting "to the death" with them is an opportunity to repay the debt of gratitude owed to both the *Buddha* and the Emperor.
- 3) The Japanese Army is comprised (or, at least, ought to be comprised) of tens of thousands of *Bodhisattvas*, ever willing to sacrifice their lives as so many "goose feathers." Their goal in this is not only the defense of their country but the rescue of fellow members of the "Mongolian race" from the hands of Western, white, and Christian imperialists.

As will be seen in the following sections, though the names of the Buddhist scholars and priests might change, these themes, with some variations and additions, would be

repeated over and over in the following years, employing increasingly jingoistic language and ever shriller voices. Given the environment that had been created, it is not surprising that Anesaki concluded his discussion of late Meiji Buddhist leaders with the observation that they had "gladly accepted the role of tools of the Government." He further noted that both they and their Shintō counterparts provided an "easy-going serviceableness to the ruling classes backed by their glorification of the regime" (391-92).

Finally, the actual fighting that took place on the battlefields of the Russo-Japanese War laid the foundation of one of the more salient features of Japanese Buddhism in the following years. That is to say, the close connection that was believed to exist between a soldier's Buddhist faith and his prowess on the battlefield. D. C. Holtom points out that in selecting troops for the crucial attack on Port Arthur, military leaders purposely selected units "from

Kanazawa and Kumamoto, districts where Buddhism is strong" (149).

As to why a strong faith in Buddhism should make a difference on the battlefield, the noted Shin sect scholar Ōsuka Shūdō had the following to say in a book published on April 20, 1905 entitled "A General Survey of Evangelization during Wartime" (戦時伝道大観):

Reciting the name of *Buddha Amita* makes it possible to march onto the battlefield, firm in the belief that death will bring rebirth in Paradise. Being prepared for death, one can fight strenuously, knowing that it is a just fight, a fight employing the compassionate mind of the *Buddha*, a fight of a loyal subject. Truly, what could be more fortunate than knowing that, should you die, a welcome awaits in the Pure Land [of *Buddha Amita* ]. (131-32).

Taitō Satoshi has pointed out that the Ninth Division from Kanazawa did indeed take Shūdō's words to heart. That is to say, at the crucial battle for Port Arthur, they recited *Buddha Amita's* name as they charged the enemy lines. The result was eventual victory, but at a cost of 15,605



casualties to themselves and countless Russian deaths (132).

The Shin sect was not alone in attempting to provide added martial prowess to Japan's soldiers. The Zen sect, too, sought to play a role, a role which can first be observed in the reminiscences of Sawaki Kōdō (沢木興道/1880-1965), one of Japan's best known modern Sōtō Zen masters and scholars. For many Western Zen practitioners, Kōdō will be best known as the founder of a lay Zen training center at Antaiji temple (安泰寺), located in Kyoto.

In his book entitled *Sawaki Kōdō kiki kaki*, Kōdō first talked of the hardships he endured as a draftee in the military just prior to the Russo-Japanese War. With the war's outbreak, however, Kōdō went to the battlefield where he states:

I and my comrades gorged ourselves on killing people. Especially at the battle of *Baolisi* temple, I chased our enemies into a hole where I was able to pick them off

very efficiently. Because of this, my company commander requested that I be given a letter of commendation, but it wasn't issued (6).

As to how his comrades felt about his accomplishment, Kōdō records the following conversation among them:

"Who the hell is that guy?"

"He's only a Zen priest"

"I see. Just what you'd expect from a Zen priest. A man with guts" (6).

In this simple conversation can be seen what is perhaps the first modern reference to the effectiveness of Zen training on the battlefield. As following sections will reveal, however, it was certainly not to be the last reference to this topic. In fact, even during the war there was a much more notable personage whose Zen training was thought to have contributed to his martial prowess. This personage was no less than General Nogi Maresuke (乃木希典/1849-1912), commander of the Third Army and one of the war's greatest heroes.

Nogi had previously received instruction and undergone *kōan* training with the noted Rinzai Zen master Nantenbō (南天棒/1839-1925). Sharf described Nantenbō himself as "a staunch nationalist and partisan to the Japanese military" (11-12). In his personal remembrances, Nantenbō recalled having explained to Nogi that the essence of Zen was contained in the single word *jiki* (direct/直). Though one word, *jiki* had three interrelated yet distinct meanings: 1) moving forward without hesitation, 2) direct transmission from mind-to-mind, and 3) *yamatodamashii* (the spirit of Japan/和魂) (Kasumi 168).

Sharf summed up the relationship between Zen and the Russo-Japanese War period as follows:

It clearly served the interests of late Meiji Zen apologists to identify the "essence of Zen" with both the "spirit of *bushidō* [the way of the warrior]" and the "spirit of Japan," notions then replete with connotations of imperial conquest and unconditional obedience to the emperor" (12).

As will be seen shortly, there is much more to be said about the relationship between *bushidō* (武士道), *yamatodamashii*, and Zen. Before preceding with that discussion, however, it is important to take note, as is done in the following section, that not all Meiji Buddhists were supporters of what Kitagawa referred to as "ethnocentric nationalism" (231).

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup>There has been debate within Zen circles as to whether the *satori*(悟り) experience of Zen is the equivalent of *Buddha* Shākyamuni's own experience of "awakening," i.e. enlightenment. For Sōen, however, there was nothing to debate. He stated: "To say the Buddha had a *satori* experience sounds as if we were talking about a Zen monk, but I think it is permissible to say that a monk's attaining *satori* corresponds to the Buddha's awakening effortlessly" (*Eastern Buddhist*, XXVI, No. 2, 141).

## CHAPTER 4: UCHIYAMA GUDŌ- RADICAL SŌTŌ ZEN PRIEST

### General Introduction

The reader will recall from the previous chapter a discussion by Anesaki Masaharu regarding the resolution of the conflict between the Meiji Government and Japan's traditional Buddhist sects. He noted that by the end of the Meiji period, Buddhist leaders had "gladly accepted the role of tools of the Government." Together with their *Shintō* counterparts, they provided an "easy-going serviceableness to the ruling classes backed by their glorification of the regime" (391-92). As already noted, similar comments have been made by Kitagawa, Yoshida, Thelle, and Scharf among others.

This said, it is important to note that these characterizations, or rather generalizations, were not meant as blanket statements. Kitagawa, for example, points out

that "there were even a few Buddhists active in the socialist and anarchist movements, and some who at least worked closely with members of such movements" (232). That is to say, there were some Buddhist priests who not only opposed their government's increasingly imperialistic policies, but actually sacrificed their lives in the process of doing so.

This chapter will focus on one such group of "radical" Buddhists. In terms of their actual numbers, which was quite small, it may be argued that any focus on this group is unwarranted. This and the following chapter will make clear, however, that in spite of their lack of numbers, they had a significant impact on the Buddhist leaders of their time, especially as these leaders continued to formulate their individual and collective responses to Japan's military expansion abroad and political repression at home.

## Radical Buddhist Priests and the "High Treason Incident"

It is the High Treason Incident (大逆事件) of 1910 that first brought to light the existence of politically radical Buddhist priests. Specifically, there were four Buddhist priests who were first arrested, and then convicted, for their alleged participation in a conspiracy to kill one or more members of the Imperial family. These four were part of a larger group of twenty-six in all who were also convicted of the same crime.

Of the four priests, the Ven. Uchiyama Gudō (内山愚童) was the only one to be executed. The remaining three were also initially sentenced to death, but later had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment. Of these three, all would eventually die in prison, though the Shin (True Pure Land) sect priest, the Ven. Takagi Kenmei (高木顕明)



died at his own hands. The remaining two were a second Shin priest, the Ven. Sasaki Dōgen (佐々木道元)<sup>1</sup> and a Rinzai Zen sect priest, the Ven. Mineo Setsudō (峯尾節堂).

The focus here is on only one of the four priests in question, namely the Ven. Uchiyama Gudō, because, first of all, space limitations preclude a detailed examination of all four. Secondly, as his execution indicates, the authorities clearly considered Gudō to be the "worst" of the four. This is not surprising for, of all the priests, Gudō was the most actively involved in the movement which the Meiji government found so reprehensible. Lastly, there is simply more information available about Gudō than any of the others.

It should be noted, however, that there is, quantitatively speaking, little information available even about Gudō, let alone the other three priests. Regrettably, this holds true especially with regard to the relationship any of the four saw between the *Buddha Dharma* and their own social

activism. On the one hand, it must be recognized that none of these four regarded themselves as specialists in either Buddhist doctrine or social/political/economic theory. Rather, as Buddhist priests, they believed they were attempting to address the social roots of the suffering they saw around them.

It should also be noted that the Japanese government attempted, even before their convictions, to turn all of those allegedly involved in the High Treason Incident into "non-persons." One example of this was the fact that the entire court proceedings were conducted behind closed doors with no press coverage allowed, for to do so, the Government argued, would be ". . . prejudicial to peace and order, or to the maintenance of public morality . . ." (Notehelfer 186).

In yet another example of police actions, Gudō's temple of Rinsenji (林泉寺) was raided and all his writings and

correspondence taken away as evidence never to be seen again. The only things left behind were a few statues of *Buddha Shākyamuni* that Gudō had carved and presented to his parishioners. Even his death did not satisfy the authorities, for they would not allow his name to appear on so much as his gravemarker at Rinsenji. In fact, when one of his parishioners subsequently dared to leave some flowers on his grave, the police instituted a search throughout the village of Ōhiradai (大平台), located in the mountainous Hakone district of Kanagawa prefecture, to find the offender.

## The Ven. Uchiyama Gudō

### Early Life

Uchiyama was born on May 17, 1874 in the village of Ojiya (小千谷町) in Niigata Prefecture. His childhood (lay) name was Keikichi (慶吉), and he was the oldest of four

children. Gudō's father, Naokichi (直吉) made his living as a woodworker and carver, specializing in Buddhist statues, family altars, and associated implements. As a child, Gudō learned this trade from his father, and would later carve Buddhist statues himself, giving them to his parishioners at Rinsenji.

Even today these simple yet serene nine inch tall carvings of *Buddha Shākyamuni* are highly valued among the villagers. As previously noted, they were one of the very few things directly associated with Gudō which would escape destruction at the hands of the police at the time of his arrest and subsequent execution.

As a child, Gudō was noted for his academic ability, to the point of being presented an award for academic excellence by the prefectural governor. Equally important, however, is that at an early age he came under the influence of the thinking of a social reformer by the name of Sakura

Sōgorō (佐倉宗五郎) . Thus, discussions of such issues as the need for land reform and women's voting rights became an integral part of his childhood education.

Gudō lost his father at the age of sixteen. In his book, *Henkaku o motometa Bukkyōsha* , Inagaki Masami identifies this early death as a significant factor in Gudō's later decision to enter the Buddhist priesthood (110). Thus, on April 12, 1897, Gudō underwent ordination in the Sōtō Zen sect as a disciple of the Ven. Sakazume Kōjū (坂詰孝重) , abbot of Hōzōji temple (宝増寺) .

Over the following seven years, Gudō would both study Buddhism academically and train as a Zen novice in a number of Sōtō Zen institutions, chief among them the monastery of Kaizōji (海蔵寺) in Kanagawa prefecture. On October 10, 1901 Gudō became the *Dharma* successor of the Ven. Miyagi Jitsubyō (宮城実苗) , abbot of Rinsenji. Three years later,

on February 9, 1904, Gudō succeeded his master as Rinsenji's abbot, thus bringing to an end his formal Zen training.

The temple Gudō acceded to was, even by the standards of that day, humble in the extreme. For one thing, it had no more than forty impoverished families to provide financial support. Aside from a small thatched roof Main Hall, its chief assets were two trees, one a persimmon and the other a chestnut, located on the temple grounds. Village tradition states that every autumn Gudō would invite the villagers to the temple to divide the harvest from these trees equally among themselves.

In his discussions with village youth, Gudō once again directed his attention to the problem of rural poverty. He identified the root of the problem as being an unjust economic system, one in which a few individuals owned the bulk of the land and the majority of the rural population were reduced to tenancy. Gudō thus became an outspoken

advocate of land reform, something that would eventually come to pass, but not until many years later, only after Japan's defeat in the Pacific War.

What is significant about Gudō's advocacy of land reform is that he based his position on his understanding of Buddhism. In discussing this period of his life in the minutes of his later pretrial hearing, Gudō states:

The year was 1904. . . . When I reflected on the way in which priests of my sect had undergone religious training in China in former times, I realized how beautiful it had been. Here were two or three hundred persons who, living in one place at one time, shared a communal lifestyle in which they wore the same clothing and ate the same food. I held to the ideal that if this could be applied to one village, one county or one country, what an extremely good system would be created (Inagaki 112-13).

Clearly, for Gudō, the traditional Buddhist organizational structure, i.e. the *samgha*, with its communal lifestyle and lack of personal property, was the model from which he drew his inspiration for societal reform.

It was also in 1904 that Gudō had his first significant contact with a much broader, secular social reform movement, i.e. anarcho-socialism. Gudō appears to have first come into contact with this movement as a reader of a newly established newspaper, the *Heimin Shimbun* (The Commoner's News/平民新聞). By the early months of 1904 this newspaper had established itself as Tokyo's leading advocate of the socialist cause, and Gudō would later express its impact on him as follows: "When I began reading the *Heimin Shimbun* at that time [1904], I realized that its principles were identical with my own and therefore I became an anarcho-socialist" (Inagaki 115).

Gudō was not content, however, to be a mere reader of this newspaper. In its January 17, 1904 edition, he wrote the following:

As a propagator of Buddhism I teach that "all sentient beings have the *Buddha*-nature" and that "within the *Dharma* there is equality, with neither superior nor



inferior." Furthermore, I teach that "all sentient beings are my children." Having taken these golden words as the basis of my faith, I discovered that they are in complete agreement with the principles of socialism. It was thus that I became a believer in socialism (Kashiwagi 29).

The phrase, "all sentient beings have the *Buddha*-nature" is, of course, one of the central themes of the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra*). The phrase, "all sentient beings are my children" is also taken from the same *sūtra* while the phrase, "within the *Dharma* there is equality, with neither superior or inferior" comes from the *Diamond Sūtra* (*Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*). Regrettably, the preceding brief statement is the only extant exposition we have of Gudō's understanding of the social implications of the *Buddha Dharma*.

Even this brief statement, however, puts Gudō in direct opposition to Meiji Buddhist leaders like Shimaji Mokurai. In his 1879 essay entitled *Sabetsu byōdō*, Shimaji maintained

that distinctions in social standing, wealth, etc. were as permanent as differences in age, sex, and language. Socialism, therefore, was flawed because it emphasized only social and economic equality. That is to say, socialists failed to understand the basic Buddhist teaching that 'difference is identical with equality' (*sabetsu soku byōdō*/差別即平等). Or phrased somewhat more philosophically, socialists confused the temporal world of form (*yūkei*/有形) with the transcendent world of formlessness (*mukei*/無形), failing to recognize the underlying unity of the two.

As the following chapter will demonstrate, it was Shimaji's position that would gain acceptance within institutional Buddhism.

#### As Village Priest and Social Activist

Of the eighty-two persons who eventually expressed their allegiance to socialism in the pages of the *Heimin Shimbun*, only Gudō and one other, Kōtoku Shūsui (幸徳秋

水) , would later become directly implicated in the High Treason Incident. This fact suggests that Gudō, like Kōtoku, was a leading figure in the nascent socialist movement. That, however, was not the case, for, if nothing else, Gudō's relative physical isolation in the Hakone mountains limited the role that he was able to play. In today's terminology, he might best be described as a rural social activist or reformer who, in his own mind at least, based his thought and actions on his Buddhist faith.

Ironically, it was Gudō's relative physical isolation that would eventually thrust him into the historical, though secretive, limelight. The background to this development was the ever increasing efforts of the Japanese Government and police to suppress the growing socialist movement with its pacifist platform. This suppression took the form of repeated bannings of politically offensive issues of the *Heimin Shimbun*; arresting, fining, and ultimately jailing the

newspaper's editors; physically breaking up socialist meetings and rallies, etc. With two of its editors (including Kōtoku Shūsui) on their way to jail for alleged violations of the Press Laws, the *Heimin Shimbun* printed its last issue on January 25, 1905. As F.G. Notehelfer has pointed out, "The dissolution of the *Heimin Shimbun* virtually brought to a close the socialist anti-war movement" (107). The Japanese Government would now be able to continue its war with Czarist Russia, free from the criticism of domestic anti-war socialists.

The war with Russia came to an end with a Japanese victory in September 1905. The victory, however, was a costly one, both in terms of the government's expenditures on armaments and the high number of military casualties. Thus, when it became general knowledge that the peace terms did not include a war indemnity, "riots broke out in

Tokyo with resultant heavy casualties. Martial law was immediately established" (Borton 278).

In this atmosphere of significant social unrest, the Japanese Government pursued its suppression of socialism even more relentlessly than before. Thus, on February 22, 1907, the Japanese Socialist Party was banned and socialists were harassed, beaten and jailed. By 1908, unable to hold public meetings, or publish either newspapers or magazines, what was left of the socialist movement went underground. Unable to openly advocate socialism, some members of the movement came to believe that the only way they could succeed was by some form of "direct action," action directed against the Imperial House itself.

It was these circumstances which prompted Gudō to visit Tokyo in September 1908. He not only met with Kōtoku Shūsui but purchased the necessary equipment to set up an underground press within his own temple. Strictly speaking,

his was not an "underground" press at all, but an "under the *Buddha*" press since the printing equipment was hidden in the storage area located underneath and to the rear of the *Buddha* altar in the Main Hall. Gudō used this press to turn out not only popular socialist tracts and pamphlets, but he also wrote and published his own materials, including his best known work, *Nyūgoku Kinen - Museifu Kyōsan - Kakumei* (In Commemoration of Imprisonment - Anarcho-Communism - Revolution/入獄紀念・無政府共產・革命).

The preceding work is interesting for a number of reasons, not least of all because it contains a pointed critique of the then prevalent understanding of the Buddhist doctrine of *karma*. After beginning with a lament for the poverty of tenant farmers, Gudō writes:

Is this [your poverty] the result, as Buddhists maintain, of the retribution due you because of your evil deeds in the past? Listen, friends, if, having now entered the 20th century, you were to be deceived by superstitions

like this, you would still be [no better than] oxen or horses. Would this please you? (Kashiwagi 197)

Gudō clearly understood that the Buddhist doctrine of *karma* was being interpreted as providing the justification for social and economic inequality. That is to say, if tenant farmers were impoverished, they had no one to blame but themselves and their own past actions. Shaku Sōen was typical of those Buddhist leaders who advocated this interpretation. He said:

We are born in the world of variety; some are poor and unfortunate, others are wealthy and happy. The state of variety will be repeated again and again in our future lives. But to whom shall we complain of our misery? To none but ourselves! (*Eastern Buddhist* 136).

Gudō's criticism of popular Buddhism, however, did not stop with the above. Previously, on May 30, 1904, Gudō had written a letter of protest to the abbot of Jōsenji (常泉寺), the Ven. Orehashi Daikō (折橋大光). In this letter he requested that the Sōtō sect cleanse itself of the practice

of what amounted to selling temple abbotships to the highest bidder. When Daikō refused to endorse his position, Kashiwagi reports that Gudō expressed his determination to push for this reform on his own (32).

Returning again to Gudō's earlier "underground" writing, its real significance lay not in its critique of certain aspects of Buddhist doctrine, but rather in its blistering denial of the heart and soul of the Meiji political system, i.e. the emperor system. It was, in fact, this denial of Japan's Imperial system that more than any other single factor led to Gudō's subsequent arrest, imprisonment, and ultimately, to his execution. He wrote as follows:

There are three leeches who suck the people's blood: the Emperor, the rich, and the big landowners. . . . The big boss of the present government, the Emperor, is not the son of the gods as your primary school teachers and others would have you believe. The ancestors of the present Emperor came forth from one corner of Kyushu, killing and robbing people as they went. They then destroyed their fellow thieves, Nagasune-hiko and others. . . . It should be readily obvious that the Emperor



is not a god if you but think about it for a moment. When it is said that [the Imperial Dynasty] has continued for 2,500 years, it may seem as if [the present Emperor] is divine, but down through the ages the emperors have been tormented by foreign opponents and, domestically, treated as puppets by their own vassals (Kashiwagi 201).

## Imprisonment

Gudō printed between 1-2,000 copies of the above tract and mailed them to former readers of the *Heimin Shimbun* in small lots wrapped in plain paper. Notehelfer notes that its radical content, especially its scathing denial of the emperor system, so frightened some recipients that they immediately burned all the copies they received (170). Others, however, were so excited by its contents that they rushed out onto to the streets to distribute it to passers-by. Distributed in this fashion, it was, predictably, not long before copies fell into the hands of the police. This in turn sparked an immediate nationwide search for both its author and production site.

On May 24, 1909 Gudō was arrested on his way back to Rinsenji after having finished a month of Zen training at Eiheiji (永平寺) , one of the Sōtō sect's two head temples. He was initially charged with violations of the press and publications laws and, at first, believed he would simply be fined and released. Upon searching his temple of Rinsenji, however, the police claimed to have discovered a cache of explosive materials including twelve sticks of dynamite, four packages of explosive gelatin, and a supply of fuses.

Kashiwagi claims the charges relating to the possession of explosive materials were false. In an article entitled "*Junkyōsha Uchiyama Gudō*," he states: "The dynamite had been stored at his temple in conjunction with the construction of the Hakone mountain railroad. It had nothing to do with Gudō" (11). Nevertheless, Gudō was convicted of both charges and initially sentenced to a total of twelve

years' imprisonment. On appeal, his sentence was reduced to seven years.

On July 6, 1909, even before his conviction, officials of the Sōtō Zen sect moved to deprive Gudō of his abbotship at Rinsenji. Once convicted, they quickly moved on to yet more serious action. Thus, on June 21, 1910, Gudō was deprived of his status as a Sōtō Zen priest. In spite of their actions, however, Gudō continued to think of himself as a Zen priest and would continue to do so until the end of his life, something that was now, unknown to him, not too far away.

### **Toward a Second Trial**

On May 25, 1910 two socialists, Miyashita Daikichi (宮下太吉) and Niimura Tadao (新村忠雄) were arrested in Nagano prefecture after police searched their quarters and found chemicals used to make explosives. In the minds of the police this was concrete evidence of the existence of a

wider conspiracy against the Imperial House. This in turn led to Kōtoku Shūsui's arrest a week later, and the investigation and interrogation of hundreds of men and women in the following months. By this time Gudō had already been in prison for a full year, yet this did not prevent him from becoming a suspect once again.

At the conclusion of its investigation, charges were brought against a total of twenty-six persons, one of whom, Kanno Sugako (管野須賀子) was a woman. Gudō, too, was included. If convicted under Article 73, i.e. "Crimes against the Throne," of the new criminal code, all of them could face the death penalty. Under Article 73 prosecutors had only to show that the defendants "intended" to bring harm to members of the Imperial House, not that they had acted on this intent in any concrete way. As Notehelfer has written so succinctly, "What was on trial, therefore, were ideas, not facts" (188).

The trial commenced in Tokyo on December 10, 1910. Kanno Sugako, not only admitted in court that she had indeed been involved in the alleged conspiracy but indicated how many others had been involved as well. Upon being asked by the presiding judge, Tsuru Jōichirō (鶴丈一郎) if she wished to make a final statement, Kanno responded:

From the outset I knew that our plan would not succeed if we let a lot of people in on it. Only four of us were involved in the plan. It is a crime that involves only the four of us. But this court, as well as the preliminary interrogators, treated it as a plan that involved a large number of people. That is a complete misunderstanding of the case. Because of this misunderstanding a large number of people have been made to suffer. You are aware of this. . . . If these people are killed for something that they knew nothing about, not only will it be a grave tragedy for the persons concerned, but their relatives and friends will feel bitterness toward the government. Because we hatched this plan a large number of innocent people may be executed (Hane 57).

In her diary entry for January 21, 1911, Kanno identified the four individuals involved in the plot besides herself as

being Kōtoku, Miyashita, Niimura and Furukawa Rikisaku (古河力作) .

As to Gudō's role in the conspiracy, Notehelfer has this to say:

Uchiyama [Gudō]'s lack of prudence expressed itself not only in his tracts and pamphlets, but in his conversations with virtual strangers. His admiration for Kōtoku was echoed in his own effort to make bombs and recruit a band of five or six 'death-defying men' to assassinate the Crown Prince. No doubt he considered himself a participant in what he described as Kōtoku's 'one last measure,' but unknown to him police detectives had already singled him out as the source of several seditious pamphlets. . . . the police investigation into Uchiyama's activities served to increase suspicions that an anti-Imperial plot was in the hatching (172).

If this version of events were true, it would appear that not only was Gudō involved in the alleged conspiracy, but he was even one of the ringleaders.

Paralleling Notehelfer's indictment of Gudō, Chief Prosecutor Hiranuma Kiichirō (平沼棋一郎) , identified Gudō's earlier writing, containing his uncompromising denial

of the emperor system, as "the most heinous book ever written since the beginning of Japanese history" (Inagaki 128). He also mentioned a second tract which Gudō had printed, entitled "*Teikoku gunjin zayū no mei*" (帝国軍人座右之銘/A Handbook for Imperial Soldiers) . Here Gudō had gone so far as to call on soldiers to desert their encampments en masse (Kashiwagi 205). In addition, Gudō had, as already noted, repeatedly and forcefully advocated both land reform in the countryside and democratic rights for all citizens.

An alternative view of Gudō's role in the alleged conspiracy comes from a somewhat surprising source, namely the administrative headquarters of the Sōtō Zen sect itself. In the July 1993 issue of *Sōtō Shūhō* (曹洞宗報) , the administrative organ for this sect, an announcement was made that as of April 13, 1993 Uchiyama Gudō's status as a Sōtō priest had been restored. The announcement went on to say, "[Gudō's] original expulsion had been a

mistake caused by the sect's having swallowed the [then] government's repressive policies" (16).

The explanation as to what caused this turnabout in the sect's attitude toward Gudō was contained in a subsequent article which appeared in the September 1993 issue of the same periodical. Written by the sect's "Bureau for the Protection and Advocacy of Human Rights" (曹洞宗人權擁護推進本部), the highlights of the article are as follows:

When viewed by today's standards of respect for human rights, Uchiyama Gudō's writings contained elements which should be seen as farsighted. Thus, we have much to learn from them, for today his writings are respected by people in various walks of life, starting with the mass media. In our sect, the restoration of Uchiyama Gudō's reputation is something that will both bring solace to his spirit and contribute to the establishment within this sect of a method of dealing with questions concerning human rights. . . . We now recognize that Gudō was a victim of the national policy of that day. . . . The dynamite found in his temple had been placed there for safekeeping by a railroad company laying track through the Hakone mountains and had nothing to do with him. . . . The sect's [original] actions were those which strongly aligned the sect on the side of an establishment



dominated by the emperor system. These actions were not those designed to protect the unique Buddhist character of the sect's priests. . . . On this occasion of the restoration of Uchiyama Gudō's reputation, we must reflect on way in which our sect has ingratiated itself with both the political powers of the day and a state under the suzerainty of the Emperor (12-16).

It is obvious that the above stated position of the Sōtō sect cannot be taken at face value. That is to say, it presents no evidence to substantiate the claim of Gudō's innocence in the alleged conspiracy against the Imperial family. Rather, it merely repeats Kashiwagi's earlier claim that Gudō was innocent of the charge of possessing explosive materials. In that sense, this statement must be treated with some scepticism, perhaps more as a reflection of the sect's regret for what it came to recognize (in post-war years) as its slavish subservience to the state. (For further evidence of the Sōtō sect's post-war 'remorse' see Chapter Eleven).

As to the question of whether a definitive statement can be made in this case about the guilt or innocence of any of the defendants, all of the evidence (or rather lack of evidence) suggests it cannot. In the first instance, as has been noted, the government's attempt to turn the accused into 'non-persons' resulted in the destruction of critical evidence. More importantly, when in 1975 the descendants of one of those originally convicted in the case petitioned for a retrial, the Ministry of Justice stated clearly for the first time that the trial's transcripts no longer existed.

Even if the transcripts had existed, it is highly doubtful that they would have provided definitive evidence, given that everyone directly connected with the trial was, by then, deceased and therefore unavailable for questioning about their statements and actions either in or out of court. It was factors like these which, at the end of his study, finally forced Notehelfer to admit that "an element of

mystery . . . continues to surround the trial" (185). It is quite possible, if not likely, that it may always do so.

In any event, there was never any doubt at the time that the defendants would be found guilty. The only uncertainty was how severe their penalties would be. On January 18, 1911, little more than a month after the trial had begun, that uncertainty vanished when the Court of Cassation (大審院) rendered its verdict. All defendants were found guilty, and twenty-four of them, Gudō and the three other Buddhist priests included, were condemned to death. One day later, on January 19th, an Imperial rescript was issued which commuted the sentences of twelve of the convicted to life imprisonment. In this way, three of the Buddhist priests, i.e. Takagi Kenmei, Sasaki Dōgen, and Mineo Setsudō, were spared the hangman's noose, but, as already noted, all of them would later die in prison.

## Toward Execution

As to why the government had been so determined to convict all of the defendants, Mikiso Hane has written:

The authorities (under Prime Minister Katsura Tarō (桂太郎) who had been directed by the *genrō* (元老) Yamagata Aritomo (山県有朋) to come down hard on the leftists) rounded up everybody who had the slightest connection with Kōtoku and charged them with complicity in the plot (56).

Notehelfer further clarifies the cause of Aritomo's concern as the following:

One thing the [court] testimony of nearly all the defendants revealed at the preliminary examination was a loss of faith in the divinity of the Emperor. Yamagata considered this loss of respect for the core of the national polity a threat to the future of the nation (187).

Acting with uncustomary haste, the government executed Gudō and his ten alleged male co-conspirators inside the Ichigaya Prison compound on the morning of January 24, 1911, less than a week after their conviction. Kanno Sugako, the only woman, would die the following day.

Gudō was the fifth to die on the 24th, and Yoshida Kyūichi records that as he climbed the scaffold stairs, "he gave not the slightest hint of emotional distress, rather he appeared serene, even cheerful. So much so that the attending prison chaplain bowed as he passed" (476).

The next day, when Gudō's younger brother, Seiji (政治), came to collect his body, he demanded that the coffin be opened. Looking at Gudō's peaceful countenance, Seiji said, "Oh, older brother, you passed away without suffering. . . . What a superb face you have in death!" (Yoshida, *Bukkyōshi* 478).

## CHAPTER 5: INSTITUTIONAL BUDDHISM'S REJECTION OF PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL ACTION

It may be fairly argued that the Buddhist connection to the overall High Treason Incident was, in terms of the numbers involved, no more than of minor historical importance. Yet, this does not mean that the High Treason Incident did not have a significant impact on the leadership of Japan's traditional Buddhist sects, first and foremost on the leadership of the Sōtō Zen sect. It was, in fact, in the reaction of the Buddhist sectarian leadership that we see the most enduring influence of this incident on the subsequent relationship between institutional Buddhism and the state.

### Sōtō Zen Sect Reaction

Although Gudō had earlier been ousted from the Sōtō Zen priesthood, the administrative head of that sect, the

Ven. Morita Goyū (森田悟由) , on the day preceding Gudō's execution, felt obliged to issue a statement abjectly apologizing for not having adequately controlled the likes of Gudō. In part, Morita said:

I am profoundly dumbstruck that there could have been someone like Uchiyama Gudō in this sect, a sect whose basic principle has been, since its founding, to respect the Emperor and protect the state.<sup>2</sup> I therefore apologize most profusely and profoundly and pledge that I will guide and educate the priests of this sect to devote all of their energies to their proper duties and thereby actively practice their service to society (*Sōtō Shūhō*, No. 340).

In addition to this apology, the Sōtō sect hierarchy also issued a number of directives to all of the temples in sect as well as to all sect-affiliated educational institutions. Typical of these was the directive of February 15, 1911 which, after condemning Gudō yet again, advised sect adherents to "exercise vigilance over both themselves and others . . .in order to expiate this most serious crime in the sect's last one thousand years" (*Sōtō Shūhō*, No. 340).

## Rinzai Zen Sect Reaction

In almost identical language, the leadership of the various branches of the Rinzai Zen sect issued similar apologies and directives. In the case of the Myōshinji branch (妙心寺派) of the Rinzai Zen sect, the administrative head, the Ven. Toyota Dokutan (豊田毒湛) had this to say:

The essence of the Rinzai sect since its founding in this country has been to protect the nation through the spread of Zen. It is for this reason that in front of the central *Buddha* image in our sect's temples we have reverently placed a memorial tablet inscribed with the words, "May the current Emperor live for ten thousand years," thereby making our temples training centers for pacifying and preserving our country. . . . We make certain that adherents of our sect always keep in mind love of country and absolute loyalty [to the Emperor]. . . .that they don't ignore the doctrine of *karma* or fall into the trap of believing in the heretical idea of 'evil equality' (悪平等) [as advocated by socialists, et. al.] (*Bukkyōshi* 510).

Commenting on Dokutan's statement, Yoshida points out that "given the Rinzai sect's inability to show how its tenets were incompatible with anarchism. . . it could not



help but lose its right to speak about modern society" (*Bukkyōshi* 511).

It is also noteworthy that in Dokutan's condemnation of "evil equality" can be heard an echo of Shimaji's earlier critique of socialists for their failure to understand the identity of difference and equality, and confusing the worlds of form and formlessness. Ketelaar shows just how important Shimaji's position had become when he writes:

The bifurcation of form and formless becomes a dominant theoretical position of late-nineteenth-century Buddhist thought. It serves to legitimate Buddhism's involvement in war . . . . it provides ammunition for the attack upon Western expansionist policies in Asia and for Buddhism's assistance in Japan's own expansionist programs (134).

### Shin Sect Reaction

The Shin sect's leadership, for its part, was no less appalled by the actions of one its own, i.e. the Ven. Takagi Kenmei. Two administrative leaders of the Higashi Honganji branch of the Shin sect, i.e. the Vens. Ōtani Eiryō (大谷瑩亮)

and Kuwakado Shidō (桑門志道) issued an admonition to all subordinate temples on January 20, 1911. It stated in part:

Last year [1910] there were those who, having adopted socialist extremism, hatched an extraordinary plot. Those who did so both violated a basic principle of this sect, which teaches the coexistence of relative and ultimate truth, and cast aside the Buddhist doctrine of causality. This is not the way in which priests of this sect should act. . . . Nevertheless. . . there is such a priest [Takagi Kenmei] in this sect. . . . Adherents of this sect should quickly rectify their thinking in accordance with this sect's teaching that *Rāja Dharma* [secular law] is paramount and relations between men should be based on benevolence. . . . They must be taught, in accordance with this sect's teaching of the coexistence of relative and ultimate truth, just how deep is the gratitude they owe to both Heaven and their Country. . . . Especially those in this sect in supervisory roles must pay special attention to what the priests and laity under their supervision are doing. . . . You must eliminate misconceptions, being ever vigilant (*Chūgai Nippō*, No. 3259).

Even though there were no priests of the Nishi Honganji branch directly involved in the trial, the administrative head of that sect, the Ven. Ōtani Sonyū (大谷尊由/1886-1939), felt compelled to issue his own statement. It began

by noting that society was being "infected by dangerous thoughts" and went on to point out that "those who mistakenly involved themselves in such lawless speech and actions are not simply enemies of the State but of the [Shin] sect as well."

As justification for his position, Sonyū pointed out that Japan was a "flawless State" to which all sect adherents should selflessly devote themselves. In particular, "as teachers, sect priests should observe tendencies in social thought in order to promote national stability and maintain social order." In so doing, they would insure that "the splendour of our sect will be exalted" (*Honzan rokuji*). As to the question of what should be done in the event that *Rāja Dharma* ever came into conflict with *Buddha Dharma*, neither Sonyū nor the other Shin leaders have anything to say.

## The Scholars' Reaction(s)

In March 1912 a book was published under the title of "Essays on Reverence for the Emperor and Patriotism" (*Sonnō aikoku ron*/尊皇愛国論). The nineteen separate essays contained in this work were written by fifteen of Japan's leading scholars, one government official, and three intellectuals, including the New Buddhist leader, Ōuchi Seiran. In addition to Seiran, there were such well-known Buddhist scholars as Inoue Enryō and Nanjō Bunyū, not to mention Murakami Senshō (村上專精/1851-1929), a noted Buddhist historian.

The book's connection to the High Treason Incident is made clear in its preface. There the Incident is referred to as "marking the greatest disgrace of the Meiji period" (1). As a result of the disturbances this Incident caused, the book's editor, Akiyama Goan (秋山悟庵), decided to ask the leading thinkers of his day to clarify the true nature of

reverence for the Emperor and patriotism "in order to exterminate vermin and provide the material to fill up ant holes" (2).

The titles of the various essays provide a good indication of the book's content. Tokyo University Professor Inoue Tetsujirō (井上哲次郎/1855-1944) wrote on "The Noble Cause of the Founding of the State," while Murakami Senshō contributed an essay entitled: "Loyalty (to the Emperor) and Filial Piety in Buddhism." Ōuchi Seiran's essay was entitled: "On Revering the Emperor and Repaying [One's Debt of Gratitude to] the *Buddha*."

Seiran used this essay to renew his attack on Christianity, writing:

Christianity and our Imperial House can never coexist, for it is impossible to truly revere the Imperial House while believing in Christianity . . . . Christianity not only turns its back on the righteous Buddhist teaching of cause and effect, but it is a heretical teaching that tears apart the establishment of our Imperial House and destroys the foundation of our country . . . . therefore

we must all join together to prevent this heretical teaching from spreading through our land (49-52).

Inoue Enryō entitled his essay: "A Treatise on the National Polity, Loyalty (to the Emperor), and Filial Piety."

In his essay he presented the following syllogism:

The land of our nation is sacred, and since our nation developed on this sacred land, it should also be called sacred. . . . Our Imperial House is sacred, and since all of the subjects in this land are its offspring - children of the gods and grandchildren of the Emperor - therefore they are sacred. . . . Our loyalty [to the Emperor] and patriotism are sacred. . . . whereas in the West such things are private matters and therefore lifeless. Why? Because the people and the King [in Western countries] don't become one family. . . . since society is based on individuals who think only of themselves (144-149).

In the above comments it is not difficult to see that the Buddhist essayists were determined to demonstrate that they, no less than their secular counterparts, were totally and completely dedicated to the Emperor and the state. In this effort, it must be admitted they were eminently successful. Vermin like Uchiyama Gudō had indeed been

exterminated, and their ant holes filled up if not once and for all at least for some time to come!

### Government Reaction

The Japanese Government, for its part, was no less interested than the sectarian Buddhist leaders in ensuring that religious figures would never again oppose its policies. With this goal in mind, it sponsored a "Conference of the Three Religions" (*Sankyō kaidō*/三教会同) which opened on February 25, 1912. This conference was attended by a total of 71 representatives from Buddhism, Shinto and Christianity as well as numerous sponsoring government ministers and officials. The government's unprecedented inclusion of Christian representatives revealed that the patriotic fervor of the new creed, as demonstrated during the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, had been officially recognized.

Sakurai Masashi notes that the conference concerned itself with passing a number of resolutions calling for such

things as support of the Imperial Way (*Kōdō*/皇道) and promotion of national morality. Conference participants also advocated cooperation between politics, religion, and education as a way to ensure national prosperity (444-49). Notto Thele makes the connection between the High Treason Incident and this conference very clear, when, after describing the conference agenda, he states:

The plot to assassinate the Emperor in 1910 made a great impact upon the political situation . . . there is no doubt that the government policy toward religions and its support of religious cooperation was stimulated by apprehensions about socialism and other 'dangerous thoughts' (252).

Kitagawa takes a position similar to Thele's and states that by bringing representatives of the three religions together, the Government wished to "secure their cooperation in halting discontent and unrest among the populace" (232). Anesaki also links the High Treason Incident and this conference when he states:



. . . the Government convened a meeting of religious leaders representative of Buddhist, Christian, and Shinto Churches, and asked for their co-operation in ameliorating the situation, thereby implying the fight against the radicals (388-89). [Italics mine.]

In this effort, it must be admitted, the Government was eminently successful. Thele notes that as a result of this conference:

Many influential leaders in the Buddhist and Christian establishments cooperated with each other to strengthen the state, fostering patriotic spirit, national unity, and moral strength in a time they perceived as fraught with danger (252).

Although the practical results of this "cooperation" will be covered in the following sections of this dissertation, let it suffice at this point to note that through the end of the Pacific War, no major Buddhist (or Christian) leaders would ever again speak out in any organized way against government policies, either civilian or military, domestic or foreign.

To state that this one conference in and of itself brought about the subservience of religion to the state would, of course, be an exaggeration. The preceding sections have disclosed that in Buddhism's case this tendency can be clearly seen throughout the Meiji period, with roots reaching back even further. On the other hand, it is no exaggeration to state that this conference was akin to driving the last nail in the coffin of any semblance of Buddhist independence from state policies, especially those relating to questions of war and peace.

It is this near total if not total obedience to the government on the part of Japan's religious leaders, Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike, that was destined to become the most enduring religious legacy of not just the High Treason Incident and its aftermath, but of the entire Meiji period, which itself came to end in 1912.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Despite his priestly personal name, i.e. Dōgen, there is some uncertainty regarding Sasaki's status as a Shin sect priest. What is uncontested, however, is that he was born and raised in the Shin-affiliated temple of Sokushōji (即生寺) located in the city of Kumamoto in Kumamoto prefecture. At the time of his arrest he was living in this temple where his older brother, Tokubo (徳母), was the abbot.

<sup>2</sup>The initial founder of the Sōtō Zen sect in Japan was Zen Master Dōgen (道元/1200-53). The question naturally arises as to whether his views toward the state and Imperial system are accurately represented here. The answer is a qualified 'yes' in that there are passages in his writings which support Goyū's interpretation. Other passages, however, suggest far more limited, if not conditional, support. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see the author's article entitled, "Zen Master Dōgen's Social Consciousness" in the

*Journal of Asian Culture* (Vol.1, No.1, 1977) published by the  
GSA of the Dept. of Oriental Languages, UCLA.

## CHAPTER 6: THE INCORPORATION OF BUDDHISM INTO THE JAPANESE WAR MACHINE

### Within Japan Proper

Shaku Sōen, it will be remembered, had said that Japan was fighting the Russo-Japanese War with "no egoistic purpose" in mind. Yet, as Beasley pointed out:

The Russo-Japanese war had set Japan on the road towards acquiring an empire of her own . . . . For the first time in modern history an Asian country had defeated one of the powers in full-scale war. By doing so, it had secured both real advantages and symbols of prestige: a paramount position in Korea and valuable rights in South Manchuria, to be added to Formosa [Taiwan] and a share in the China trade (172-173).

Not content with "a paramount position in Korea," Japan proceeded, in 1910, to force the Korean King to sign a Treaty of Annexation. Korea lost its independence and Japan acquired, at last, a major colony on the Asian mainland.

Summing up Japan's position in the second decade of the 1900s, Burton wrote:

[Japan] had been transformed into a world power which dominated the entire Far East. It seemed to have been catapulted onto the world stage by an uncontrollable and compelling urge to become strong, to force its will on any who challenged its position, and to be the leader of Asia (272-73).

In connection with the above, the question was raised, both within and without Japan, as to what was it that had enabled Japan to so quickly transform itself into a world power. Though certainly not the only voices within Japan attempting to address this question, Japan's Buddhist leaders, especially those in the Zen tradition, believed they knew the answer.

Nukariya Kaiten (忽滑谷快天/1867-1934), a noted Buddhist scholar and subsequent president of Sōtō Zen-affiliated Komazawa University, wrote a book in English, published in 1913, entitled *Religion of the Samurai: A Study*

*of Zen Philosophy and Discipline in China and Japan.* According to Kaiten, not only are Zen ideas "in harmony with those of the New Buddhists" (xii i), but "it is Zen that modern Japan, especially after the Russo-Japanese War, has acknowledged as an ideal doctrine for her rising generation" (xvi).

In a later section of his book, Kaiten described the rationale for the renewed interest in Zen as follows:

After the Restoration of the Meiji the popularity of Zen began to wane, and for some thirty years remained in inactivity; but since the Russo-Japanese War its revival has taken place. And now it is looked upon as an ideal faith, both for a nation full of hope and energy, and for a person who has to fight his own way in the strife of life. Bushidō, or the code of chivalry, should be observed not only by the soldier in the battle-field, but by every citizen in the struggle for existence. If a person be a person and not a beast, then he must be a Samurai - brave, generous, upright, faithful, and manly, full of self-respect and self-confidence, and at the same time full of the spirit of self-sacrifice (50-51).

When Kaiten looked around for a contemporary personage who embodied the Samurai spirit, he found it in none other than General Nogi, the Zen trained hero of the

Russo-Japanese War. Nogi's spirit of self-sacrifice was so great that upon the death of Emperor Meiji in 1912, the General (and his wife) had committed ritual suicide, i.e. *seppuku* / 切腹, in a traditional practice known as *junshi* / 殉死, i.e. following one's lord into death.

In as much as the practice of *junshi* had been identified as an antiquated custom, and therefore forbidden, by the Tokugawa shogunate as early as 1663, Nogi's suicide could not escape a certain amount of controversy. As Carol Gluck has noted, "Nogi's act . . . aroused heated debate over its ethics and appropriateness among the intellectuals of the day" (221). Typical of this controversy was the following newspaper editorial:

General Nogi's death marked the completion of Japan's Bushidō of old. And while emotionally we express the greatest respect, rationally we regret we cannot approve. One can only hope that this act will not long blight the future of our national morality. We can appreciate the General's intention; we must not learn from his behaviour (*Tōkyō Asahi Shinbun*).



If the public debate over Nogi's death was marked by a certain degree of ambivalence, Kaiten had not slightest doubt as to its true significance. He expressed his view as follows:

We can find an incarnation of Bushidō in the late General Nogi, the hero of Port Arthur, who, after the sacrifice of his two sons for the country in the Russo-Japanese War, gave up his own and his wife's life for the sake of the deceased Emperor. He died not in vain, as some might think, because his simplicity, uprightness, loyalty, bravery, self-control, and self-sacrifice, all combined in his last act, surely inspire the rising generation with the spirit of the Samurai to give birth to hundreds of Nogis (50-51).

Kaiten was, of course, not the only Buddhist leader to express thoughts like these. As early as 1905 Shaku Sōen expressed his own views in this regard during the course of his second visit to the United States. He wrote:

Fortunately, Japan had just won the war, and that made people everywhere sit up and take note of her. In fact, the whole world was surprised that Japan had defeated Russia. It was impossible to explain Japan's string of military victories in terms of military equipment and logistics. . . . [It] was due to the samurai

spirit, the Spirit of Japan, nurtured by the country over the past two thousand years. (Yokoyama 144).

Sōen went on to state that this Spirit of Japan had come from "a single spiritual teaching" which he identified as having developed out of an amalgamation of Confucianism, Shintōism and Buddhism. In a meeting with President Theodore Roosevelt during his sojourn in the U.S., Sōen described the Buddhist contribution to the Spirit of Japan as being centered on the concept of "self-sacrifice":

To sacrifice the self, seen from the inside, is centered around the abandoning of what Buddhism calls the small self, so as to serve the greater cause. . . . I believe that the readiness for self-sacrifice is found in the peoples of all other countries, but never is it so clearly manifest as in the Japanese. This spirit is one of the factors contributing to the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War. There are many other factors, but among the more intangible ones is this readiness to give up one's life" (Yokoyama 145-46).

As to what this spirit of self-sacrifice should be directed towards, Sōen is quite clear. On the one hand, those imbued with this spirit ought "to work for justice and

the common good." On the other hand, they should also "serve the state" and recognize "that it is increasingly important that everyone make an effort to serve the Emperor" (Yokoyama 145-148).

Sharf points out that Sōen's Western lectures on Buddhism had two major purposes, the first being "to justify Japanese military aggression." Secondly, Sōen wished to demonstrate his interest in the then popular intellectual pastime of "*nihonjinron*" (日本人論), i.e. theories concerning the alleged uniqueness of the Japanese (10).

Even after his return to Japan in 1906, Sōen continued to develop this theme. This in turn led to yet another invitation to travel abroad, only this time the invitation came from the Japanese-owned South Manchuria Railway Company.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Sōen delivered a series of lectures in 1912 entitled "The Spirit of the Yamato Race" to members of the Japanese colonial administration in both Korea and

Manchuria. Murakami notes that there was nothing unusual about Sōen's trip, for all of Japan's traditional Buddhist sects had a general policy of "[maintaining] Buddhism's reputation as 'protector of the country'" (54).

Although Sōen's and Kaiten's views may be considered representative of the post-Russo-Japanese War era, this does not mean that all Buddhist leaders were in agreement with them. One notable voice of dissent came from Ōtani Sonyū (大谷尊由/18??-19??), the administrative head of the Nishi-Honganji branch of the Shin sect. His was not simply a dissenting voice but, in his conclusion, a prophetic voice as well. For this reason, it is quoted here at length:

There was a time when the phrase "for the sake of the state" wielded such a power as to suppress all other considerations, making the people subservient to the despotic will of statesmen, and even the spiritual leaders had meekly to submit to their sometimes arrogant and inflexible orders. This was all right if the state was representative of things that are good, just and humane; but as history tells us, no state has ever proved in the past to be such a symbol. In fact, every

one of the states that prospered and disappeared, or that are now prospering, has been anything but symbolic of justice and love and liberty. Hence the history of the world has been the record of constant struggles and untold suffering. But fortunately, since the termination of the recent war, the world seems to be realizing the enormity of the loss and the foolishness of the greed for power. We are now growing more conscious than ever of the imperative necessity of emphasizing the spiritual side of human life and the fact that our lives are so closely interrelated that whatever things good or bad happen to one nation are sure to affect another. The time is come when we have to abandon the narrow conception of the state which puts one nation's welfare, especially material welfare, above that of the friendly neighbors....

Statesmen have been wont to urge us to sacrifice our personal interest for the state, to abandon our individual claims and even affections for upholding the state as the highest expression of human life. This is all right if the state is also the perfect and most rational symbol of all that we, as individuals, can conceive as good and just and lovable. If the state, on the contrary, betrays our thought of justice and freedom and countermands the dictates of love and humanity, it has no right to continue its existence. If it does not fall by itself, other states will not suffer its ever menacing existence. To obey blindly whatever is claimed by the state, good or bad, just or unjust, is to enslave oneself and to lose one's moral and spiritual individuality. . . . I believe in the existence of the state, for I think it necessary to the enhancement of

real human welfare. But I cannot subscribe to the ideas stoutly upheld by some people who, taking the state for an absolute form of human life, believe in its power of doing anything for its own maintenance, regardless of the consequences either to its own members or to the neighboring states. Inasmuch as no one absolute state can exist by itself and in itself, it requires other states to be its friendly neighbors, for no state can ignore the claims of other states, just as in the case of individuals. If it does this and goes on its own way ignoring its fellow-organizations, it is sure to meet a sad fate and lose its own existence before long (Italics mine) (Holtom 144).

Sonyū wrote the above in 1921, thus "the recent war" to which he referred was W. W. I (1914-19). In this war Japan was allied with Great Britain, France, and the United States against Germany. Choosing to confront the latter nation only where it was weakest, i.e. in its colonial outposts in China and the Pacific, Japan once again emerged victorious, at a relatively low cost to itself in both men and materials.

In spite of its victory, however, Anesaki pointed out that:

The collapse of the great empires, the final outcome of the war and its aftermath, these could not fail to produce profound impressions upon the Japanese. . . . the seriousness of social and moral problems began to demand deep reflections (393-94).

If Sonyū's critical comments may be considered one expression of the deep reflection taking place within the ranks of Buddhist leaders, they must also be viewed as a minority viewpoint. Even Sonyū himself would later abandon his critical stance when, in 1937, he joined the first cabinet of Prince Konoye Fumimaro as the Minister for Colonial Affairs (拓務大臣), a position giving him direct responsibility for running Japan's constantly expanding empire. In addition, he also served as the President of the North China Development Corporation which, as Burton explained, was one of "the Japanese government-owned development corporations . . . primarily concerned with the exploitation of the recently conquered areas [in northern China]" (407).

Returning to the 1920s, Arai Sekizen (新井石禅/18??-19??), administrative head of the Sōtō Zen sect, made the following comments in 1925:

Buddhism does not absolutely oppose war. . . . Peace is man's natural ideal. It is the highest ideal of man. Japan is a lover of peace, so even if she goes into war, it is always a war of peace. . . . In advocating peace and racial equality, we must not forget the state we belong to. Real peace cannot be expected if we forget our state in our love of mankind. . . . If we forget our duty to our country, no matter how we advocate the love of mankind, there will be no real peace. . . . (395-400).

In his discussion of this era, D. C. Holtom pointed out that, Sonyū's critique notwithstanding, it was Sekizen and like-minded leaders whose positions carried the day. Institutional Japanese Buddhism had reached the point where it accepted "practically without qualification the principle that if the nation goes to war, by that very fact the war is sanctified; it becomes a crusade for peace and good will on



earth." He then added, "[Japanese Buddhism] . . . proclaimed all Japanese wars holy" (148).

Thus, by the end of the 1920s, if not before, institutional Buddhism had firmly locked itself into ideological support for Japan's ongoing military efforts wherever and whenever they might occur. And occur they soon would, on a scale and over a period of time that dwarfed anything the Japanese people had ever experienced.

### **Within the "Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere"**

Institutional Buddhism's support for the Russo-Japanese War had not been confined to just ideological support or providing military chaplains. At home it had expressed itself in everything from the conduct of special *sutra*-recitation ceremonies believed to ensure victory in battle to social welfare activities like providing financial and in-kind assistance to soldiers' families, especially the

families of those who had fallen on the battlefield. Numerous Buddhist temples had even become detention centers for Russian prisoners of war.

Paralleling these domestic activities, however, were equally ambitious missionary efforts on the Asian mainland, efforts that did not end with the war's conclusion. If anything, these missionary efforts only increased in the post-war years. The Japanese Government itself had recognized the political importance of these efforts as early as the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese War when Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi demanded that China allow the establishment of Japanese Buddhist missions in that country.

It will be recalled that the Higashi Honganji branch of the Shin sect had established a temple in Shanghai as early as 1876 and a further mission in Korea in 1877. With Japan's expansion onto the Asian continent firmly established as a result of its victories in both the Sino-Japanese and Russo-

Japanese Wars, these pioneering efforts of the Shin sect multiplied many times over. Thus, by 1918 the Nishi Honganji branch of the Shin sect had a total of thirty-four missions in Korea while the Higashi Honganji branch had fifty-eight. By 1941 these same two branches would have a total of fifty-three and eighty missions in Manchuria respectively.

Nor, of course, were these continental missionary efforts limited to the Shin sect alone. The Sōtō Zen sect, for example, established its first mission in Korea in 1904, a number which grew to more than twenty-one by 1912 and more than one hundred by war's end. In Manchuria, its evangelization efforts began in 1907 and reached a total of thirty-seven by 1940. The year 1907 also marked the founding of the first Nichiren sect mission in Manchuria. This number grew to more than twenty by war's end. The Jōdo sect established its first temple in China in 1905, while the esoteric Shingon sect had over three hundred

priests stationed in various areas of Manchuria and China proper during the war years.

In 1934 Shimizu Ryūzan (清水流山/18??-19??), a professor of the Nichiren University of Tokyo, explained the underlying purpose of these missions as follows:

The underlying principle of the Spirit of Japan is the enlightenment of the world with truth. Just as our brother Manchurians have come to follow us with affection, so also must we lead all the nations of the world into righteousness and establish heaven on earth, where brotherly love and world-wide peace shall prevail and where all men shall be Buddhist saints. This is the true ideal of the Spirit of Japan (46).

In contrast to this idealistic view at the time, Yoshida has pointed out that for the most part these missionary efforts were simply one part of Japan's colonial administration, the ultimate goal of which was "to propagate the benevolent influence of the Emperor" (231).

One way in which this goal was put into practice in the Shin sect's missions was the placement of *tenpai* (天牌/lit.

Emperor signs) on the altars of its continental missions. These large tablets, located beside the central figure of worship, *Buddha Amita* , were designed to instill reverence, loyalty, and obedience to the Japanese Emperor among the colonized peoples. As Hishiki Masaharu has noted, the tablets were "a method of inculcating Emperor worship in Buddhist clothing" (55).

Hishiki further pointed out that the typical pattern for institutional Buddhism's missionary efforts on the continent was for it to advance together with the Japanese military as it invaded and occupied increasingly more areas. He identified this as "evangelization following the military" (50). In his mind, this style of evangelization is to be distinguished from its Christian counterpart in which Christian missionaries would first enter a potential colonial territory and subvert its culture in preparation for both

the merchants and military who followed sometime later (49-50).

In this regard it must be pointed out that the missionary efforts of the Shin sect were unique in that they did not follow the model mentioned above. That is say, they actually preceded the Japanese military's actions. Once again, it is Hishiki who pointed out that this emerged as a result of the vision of Meiji period sect leaders like Ogurusu Kōchō and Okumura Enshin who advocated using Buddhism as the basis for forming an anti-Western alliance among Japan, China, and India. In so doing, "they anticipated the ideology of the 'Great East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere' which would provide the rationalization for Japanese aggression in Asia" (53).

While Oguruso and Okumura may have been pioneers in connecting Buddhism to Japan's Imperial plans, they were soon joined, as noted above, by the leaders of all of institutional Buddhism. Thus, these Buddhism missions were

not focused so much on propagating their particular sectarian viewpoints as they were on "social welfare" activities. These activities included such things as running Japanese language schools, preparing parcels of treats for soldiers in the field, and providing technical training for would-be employees of Japanese companies.

In its broadest sense these social welfare activities may be viewed as one part of what was then widely known as "education to create Imperial subjects" (*kōminka kyōiku* /皇民化教育). More closely related to Japan's military actions, however, is the fact that these missions were also used, when necessary, to provide temporary shelter for Japanese troops. Not only that, some of them were also connected with something known as "pacification activities" (*senbu kōsaku* /宣撫工作). Simply put, these were spying activities in which mission priests would identify those locals suspected of being opposed to Japanese domination to the

military authorities. When Buddhist priests were actually conscripted into the military, as they were, it was common for them to be assigned to units involved in these "pacification" efforts. Hishiki pointed out that there were even priests whose spying activities were so secret that all documents identifying them as either priests or soldiers were destroyed (56).

Daitō Satoshi has noted that the fundamental character of the Buddhist missions on the continent was that both they, and the priests who staffed them, were representatives of the Great Empire of Japan. In so doing, they necessarily forfeited the universal teachings of their religion (61). In light of this, it is hardly surprising to learn that with the end of war in 1945 every single one of these continental missions, regardless of sect affiliation, would collapse, never to be revived again.



## Endnote

<sup>1</sup>It is noteworthy that the Nishi Honganji branch of the Shin sect, together with members of the aristocratic Ōtani family who have traditionally headed that branch, were major stockholders in the South Manchuria Railway Company.

## CHAPTER 7: BUDDHIST RESISTANCE TO JAPANESE MILITARISM

### Organized Resistance - *Shinkō Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei*

By the 1920s, Japanese institutional Buddhism was, as a whole, firmly locked into support of Japan's military and colonial policies. There were, however, a small number of Buddhists who refused to accept the supportive stance of their sectarian leaders. One group formed by such Buddhists was the "Youth League for Revitalizing Buddhism" (*Shinkō Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei*/ 振興仏教青年同盟). Kitagawa described this group as the "notable exception" to institutional Buddhism's subservience to the state, especially as the League members were "deeply involved in social action" (233). Inagaki Masami (稲垣真美/1926-) noted that the League was "the only sign that there were still conscientious religionists within Buddhist circles" (*Henkaku* 68).

Another distinguishing feature of this organization was that, as its name implies, the membership was relatively young, mostly in their 20s and 30s. Furthermore, the leadership was composed predominantly of laymen rather than clerics. This latter feature is important in that it meant this organization was not as readily controllable by sectarian hierarchies as it otherwise would have been. Needless to say, however, there was no protection from police control.

The League was founded on the afternoon of April 5, 1931 with more than thirty persons in attendance, including four uniformed policemen. The first order of business was the selection of officers, with the 42 year old Nichiren sect lay activist, Senō Girō (妹尾義郎/1889-1961), being elected as chairman. Next came the reading of the declaration giving the reasons for the League's creation. In as much as it is

so at variance with the thinking of institutional Buddhist leaders, it is quoted here in its entirety:

This is an age of suffering. Our compatriots are seeking affection, yet have had no choice but to struggle. The masses of people seek bread, but are fed repression. To escape or to fight, today the entire world is moving about in confusion and financial difficulty.

In such an age, what should Buddhists be aware of, what contribution should they be making to society? The majority of Buddhists, intoxicated with an easy peace of mind, don't even think about these questions. Through Buddhism these Buddhists possess the highest principles available for the guidance of human beings, yet what contact do they have with the lives of the masses? Furthermore, these Buddhists claim that "religion transcends class differences and values harmony." However, in reality their role is that of an opiate, and they are therefore cursed by the masses and incite the moral indignation of young Buddhists.

This present situation is something that genuine believers cannot bear. However, when we look to already existing sectarian organizations for reform, we are forced to recognize just how serious their corrupt traditions and degeneration are.

Faced with this situation, we have no choice but to resolutely propose a movement to revitalize Buddhism. A revitalized Buddhism must be based on self-reflection. It must deny currently existing Buddhism

which has already lost its capacity for confrontation while, at the same time, calling on all Buddhists to return to the *Buddha*. A revitalized Buddhism must recognize that the suffering in present-day society comes chiefly from the capitalist economic system and must be willing to cooperate in a fundamental reform of this system, working to preserve the well-being of the masses. We must revolutionize bourgeois Buddhism and change it to a Buddhism for the masses. A revitalized Buddhism must intensify its speculation and research in an attempt to clarify Buddhist culture for the new age and bring about world peace.

If it does this, a revitalized Buddhism will have absolutely no reason to fear the anti-religious movement which is popular at the moment. The reason for this is that we believe religion will never disappear so long as human beings seek affection and stand up for what they believe in, given their finite nature which longs for the infinite. The religion we seek is not one centered on a creator God. Aren't there too many contradictions between believing in an all-powerful God and the situation we find ourselves in today?

We believe in a Buddhism that necessarily conforms to the truth, and we revere the *Buddha* who bore witness to love, equality and freedom through his practice. Our reverence is based on the inherent requirement of life to seek perfection, something which lies at the deepest part of human existence.

We are convinced that it is as a result of this requirement that human beings have been able to

constantly create unique cultural forms. We are further convinced that something like the anti-religious movement is itself either an expression of a lack of awareness of the nature of human life or a process for getting rid of numerous superstitions which have hidden themselves in [Buddhism's] esoteric sanctuaries, thereby providing good material for the revival of true Buddhism.

Young Buddhists, now is the time for us to arise. Without hesitation we must discard tradition and, joining together as one, return to the *Buddha*. And then, while personally experiencing the Buddhist spirit of love and equality, solemnly move forward to reconstruct capitalism. Is this not the way we should endeavour to construct our ideal Buddhist society? (Inagaki, *Butsuda* 3-6)

The preceding declaration was adopted unanimously despite the obvious discomfort of the policemen in attendance. However, when it came time to accept the League's "Statement of Principles," there was spirited debate over their adoption. The three proposed principles were as follows:

We revere *Buddha Shakyāmuni* whose character is unexcelled among human beings. We seek to make

possible the construction of a *Buddha* land according to the teachings of faith in, and love for, our fellow human beings.

We recognize that all existing sects are corpses which desecrate the spirit of Buddhism. We look forward to the elimination of this type of Buddhism and the promotion of a Buddhism consistent with the new age.

We recognize that the organization of our current capitalist economy is contrary to the spirit of Buddhism and injurious to the well-being of the masses. Reforming this, we look forward to the coming of a new society (Inagaki, *Butsuda* 6-7).

The debate centered on the final words of the third principle. Some members of the audience insisted that the word "socialist" be inserted, i.e. ". . . a new socialist society." After much debate, literally accompanied by "saber-rattling" from the uniformed police present, this proposal was abandoned, and the principles were adopted as proposed.

To understand why the League had come into existence at this time, it is important to remember that both Japan and the West were then in the midst of the Great Depression

which had begun in 1929. As Borton noted, "For a country like Japan, which was so dependent on foreign trade, [the Great Depression] spelled disaster" (359). At home, Japan suffered from both high unemployment and increasingly severe labor disputes. Farmers found themselves caught between the requirement to pay taxes as before and greatly reduced income. The end result of this was that "rural debt rose rapidly, taxes were in arrears, more farmers sold their daughters into prostitution, and tenants sought redress from high rents by resorting to organized tenancy disputes" (Borton 359).

Things were no better in Japan's overseas colonies, for there were student-led demonstrations against Japanese rule in Korea in 1929 and an aboriginal uprising in Taiwan in 1930. While all acts of resistance, both overseas and at home, were brutally suppressed by the Japanese military and police, they led to an ever increasing role for both



right-wing political figures, in and out of government, and their military allies. In addition, there were the family-owned financial combines known as *zaibatsu* (財閥) who "to an increasing extent, were able to impose their wishes on the government" (Borton 358).

Given this background, it is little wonder that Inagaki described the League as being composed of "the first clearly religious people to have entered the path of resistance [to the state]" (*Butsuda* 21). Resistance to the Japanese state of the 1930s, however, was a path fraught with danger. No one understood this better than the League's new chairman, Senō Girō. On January 13, 1931, more than two months before the formal founding of the League, Girō had made the following entry in his diary:

This morning as I sat quietly [in meditation], I felt very cold. My finger tips turned to ice, almost to the point of losing all sensation in them. However, when I thought that in the course of fighting for justice this

was just preparation for being taken off to jail, I was filled with joy (*Nikki* 6).

It would be five more years, not until the early part of 1936, before Girō's premonition became a reality. In the meantime the League would become actively engaged in such things as publishing a newspaper and pamphlets promoting its views, holding public meetings to increase its membership, and joining together with allies in other, mostly political, organizations which advocated the reform if not the replacement of capitalism.

Between 1931 and 1934 the League published a total of six pamphlets detailing its positions on various issues. Of these six, two were written by Girō himself and the others by leading League members. Not surprisingly, Girō wrote the first pamphlet published which was entitled simply: "A Lecture on the Revitalization of Buddhism" (*Shinkō bukkyō no teishō*/新興仏教の提唱). In this pamphlet he presented a

more detailed rationale for the founding of the League together with the doctrinal basis of its program.

Girō's second pamphlet, published in 1933, was entitled: "On the Road to Social Reform and the Revitalization of Buddhism" (*Shakai henkaku tojō no shinkō bukkyō*/社会変革途上の新興仏教). As its name implies, Girō's focus was on the need for social reform based on a Buddhist understanding. For example, he put forth the proposition that international cooperation, rather than narrow nationalism, was the Buddhist approach to world peace. When nations seek only to promote themselves, he wrote, they inevitably, sooner or later, resort to military force to achieve their self-centered goals. Such efforts, Girō maintained, were clearly at odds with the Buddhist doctrine of "selflessness" (*muga*/無我).

As Uchiyama Gudō had done before him, Girō maintained that the ideal Buddhist society, i.e. the *samgha*, was a

communal organization. As such it was in direct contradiction to the personal acquisitiveness fostered by a capitalist economic system. In particular, Girō saw Buddhist temples as the natural agents for the promotion of such a communal society in Japan.

Together with the capitalist system, it was then existing Japanese Buddhism and its leaders who came in for the harshest criticism. Among other things, Girō accused sectarian leaders of having turned the central object of worship in each of their sects (e.g. *Buddha Amida* in the Shin sect) into absolute deities who had the power to "save" their believers. According to Girō early Buddhism was clearly atheistic in orientation, with no place for salvation figures to act as religious opiates.

In addition, Girō accused temple priests of being "sermon thieves" (*sekkyō dorobō* /説教どろぼう). They deserved this title, in his opinion, because they took the

position that social ills and inequities could all be solved if only people would become more spiritually inclined. At the same time, they insured that they themselves were well provided for through their solicitation of large donations. In so doing they effectively became pawns of the ruling classes who used their services to help support the status quo.

For Girō there was little if no hope that currently existing Buddhism would be able to reform itself from within. He made this clear in the final sentences of his pamphlet when he wrote:

As the saying goes, one should not serve new wine from old wineskins. Members of the Youth League for Revitalizing Buddhism should advance resolutely. You should carry the *Buddha* on your backs and go out into the streets! Go out into the farm and fishing villages! (Inagaki, *Butsuda* 139).

Of all the slogans put forth by League it was this last one, i.e. "carry the *Buddha* on your backs and go out into the

streets," that was destined to become the best known. It clearly combines the League's Buddhist doctrinal foundation with a call to social action.

It should come as no surprise that the temple priests described as "sermon robbers" by Girō were none too happy with the League's activities. Initially, institutional Buddhist leaders tried to ignore the League altogether, but, as its supporters became more numerous, this became impossible. Things came to a head in May 1933 at the third national conference of the All Japan Federation of Buddhist Youth Organizations (全日本仏教青年会連盟).

Although this Federation was formed in the same year as the League, it was a much larger organization, being composed of more than four hundred and fifty separate Buddhist groups. One of these groups was the League itself. Thus, in theory at least, it had the same rights as any of the other member organizations to put proposals up for

adoption. Exercising this right, League representatives, including Girō, proposed, among other things, that the Federation should go on record as being opposed to "anti-foreign, militarist and nationalist ideologies," including the movements which promoted the same (*Butsuda* 147).

The response of the conference host, Ōtani University (affiliated with the Higashi Honganji branch of the Shin sect), to this and similar League proposals was to force the conference to find a new meeting site off-campus. This, however, did nothing to deter the League representatives who next put forward a motion condemning Hitler and the Nazi Party for their "all-out violent oppression of the Jewish people, their "burning of cultural properties," their "repression of liberals and peace activists" etc. These violent acts were identified as both "inhumane" and "anti-Buddhist" (*Shinkō Bukkyō*).

All of these League proposals got nowhere, for, as Inagaki has pointed out, the Federation was being run behind the scenes by both branches of the Shin sect (*Butsuda* 149). On the contrary, the Federation ended up passing a resolution of gratitude to the kingdom of Siam (present-day Thailand) for its political support of Japan's newly created puppet government in Manchuria, i.e. *Manchukuo* (満州国). Not content with this, Federation officials then went on to demand the League's expulsion from the Federation. Once again they were successful, and the League was expelled in the latter part of June 1933.

Repressive activities directed towards the League were not limited to institutional Buddhist leaders alone. The police, as representatives of the state, were ever ready to do their part. Thus, the League's organ, *Shinkō Bukkyō* (新興仏教), was first censored as early as the November 1931 issue. Over the next five years the police would on more



than ten occasions either forbid the sale of offending League publications altogether, or require certain articles to be deleted prior to distribution.

The state's repression, moreover, did not stop with censorship alone. League-sponsored public lectures were frequently terminated by police in the audience starting as early as May 1933. Girō himself was first arrested in September 1934 when he attempted to speak at a rally in support of Tokyo's striking street car conductors. Although he was only held overnight, he was beaten by the guard the next morning before his release.

In February 1936 Girō was arrested once again, this time together with another League member, Matsuura Fumio (松浦文雄). As Inagaki has noted, the police were convinced that "the League for the Revitalization of Buddhism was either connected to the Communist Party or a Communist organization using Buddhism as a cover" (*Butsuda* 176).

Unable to force admissions of Communist affiliation from either man, the police finally released the two League leaders after having held them without charges for nearly one month.

From a police perspective, what was so disturbing about the League was that its membership took their organization's motto to heart as it did. That is to say, the members did indeed carry the *Buddha* out into the street. For example, as early as August 1932 League members began collecting signatures on the street for a petition drawn up by the Japan Farmers Union (日本農民組合). The League was collectively able to gather more than two thousand signatures on this petition which demanded, among other things, that the government increase pay in order to relieve the disparity in income between the upper and lower classes.

In addition to its work on behalf of farmers, the League also took a strong stance against various government and judicial measures which helped perpetuate discrimination

against Japan's traditional outcast community, members of which were commonly referred to as *burakumin* (部落民). Still further, League members supported the activities of the "Anti-Nazi Fascism League" (*Han-Nachisu Fassho Funsai Dōmei*/ 反ナチス・ファッショ粉碎同盟) and took part in many anti-war labour strikes. Girō himself also became an editor of *Rōdō Zasshi* (Labour Magazine/労働雑誌).

For Girō the end result of his activism came on December 7, 1936 when he was arrested yet again. This time, however, he was charged with treason for having allegedly plotted the destruction of both the emperor system and capitalism. As Stephen Large has noted, "[Girō] was faced with precisely the test of moral character for which he had prepared himself earlier as a devotee of Nichiren" (90).

At first Girō denied the police accusations, insisting that his goals and those of the League had been to reform capitalism, work for world peace, and oppose fascism and

militarism. After enduring more than five months of relentless police questioning, however, he finally broke down and confessed that all of the charges against him and the League were true. Not only that, he promised that henceforth he would unconditionally support both the Emperor and the nation.

Girō's confession was used by the police as the pretext for the wholesale arrest of more than two hundred members of the League starting in October 1937. Of those arrested, twenty-nine were eventually prosecuted. Despite his pledge to support the Emperor and nation, Girō himself was sentenced to five years in prison on August 29, 1939. In 1942, however, he was given an early release from prison due to ill health. By that time, of course, all traces of the League had been eradicated. So, too, had all traces of any

organized Buddhist resistance, however small, to Japan's war efforts.

### Individual Resistance

Attempting to document individual Buddhist resistance to Japan's wartime policies, is a nearly impossible task, especially in the face of the need for documentation. Typical of the difficulties encountered in this area is an episode related by Ienaga Saburō. He wrote:

Some individuals refused military service because of pacifist convictions. Ishiga Osamu was a member of War Resisters International, a Quaker organization. In 1939 he refused to appear at the one-day inspection callup of reservists and turned himself into the *Kempeitai* [military police]. While being held by the military police, Ishiga heard of another man, a member of the Buddhist Shinshū sect, who refused to take human life (214-15).

Who was this Shin sect believer? What was his fate at the hands of the military police? Were there others like

him? How did this person come to hold his views? These and other questions remain unanswered.

A somewhat better documented episode is taken from a yearly police report entitled *Shakai undō no jōkyō* (The State of Social Movements/ 社会運動の状況). The report for 1939 refers to a Buddhist Jōdō sect chief priest by the name of Ono Onyū. He is recorded as having had the temerity to put up the following notice on his temple bulletin board: "There never was a good war or a bad peace. A reckless war destroys in one year what man took many years to create. [Benjamin] Franklin." (Ienaga 215). Was Onyū persecuted because of this action? Did he do anything beyond this? Once again, all of these questions remain unanswered.

With regard to the Zen sect, there is one report of anti-war statements made by a Sōtō Zen master, Kondō Genkō (近藤源光/1879-?), abbot of the monastery of Seiunji (聖雲寺). One of the trainees at the monastery, Koyama Kishō

(小山貴聖) recalls an evening talk given by Genkō in the fall of 1937, not long after the outbreak of full-scale war between Japan and China. Genkō said:

It is troubling that hostilities have broken out between Japan and China. War is an activity in which people kill each other. Whether it be friend or foe, the killing of people is monstrous. There is nothing more sinful in this world than the killing of people. There are big fools who say things like: "We have to enlarge Japan's territory, turning it into a great empire, and increasing the amount of red [for Japan] on the maps of the world." It appears that people who feel this way are gradually increasing in number. As for me, I intensely dislike villainous, inhumane things like this war. It must be stopped immediately. (*Jion* 74).

It is thought that Genkō made statements like this on more than one occasion. This resulted in a visit and warning from the police. What happened thereafter is unclear, but in 1941 Genkō unexpectedly gave up his abbotship, returned to his home in Akita prefecture and disappeared, never to be seen or heard from again. Did he give up his abbotship voluntarily or under outside pressure? Was foul play

involved in his disappearance? These questions, too, remain unanswered.

Finally, there is one well-documented case of individual war resistance. The name of the priest was Takenaka Shōgan (竹内彰元 / 1866-1945). He was affiliated with the Higashi Honganji branch of the Shin sect and was the abbot of Myōsenji (明泉寺) temple in Gifu prefecture. Like Genkō above, the outbreak of war in China in July 1937 was the catalyst for Shōgan's remarks, remarks which were first directed toward parishioners going off to fight in that war.

Concretely, Shōgan said the following on September 15, 1937:

War is both sinful and, at the same time, the enemy of humanity; it should be stopped. In both northern China and Shanghai, [Japan] should stop with what it has already occupied. War is never a benefit to a nation, rather it is a terrible loss. Look at the budget for this war, it's enormous, amounting to some two billion and forty million yen. This, combined with the large numbers of draftees headed for the front, is a serious blow to industry at home. In as much as this money will be



used to pointlessly kill and maim both men and animals, it may be called a budget for murder. From this point of view as well, it would be wise for the state to stop this war (Daitō 139).

It may be argued that there was nothing particularly Buddhist in Shōgan's remarks. A fiscal conservative/humanist might have said the same thing. Yet, despite protests from his parishioners, Shōgan's anti-war remarks did not stop. The following month, on October 10th, he addressed a group of six of his fellow priests at a nearby temple. He said:

I don't know what others may think about the recent trouble [in China], but it looks to me like aggression. From a Mahayanistic point of view, it is improper to needlessly deprive either oneself or others of their lives, incurring enormous costs and loss of life in the process. War is the greatest sin there is. Just how much advantage is there in taking such places as Tienjin or Baoding? It would be better to stop the war in such places (Daitō 139).

The connection to Buddhism is somewhat clearer in the above quote. This would turn out to be an important

factor when, like others before him, Shōgan was brought to trial in December 1937, charged under the section of the law which forbade "fabrications and wild rumors" (造言飛語). Although he was found guilty, because his statements were based on religious, rather than political, grounds, and because he was already seventy-one years of age, Shōgan escaped imprisonment. He was, however, kept under special police surveillance until the end of the war in 1945, which was also the year he died.

Although all of the preceding incidents of individual war resistance had no appreciable impact on the prosecution of the war, the potential for such impact was not lost of the government. As early as 1937 the headquarters of the "Special High Police" (特別高等警察), whose job it was to ferret out disloyal elements, had given the following instructions to its personnel:

The erroneous words of Buddhist priests and missionaries can have a not inconsiderable impact on the masses. In light of this, you must pay special attention to watching out for, and controlling, such statements (Daitō 142).

One can only wonder what the effect would have been on Japanese society, including the government, if even hundreds, let alone thousands, of Buddhist priests had spoken out as did the handful of priests noted above. They did not, of course, but as Daitō Satoshi pointed out, all of those Buddhists who opposed Japan's war policies, "demonstrated that resistance was possible" (155). Each and every Japanese Buddhist did have a choice to make.

# CHAPTER EIGHT: THE EMERGENCE OF "IMPERIAL WAY- BUDDHISM

## Introduction

As has been previously shown, the personal and institutional choices of Japanese Buddhism's leaders toward their country's expansionist policies had been made long before the 1930's, reaching at least as far back as the Russo-Japanese War if not before. What happened next, then, may in some way be considered the logical extension, if not the logical conclusion, of these previous decisions. That is to say, the emergence of "Imperial Way-Buddhism" (皇道仏教) in the 1930's was not really a new phenomenon as much it was the systemization or codification of previously held positions.

Stated in Buddhist terms, Imperial Way-Buddhism represented the total and unequivocal subjugation of the *Buddha Dharma* to the *Raja Dharma*. In political terms, it

represented the total and absolute subjugation of institutional Buddhism to the state and its policies. Total submission to the state, however, did not mean that the various sects gave up their individual sectarian creeds or identities, only that vis-a-vis the state, they agreed on a common, supportive, and subservient position for themselves.

### **Buddhism and the Emperor/State**

In Japan of the 1930's the state was represented by, if not totally identified with, the person of the Emperor. In theory, the government did nothing which did not enjoy his support and consent. Whether or not this was actually true in fact has long been a subject of scholarly debate. Interesting as this debate is, it is not relevant here. That is to say, what is of concern is how institutional Buddhism's leaders understood the emperor system from a doctrinal

standpoint, not the question of the Emperor's actual political power.

One of the clearest expressions of this understanding is contained in a book entitled, appropriately enough, *Gokoku Bukkyō* (護国仏教/Nation-Protecting Buddhism). This book, published by the *Ōkura seishin kenkyūjo* (大倉精神研究所) in January 1938, consists of a number of essays written by institutional Buddhist leaders and scholars. For example, one of the contributors, Saeki Jōin (佐伯定胤/1867-1952), was a Hossō (法相) sect priest and chief abbot of Hōryūji (法隆寺), one of Japan's oldest and most famous temples. His essay was entitled, "Japanese Buddhism and the Concept of the Structure of the State" (*Nihon Bukkyō to kokutai kannen*/日本仏教と国体観念).

Jōin begins his essay with a laudatory description of the many and varied contributions that Japan's emperors had made over the centuries to the development of the

nation and society. In particular, Prince Regent Shōtoku (573-621), a major figure in the establishment of Buddhism in Japan, came in for special praise. The Prince "should be considered the model for creating a new culture in today's Showa period [1926-1989], for without his ideals neither the betterment of society nor its purification can be accomplished" (135-44).

Building on the idea of the Prince as a model for the Japanese society of his day, Jōin went on to quote from the Seventeen Article Constitution that had been traditionally ascribed to Shōtoku. Article Three stated, "If you receive an Imperial edict you must revere it, for the Ruler is Heaven and the people are the earth." From this Jōin concluded:

The Emperor, being holy and divine, is inviolable. . . . The Emperor's edicts, being holy and divine, are inviolable. . . and they must always be revered (158).

While there seems to be little connection to Buddhism in the above, Jōin went on to show that in his mind, at least, there was a direct connection. He wrote:

As expressed in the Lotus *Sūtra*, the *Buddha* in his compassion regards [beings in] the three worlds [of desire, form and spirit] as members of his family. That is to say, he doesn't think of his family as composed of just his blood relatives, or only the few members of his immediate family, or simply those in his local area.

No, his family includes everyone in the whole world, in the entire universe. For him, everyone in the world is a member of his family. In fact, he does not limit his family members to human beings alone, even animals and all living things are included. . . . There is nothing that the *Tathāgata* in his great compassion does not wish to save. . . . There is no one who he does not consider as his child. . . . When this faith in the great compassion and mercy of the *Tathāgata* is applied to the political world, there is not a single member of the Japanese nation who is not a child of the Emperor. . . . This expresses in the political realm the ideal of a system centered on the Emperor (159-60).

Jōin's identification of Buddhism with the Emperor was by no means limited to him alone. A second essay was entitled: "The Tendai [天台] Sect of Japan and Pacifying and



Preserving the State" (*Nihon Tendai to chingo kokka*/ 日本天台と鎮護国家). It was written by Fukuda Gyōei (福田堯穎/1889-1971), a Tendai priest and former president of Taishō University (大正大学), one of Japan's oldest Buddhist universities. In a unique configuration, this university was affiliated with three separate sects, i.e. the Jōdo, Shingon, and Tendai sects.

Gyōei began his essay by noting that it was in Japan where "pure *Mahāyāna* [Buddhism]" was to found (185). This was so, according to him, because Saichō, the eighth century founder of the Tendai sect in Japan, took it as an article of faith that "all Japanese had the disposition of *Bodhisattvas*" (188). As *Bodhisattvas* they were both treasures and benefactors of the nation.

Gyōei was quick to point out that it had never been a case of simply transplanting Indian and Chinese Buddhism to Japan as it existed in these countries. Rather, the Tendai

sect in particular had been established "based on a deep understanding of the Japanese national character. . . as a religion to pacify and preserve the nation" (208-9). This had all been made possible through the "gracious wish" (御願) of successive Japanese emperors.

There was one more seminal essay contained in the book in question. The essay is seminal in that it is the most complete exposition of "Imperial Way-Buddhism" still extant. It was written by Dr. Shio Benkyō (椎尾井匡/1876-1971), a Jōdo sect priest who later became President of Taishō University. He entitled his 132 page essay simply "Imperial Way-Buddhism."

Benkyō began his essay with a discussion of the life and teachings of *Buddha Shākyamuni*. He then went on to declare that as far as contemporary Buddhism was concerned, the limited amount of Buddhism left in India was a "failure," just as that left in China was another "failure." "On the

contrary," he wrote, "it can be said that it is in Japan where it is possible to draw near to a Buddhism like that of the time when *Buddha Shākyamuni* was alive" (33).

In explaining the purity of Japanese Buddhism, Benkyō also went back to Prince Shōtoku for whom "building one great *samgha* in this land was of the greatest importance" (37). Shōtoku was motivated to do this because he viewed the *samgha* as "a great harmonious body" (37). Later Japanese Buddhist sect founders, including Hōnen (1133-1212), Nichiren (1222-82), Eisai (1141-1215) et. al. were, despite their sectarian differences, united in the belief that the *samgha* was "synonymous with the state" (38).

The third section of Benkyō's essay is entitled "The Superior National Character of Japan" (*Takuetsu seru Nihon no kunigara*/ 卓越せる日本の国情). As the title suggests, Benkyō continues to develop his theme of the superiority of Japanese Buddhism over that found in other Asian countries.

He writes:

Buddhism in Indian collapsed due to civilization, Buddhism in China collapsed because it ran directly contrary to the history and nature of the Chinese state, therefore it was only able to produce a few mountain temples. On the other hand, thanks to the rich cultivation Japanese Buddhism received on Japanese soil it gradually developed into that which the Buddhist teaching was aiming toward (50).

Why and how had this all come about? Benkyō's answer was as follows:

The fundamental reason for this occurrence is the priceless customs and manners of our country. These customs and manners are to be found throughout the land, but their heart lies with the Emperor and the Imperial Household through whose efforts they have been guided and fostered.

In the following section, i.e. Section Four, Benkyō comes at last to a definition of Imperial-Way Buddhism. The essence of his definition is as follows:

The reason that Buddhism was able to develop in Japan was totally thanks to the Imperial Household, especially to the fact that each of the successive emperors personally believed in, and guided Buddhism so that it could accomplish its task. Although it is true that Japanese

Buddhism has developed through the power of devotion of illustrious priests and lay persons, the fact that such persons were able to believe and practice their faith was due to the Imperial Household and emperors who fostered its development through the continual issuance of Imperial edicts and their own personal example. This is something that cannot be seen in other countries. It is for this reason it ought to be called Imperial Way-Buddhism (50-51).

For Benkyō the fundamental historical characteristic of Japanese Buddhism is its "nationalism" (*kokkateki*/ 国家的). In as much as the Emperor is the state, and Buddhism and the state are one, then the Emperor and Buddhism are also one. Not only that, but it is due to the structure of the state that it is possible to understand the spirit of Buddhism. Even the various sects in Japan owe their existence to the equal protection and respect they have been afforded by the Imperial Household.

As to the nature of the Imperial Household itself, Benkyō wrote as follows:

Within the Imperial Household lives the great life of the universe. Within this true life lives true [religious]

faith, and within true faith is the power to detect the path of true faith. Those who truly seek righteousness will find righteousness. Within our Imperial Household can be found the truest of true righteousness which is itself the righteousness of the universe. . . . which is the truth-seeking power of the universe. . . . Or said in a different way, if one seeks the location of this enduring Imperial power, i.e. the location of the spirit of Japan, it is found in the Imperial Household" (129-30).

Benkyō goes on to explain that it is the Imperial edicts which give expression to true righteousness. The Imperial edicts also give expression to the spirit of Japan. He continues:

Thus, the Imperial edicts are the structure of the nation. They are the life of the nation. If issued, these edicts must be revered. . . . In looking at the past we see that it was Imperial edicts from successive emperors which taught us the proper way to make offerings of even a single flower [to the *Buddha*], or offer even one stick of incense, or read the *sūtras* with the correct pronunciation, or worship in the *Buddha* Hall. The power to select and protect each of the sects, to determine each and every temple observance - all have their roots in Imperial edicts. Japanese Buddhism acts on the basis of Imperial edicts. This is what distinguishes it from the Buddhism of foreign countries (130-31).

Now, at long last, Benkyō is ready to conclude his essay by describing what the true purpose of Imperial Way-Buddhism is. He does this by first noting that during the Meiji period there were a number of "august edicts" issued by the Emperor. At that time, he noted: "The power of the people to revere these edicts without question was very strong" (131). The problem was that with the passing of Emperor Meiji there had been a gradual decrease in the people's ability to properly revere the edicts of the emperors who followed, especially those of the then current emperor, i.e. Emperor Hirohito. The people had become "very lax" and "careless" in their attitude.

Imperial Way-Buddhism, then, was designed to address these alleged deficiencies in the national character. As Benkyō stated:

The *Buddha Dharma* is nothing other than modestly doing one's duty while holding on to righteousness. This is the meaning of the *Buddha Dharma* which successive

emperors have taught. Seen in this light, it must be admitted that during the Taishō [1912-1926] and Shōwa [1926-1989] periods, the people have been careless in their unquestioning reverence of Imperial edicts. This means that they have also been careless in their attitude toward the state structure. This is the reason that Japanese Buddhism must rise to the occasion. When we think about this situation, we recognize that it was truly due to the power of the Imperial Household that Japanese Buddhism in the past was able to expand. Not only that, I believe that it will only be possible for Buddhism to accomplish its task in the future if we take the lead in obeying the will of the Imperial Household, thereby guarding and maintaining the prosperity of the Imperial Throne evermore. To venerate the Three Treasures [of Buddhism] means to revere Imperial edicts without question. This is the attitude we should have as we reflect deeply on the reality before us (132) [Italics mine].

Although it could not have been known at the time, the "reality" Japan was facing was of a protracted war which would eventually consume hundreds of thousands of Japanese lives. (Not to mention the lives of millions of non-Japanese war victims.) Needless to say, all of those Japanese consumed in the war were acting, at least in principle, in accordance with Imperial edicts. Imperial Way-Buddhism,



then, was established to encourage unquestioning obedience of these edicts; for unquestioning obedience was nothing less than the veneration of the Three Treasures of Buddhism, i.e. the *Buddha, Dharma, and Samgha*. The essence of "Imperial Way Buddhism" was to be found in the person of the Emperor. Absolute and total obedience to His Will was the one unalterable and absolute creedal requirement. Should there be any doubt that Imperial Way-Buddhism was a broad institutional Buddhist movement, it is noteworthy that only three months after the preceding essays were published, i.e. in April 1938, a number of leading clerics in the Nichiren sect formed the "The Association for the Practice of Imperial Way-Buddhism" (*Kōdō Bukkyō gyōdō kai* / 皇道仏教行道会). The association was headed by the administrative head of the sect, Takasa Nichikō (高佐日皇/18??-19??) and claimed to have more than 1800 members nationwide (Nakano 195).

The association's principles asserted that:

Imperial Way-Buddhism utilizes the exquisite truth of the Lotus *Sūtra* to reveal the majestic essence of the state structure. Exalting the true spirit of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, this is a teaching which reverently supports the Emperor's work. This is what the great founder of our sect, St. Nichiren meant when he referred to the divine unity of Monarch and *Buddha*. . . . That is to say, Imperial Way-Buddhism is the condensed expression of the divine unity of Monarch and *Buddha* . . . put into contemporary language. For this reason the principle image of adoration in Imperial Way-Buddhism is not *Buddha* Shākyamuni who appeared in India, but His Majesty the Emperor whose lineage extends over ten thousand generations (Nakano 196).

While it took the Shin sect a little longer to formally join in the Imperial Way-Buddhist movement, it nevertheless did so as early as June 1942. This was the date the Nishi Honganji branch distributed a pamphlet entitled, "A Unitary View of the Debt of Gratitude [Owed to the Emperor] - The Essence of Imperial Way-Buddhism" (*On ichigen ron - Kōdō Bukkyō no shinzui*/ 恩一元論—皇道仏教の心髄). This pamphlet included the following:

The Shin sect . . . takes the *Raja Dharma* as its basis, teaching to reverently faithfully follow Imperial commands without question. Therefore, should, on the contrary, there be any who commit high treason, Amida would also exclude them from salvation. In the Shin sect there could be no teaching which does not advocate submission to the Imperial state structure. That is to say, it is because one is anchored in Amida's salvation that it is possible to be a good Imperial subject. Without question, it is the Shin sect that is in accord with the Imperial state structure (Nakano 238).

In March of the following year, the Higashi Honganji branch also chose to participate in this movement. The occasion for this was the meeting of the branch's Twenty-Fourth General Assembly. The branch's organ, *Shinshū* (真宗), trumpeted the following headline about the Assembly: "The Imperial Way-Shin Sect Establishes the Path for Public Service."

As Daitō has pointed out, for the Higashi Honganji branch, the term "Imperial Way-Shin sect" meant the absolute recognition of the power and authority of the emperor

system. He further noted that it was not simply a name, rather:

During the fifteen years of war [1931-45] the content, i.e. the actual activities, of the sect can be said to have been those of the "Imperial Way-Shin Sect." In fact, to be precise, it can be said that the Imperial Way-Shin sect was only the completion of what had been passed down from the Meiji and Taishō periods (110).

As has been demonstrated, what Daitō said about the Shin sect can also be said of institutional Buddhism as a whole. If the various branches of the Zen sect have been left out, it is only because their activities will be examined in the following section. Before doing this, however, it is important to ask the question, how did institutional Buddhism view warfare? No matter how much one might unquestionably revere the Emperor's edicts, wasn't there a basic conflict between the Buddhist precept prohibiting the taking of life in any form and serving as a soldier in the Imperial Army or Navy?

## Buddhism and War

By this time it is hardly surprising to learn that it was left to two Zen scholars, both affiliated with the Sōtō Zen sect, to put forth a doctrinal understanding of the relationship between Buddhism and war which was compatible with Japan's state structure. That is to say, put forth a doctrinal understanding which enabled institutional Buddhism to directly support Japan's war effort. This was done in a 1937 book written by Komazawa University Professor Hayashiya Yūjirō (林屋友次郎/18??-19??) with the assistance of Shimakage Mei (島影盟/18??-19??). It was entitled simply and appropriately: "The Buddhist View of War" (*Bukkyō no sensō kan*/仏教の戦争観).

In the book's preface, Hayashiya laments the fact that "although recently there has been a great deal of discussion about war in various circles, within Buddhism there has still been little" (1). He then goes on to admit that "Buddhist

scriptures contain very little material directly concerning war" (1). Yet, despite this, "I would like to say a little something, basing my views on Buddhist compassion and the need for deliverance from suffering" (1).

On the first page of the text itself, the authors made it clear that the outbreak of full-scale war between Japan and China was the catalyst which had caused them to examine this issue. In particular, they referred to a proclamation of support for Japan's war actions signed by institutional Buddhist leaders from each of the major sects on 12 July 1937. This proclamation, issued by a pan-Buddhist organization known as the *Myōwa-kai* (明和会), read as follows:

Revering the Imperial policy of preserving the Orient, the subjects of Imperial Japan bear the humanitarian destiny of one billion people of color. Faced with the outbreak of the incident in northern China, it is a time of deep pain and yet a time to eliminate tyranny. Our Imperial government has already issued an earnest appeal aimed at both domestic and foreign audiences.

Based on this, the *Myōwa-kai*, a working organization composed of each of the sects of Buddhism, will work together to resolve this increasingly urgent national emergency. We are prepared to conduct consolation activities on behalf of front-line Imperial Army troops in the field. Likewise we are willing to cooperate in such other activities as the protection of Japanese nationals [in China]. Furthermore, within the country we are prepared, as part of our self-sacrificial public duty, to work for the spiritual general mobilization of the people. We take this occasion to express the firm resolution of Japanese Buddhists (2).

The authors note that the preceding statement had a significant effect on Chinese Buddhists, who responded with a number of protest letters. The *Myōwa-kai* saw no merit to these protests and issued the following statement on 28 July 1937 reaffirming its position. It read in part:

In order to establish eternal peace in East Asia, arousing the great benevolence and compassion of Buddhism, we are sometimes accepting and sometimes forceful. We now have no choice but to exercise the benevolent forcefulness of "killing one in order that many may live" (*issatsu tashō* / 一殺多生). This is something which *Mahāyāna* Buddhism approves of only with the greatest of seriousness. . . . We believe it is time to make a major change to the course of human history which has been centered on Caucasians and inequality

among humanity. To realize the true happiness of a peaceful humanity and construct a new civilization, it is necessary to change the false path into the true path within the advance of world history. Rooted in this sublime view of history, the mission and responsibility of *Mahāyāna* Buddhists is to bring into being true friendship between Japan and China (4).

The authors saw in these exchanges an indication of the difference between Chinese and Japanese Buddhists.

This difference was described as follows:

In general it can be said that Chinese Buddhists believe that war should absolutely be avoided no matter what the reason. Japanese Buddhists, on the other hand, believe that war conducted for a [good] reason is in accord with the great benevolence and compassion of Buddhism (7).

The conflict between Japan and China, the authors admit, is one that has deep historical, even geographic, roots. It also involves the national characters of the two peoples. Fundamentally, however, it is a question of how Buddhism views war. The remaining ninety-six pages of their book are devoted to answering this question.



They begin by pointing out that Buddhism sees war as being neither inherently good or bad. This is because according to the Buddhist world view there is nothing, including war, which has its own "self-nature" (*jisshō*/自性).

This leads them to the following conclusion:

The fact that Buddhism hasn't determined war to be either good or bad is because it doesn't look at the question of war itself but rather to the question of the war's purpose. Thus, if the war has a good purpose it is good, while if it has a bad purpose it is bad. Buddhism does not simply approve of wars which are in accord with its values, but vigorously supports such wars to the point of being a war enthusiast (18-19).

Having established that war is neither intrinsically good nor evil, the authors go on to develop one of the central themes of their book, i.e. that war is a method of accomplishing Buddhist goals. Thus, they wrote that "Buddhistic war is always war used as a means toward an end. The end is to save sentient beings and guide them properly" (23).

Regarding who will do the "saving and the guiding" it turns out, not surprisingly, to be that long term "protector" of Buddhism in Japan, the Emperor himself. In fact, the authors wrote that the Emperor of Japan was actually a "Golden Wheel [Rolling] Sacred King" (金輪聖王), one of four manifestations of an ideal Buddhist monarch or *cakravartirāja*. "The reason Japanese Buddhism regards the Emperor as a Golden Wheel [Rolling] Sacred King" they wrote, "is because he is the *Tathāgata* [fully enlightened being] of the secular world" (27).

One of the characteristics of a Golden Wheel[Rolling] Sacred King is that due to "lack of *viśdom* of his subjects" he is unable to rule by his virtue alone, and must resort to such things as laws, taxes, and, significantly, weapons. The same holds true for his relationships with other countries. When "injustice" and "lawlessness" abounds in these countries, he must "grasp the weapons of force" (28).

When the Golden Wheel [Rolling] Sacred King wields force, however, it is not the force of hatred and anger. Rather, it is the force of compassion. The same force that a parent uses when, out of love, they strike their children. That is to say, it is a compassionate act designed to "perfect their children's character and bring them happiness" (37 ).

The authors did admit that when the Golden Wheel [Rolling] Sacred King actually employs force it may not appear to be an act of compassion. Nevertheless, because a war conducted by a Golden Wheel [Rolling] Sacred King is for the purpose of achieving Buddhism's goals, "it can be seen that, from a Buddhist viewpoint, it is working as a force to promote the advancement of society."

Concluding their discussion of the Emperor as an ideal Buddhist monarch, the authors argue that Buddhism's protection of life does not mean that life is protected for its own sake. Rather, it is protected merely as one aspect

of compassion. Therefore Buddhism does not deny the aggressive killing of mass numbers of people that takes place in war, for it sees such warfare as an inevitable part of creating an ever stronger and more sublime compassion.

The theme of war as an act of compassion continues to be the central theme of their book. This was, as has been seen, also a central theme of the pan-Buddhist *Myōwa-kai*. The authors, however, give a much more detailed description of its function. They point out, first of all, that the critical aspect of a Buddhist sanctioned war is that it "gives life to the state" (45). While admitting that wars are costly in terms of both the money required and the human losses suffered, "the most important question is the clear, steadfast continued existence of the state itself" (46).

When war becomes necessary to give life to the state, then "the best war possible should be fought without hesitation" (47). In this situation, individual citizens have

to recognize that they are "of one body and mind" with the state, recognize that "they cannot exist without the state" (48). While it may be true that war destroys individual lives, it does not, the authors claim, deny individuals as such. This is because Buddhist-sanctioned wars are not aimed solely at the perfection of the state but include the perfection of individuals as well. In fact, "if individuals were perfected, wars could not occur" (72).

The cause of war, the authors assert, is in the "as yet low levels of wisdom of human beings," and is definitely not to be found in either the state or the Golden Wheel [Rolling] King (72). Thus, when the Golden Wheel [Rolling] King takes up weapons he does so for the perfection of the state and the advancement of human beings. It is an expression of his compassion and his desire to save sentient beings. "The reason, then, for fighting a war is not to continue war, but to eliminate war" (72). That is to say, eliminate

war through the perfection of both the state and the individuals within it.

If, up to this point, the discussion has been centered on the welfare of one's own country and citizens, the authors wanted to clarify that this was not their sole concern. In fact, they titled their fifth chapter, "War Which Also Benefits One's Enemy." They began by quoting then Prime Minister Konoe's statement on the North China Incident. He had explained that Japan was not an aggressor against China but actually "acting cooperatively" with that country. The goal of that cooperation, Konoe stated, was as follows:

Japan has no intention of sacrificing China for its own benefit. Rather Japan and China should stand on the basis of mutual equality, mutually helping each other, and thereby contributing to the enhancement of Oriental culture and the prosperity of East Asia . . . . Japan respected the territorial integrity of China and wanted nothing more than for people of north China to reflect on their conduct and return to their innate Oriental character just as quickly as possible" (75).

According to the authors, the Prime Minister's statements were fully in accord with Buddhism. In this case it was Buddhism's responsibility to ensure that China got "some degree of benefit" out of the war. This concern was in accord with the fact that "Japan was first in the world in understanding the true spirit of Buddhism" (76). As to what benefit China might expect to get out the war with Japan, it would have "its unreasonableness corrected and an opportunity to reflect on its conduct" (75).

Finally, the authors asked how war could be prevented. They responded by stating that the key was understanding the way in which one could be delivered from suffering as taught in the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism. Just as there was suffering at an individual level so, too, did it exist within society as a whole. The cause of both types of suffering was "defilements" (*bonnō*/煩惱), which caused a gap between the ideal and reality. This gap in turn resulted in wrong

conduct. Without changing this wrong conduct there was no hope of eliminating suffering.

The problem, of course, was that the situation in China had been caused by that country's failure to understand the Four Noble Truths. Not only that, "[the Chinese] had not the least understanding of the spirit of Buddhism" (93). Consequently, they could not understand that it was "Chinese desire" which had caused the war. "If only," the authors urged, "they would wake up to this fact, they would realize that in order to release themselves from their national desire the critical thing is that they reform their politics and restore their national strength" (99).

The authors further pointed out that Japan itself had done exactly that. That is to say, its present developed state was due to its having gradually increased its national power "while bearing the almost intolerable insults of the Western countries" (99). Although China should do the same,



its people "had no sense of a nation" and "its statesmen only valued greed" (100). In this situation who else was there capable of "saving" China but Japan!

Although the authors did not make the previous statement, it was clearly implied in the last section of their book. The last paragraph of this section (and the book) expressed the essence of their message. It read in its entirety:

Were the level of wisdom of the world's peoples to increase, the causes of war would disappear and wars cease. However, in an age when the situation is such that it is impossible for humanity to stop wars, there is no choice but to wage compassionate wars which give life to both oneself and one's enemy. Through a compassionate war, the warring nations are able to improve themselves, and war is able to exterminate itself (105).

In the meantime, of course, Japan would continue (and constantly enlarge) its "war of compassion" against China, all the while enjoying the total backing and full cooperation

of institutional Buddhism's leaders. It was, after all, their religious duty as Asia's most advanced Buddhists!

Should there still be any doubt as to whether the preceding book was representative of institutional Buddhism's thinking at this time, there is a second book published in the same year, i.e.1937, which also contains a lengthy discussion of the relationship of Buddhism and war. Entitled "Rapidly Advancing Japan and the New *Mahāyāna* Buddhism" (*Yakushiin Nihon to Shin Daijō Bukkyō*/躍進日本と新大乘仏教), the book was written by Furukawa Kakugo (古川 確悟/18??-19??). Furukawa was a prolific writer on Buddhist-related topics who had also made numerous appearances on the radio.

In the preface of his book Furukawa describes himself as having been involved in Buddhist educational efforts for more than thirty years, but more recently he had been "occupied with providing spiritual education for the Imperial

Army's officer training program" (2). His goal in doing so, he wrote, "was to modify Buddhism, the greatest leader of the nation's thought, from its passive Indian-style attitude to an aggressive Japanese-style attitude" (2).

Reading Furukawa is like reading an expanded version (@ 395 pages) of *The Buddhist View of War*. In fact, in some ways he even went further than the previous work. For example, according to him Japan was not simply the most advanced Buddhist country in Asia, it was "the only Buddhist country" (2) [Italics mine.] Furthermore, in conjunction with the North China Incident he stated that Japan was "presently using the sword in Manchuria to build a second divine country [after Japan], just as it would go on to do in China and India" (51). This meant that it would be possible for Japan, as a divine nation, "to transform the world into a pure Buddha land as spoken of in Buddhism" (51).

Furukawa made the following appeal to his fellow believers:

All Buddhists in the country! Resolutely arise and participate in this rarest of holy enterprises. What difference does it make what the League of Nations does? Who do England and the U.S. think they are anyway? The arrow has already left the bow. Do not hesitate in the least. A firm will makes even demons run away. The only thing is to push on resolutely (51-2).

Furukawa devoted the second chapter of his book to the relationship of Buddhism to war. Although he, too, found Buddhist participation in warfare entirely fit and proper, he recognized that "early Buddhism" (*genshi bukkyō*/原始仏教) had not held that position. According to him, what had happened was that as society gradually became more complicated, coupled with such things as an increase in the number of believers, the need to preserve the *Dharma* was recognized.

Furukawa asserted that it had been Buddhists affiliated with the *Mahāyāna*, as opposed to the *Hīnayāna*, school who

had first sanctioned killing in order to preserve the true *Dharma*. *Mahāyāna* Buddhists knew, he claimed, that:

Strict observance of the precept against killing at any time and at any place was absolutely impossible. Similarly, it was utterly absurd to deny murderous conduct under all conditions, for to do so would mean that human society could not be maintained for even a day (108).

Building on the above, Furukawa asserted that "Buddhism clearly recognizes a just war" (110). Applying this to the situation at hand, he wrote:

Looking at the war in Manchuria from the point of view of a believer in Buddhism, it can be approved of as a just war. Anyone discussing this war who is a Japanese would agree. That is to say, no one could fail to see that this is a fight to defend Japan's legitimate rights and interests. . . . Given that our actions toward China are legitimate, it is not only we who benefit from what we do, but the whole Orient, nay, the whole world. Beyond that, China ought to benefit as well (110-11).

In recognizing that so-called primitive Buddhism was originally pacifist in nature, but abandoned this position with the emergence of both a complicated society and the

*Mahāyāna* school of Buddhism, Furukawa took a somewhat different stance than had the earlier authors of "The Buddhist View of War." Nevertheless, his conclusions were almost indistinguishable from theirs. Amongst them, their common assertion that Japan had gone to war for the "benefit of China" is one of the most notable.

In closing this section, it should be noted that the two preceding works were, like the "Imperial Way-Buddhism" movement of which they were a part, pan-Buddhist in their orientation. This did not mean, however, that the individuals sects either disappeared or lessened their own sectarian efforts in support of Japan's war effort. That is to say, each sect used its sect-sponsored newspapers, magazines, and evangelistic materials to mobilize its adherents behind the war. To give but one example, the Tendai sect issued a ninety-six page pamphlet entitled "*Fukyō shiryō*"

(Evangelism Materials/布教資料) in 1942. Its preface reads

in part:

The Great East Asian War has entered another year. We reverently celebrate the majestic appearance of the invincible Imperial military. It is in these circumstances that we hereby publish a second volume of evangelization materials for use as teaching texts by interested parties. . . . In so doing it is our intention to clarify the principles concerned with the new age and Buddhism which is the essence of the national spirit. We will be very happy if these materials are employed to spread the spirit of dying for one's country in order to protect the state, save the world, and benefit people.

As this and countless other materials from all of Japan's major sects reveal, institutional Buddhism had wedded itself, in body and spirit, to the state and the emperor system. Institutional Buddhist leaders refused to recognize the possibility of there being so much as the slightest contradiction between the doctrines of their faith and Japan's war effort. Institutional Buddhism was a bride who with great forethought, dedication, and determination, chose to worship at her master's feet.

## CHAPTER 9: THE EMERGENCE OF "IMPERIAL STATE-ZEN"

### Introduction

By this point it should be clear that the involvement of Japan's two major Zen sects (i.e. Rinzai and Sōtō) in their country's war effort was not an isolated phenomenon, but rather, was one part, or subset, of the overall relationship between institutional Buddhism and the state in Japan. It is important to be aware of this because, as Sharf has noted, from the late nineteenth century onwards, proponents of Zen had promoted Zen not merely as one school of Buddhism but as "the very heart of Asian spirituality, the essence of Japanese culture, and the key to the unique qualities of the Japanese race" (6).

A parallel development during this period had been the tendency to explain Japan's string of Asian military victories as stemming from the allegedly ancient code of



*bushidō* (武士道), i.e. the "Way of the Warrior." Again, according to Scharf, "*bushidō* was the expression of 'Japaneseness' itself" (6). If both Zen and *bushidō* comprised the essence of Japanese culture, the question naturally arises as to the relationship between these two seemingly disparate phenomena.

The answer to this question is the key to understanding the eventual emergence of "Imperial State-Zen" (皇國禪). It should be noted, however, that a thorough understanding of the relationship between Zen and *bushidō* is both beyond the scope of this dissertation and unnecessary. That is to say, the question at this point is not what the actual historical relationship was so much as how Zen adherents from the Meiji period onwards perceived and interpreted it. In other words, what did post-Meiji Zen adherents find in this relationship that justified their own fervent support of Japan's war effort?

## Zen and the Warrior Ethos

As has already been shown, the Meiji connection between Zen and martial prowess became pronounced as early as the Russo-Japanese War through such personages as Rinzai Zen masters Shaku Sōen and Nantenbō, not to mention the latter's famous student, General Nogi Maresuke. Yet, it was left to a somewhat surprising source to begin to explicate the symbiotic relationship alleged to exist between Zen and *bushidō*.

The source was a book written in English by Dr. Nitobe Inazō (新渡部稲造/18??-19??) entitled *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*. Published in 1905, the surprising thing about this book is that it was written not by a Buddhist but a Christian, for Dr. Nitobe identified himself as such in the preface. Nevertheless, he stated that he had chosen to act as a "personal defendant" of the creed "I was taught and told in my youthful days, when feudalism was still in force" (xii-iii).

In Chapter II, "Sources of Bushido," Nitobe clarified the relationship between *bushidō* and Zen as follows:

I may begin with Buddhism. It furnished a sense of calm trust in Fate, a quiet submission to the inevitable, that stoic composure in sight of danger or calamity, that disdain of life and friendliness with death. A foremost teacher of swordsmanship, when he saw his pupil master the utmost of his art, told him, "Beyond this my instruction must give way to Zen teaching" (11).

As to what Zen teaching was, Nitobe offered little in terms of a detailed explanation. He did state, however, that:

[Zen's] method is contemplation, and its purport, so far as I understand it, [is] to be convinced of a principle that underlies all phenomena, and, if it can, of the Absolute itself, and thus to put oneself in harmony with this Absolute. Thus, defined, the teaching was more than the dogma of a sect, and whoever attains to the perception of the Absolute raises above mundane things and awakes "to a new Heaven and a new Earth" (11-12).

Although Nitobe's discussion of Zen was limited, he was far more forthcoming in his description of *bushidō*'s role in modern Japan. He wrote:

Bushido, the maker and product of Old Japan, is still the guiding principle of the transition, and will prove the formative force of the new era (172).

When Nitobe sought proof of *bushidō*'s ongoing influence on modern Japan, he found it in none other than the Sino-Japanese war. He stated:

The physical endurance, fortitude, and bravery that "the little Jap" possesses, were sufficiently proved in the Sino-Japanese war. "Is there any nation more loyal and patriotic?" is a question asked by many; and for the proud answer, "There is not," we must thank the Precepts of Knighthood [i.e. *bushidō*]. . . . What won the battles on the Yalu, in Corea and Manchuria, were the ghosts of our fathers, guiding our hands and beating our hearts. They are not dead, those ghosts, the spirits of our warlike ancestors. To those who have eyes to see, they are clearly visible (176-88).

What, then, of the future? Nitobe devoted the last chapter of his book to that very question. On the one hand, he acknowledged that without feudalism, its "mother

institution," *bushidō* had been left an "orphan" (183). He then suggested that while Japan's modern military might take it under its wing, "we know that modern warfare can afford little room for its continuous growth" (183). Would *bushidō*, then, eventually disappear?

It should come as no surprise to learn that Nitobe did not believe *bushidō* was slated for extinction. On the contrary, in the concluding paragraph of his book, he saw it as still "bless[ing] mankind" with "odours . . . floating in the air" (193). His concluding paragraph read as follows:

Bushido as an independent code of ethics may vanish, but its power will not perish from the earth; its schools of martial prowess or civic honour may be demolished, but its light and its glory will long survive their ruins. Like its symbolic flower, after it is blown to the four winds, it will still bless mankind with the perfume with which it will enrich life. Ages after, when its customaries will have been buried and its very name forgotten, its odours will come floating in the air as from a far-off, unseen hill, "the wayside gaze beyond"; - then in the beautiful language of the Quaker poet,

"The traveller owns the grateful sense  
Of sweetness near, he knows not whence,  
And, pausing, takes with forehead bare  
The benediction of the air" (192-93).

It will be recalled from the previous section that the proponents of "Imperial Way-Buddhism" had been able to put forth the remarkable proposition that the Japanese invasion of China was for that country's benefit. None the less remarkable in terms of intellectual gymnastics, is Nitobe's ability to tie the code of the Japanese warrior to the poetry of a pacifist Quaker. Had Nitobe himself actually gone to the modern battlefields of which he wrote, let alone those countless ones to follow, one can only imagine what "odours will come floating in the air."

Reference has already been made to Nukariya Kaiten, the Sōtō Zen priest and scholar, who only eight years later, in 1913, wrote the *Religion of the Samurai* while lecturing

at Harvard University. He maintained, it will be recalled, that:

Bushidō . . . should be observed not only by Japan's soldiers on the battlefield, but by every citizen in the struggle for existence. If a person be a person and not a beast, then he must be a Samurai - brave, generous, upright, faithful, and manly, full of self-respect and self-confidence, and at the same time full of the spirit of self-sacrifice [Italics mine.] (50).

In the context of what was to follow, Kaiten may be said to have anticipated the future use of *bushidō* in two important respects. The first is that in post-Meiji Restoration Japan "every citizen" was expected to adopt the code of the warrior. This amounted to an early call for the militarization of the whole of society. Secondly, for all the admonitions to be "generous, upright, faithful" etc., "a spirit of self-sacrifice" would come over time (especially after 1937) to be proclaimed as the essence of *bushidō*.

Shaku Sōen, too, continued speaking out on what he believed Zen could and should contribute to the nation's

advancement. Within this context, he joined the discussion of *bushidō*'s modern significance in a book entitled *Kainin kaima* (A Fine Person, A Fine Horse/快人快馬) published in 1919. The date is significant in that W.W. I had only just ended. Once again, war had become the pretext for yet another discussion of Zen's contribution to Japan's military prowess.

In Japan's fight against Germany, Sōen lamented what he saw as the Japanese people's increasing "materialism," "extreme worship of money," and general decadence (41). In his mind the solution was clear, namely: "the unification of all the people in the nation in the spirit of *bushidō*" (47). For Sōen, as for Kaiten, the essence of this code was to found "in a sacrificial spirit consisting of deep loyalty [to the Emperor and the state] coupled with deep filial piety" (47).



The question naturally arises as to where Zen fits into the picture. Sōen's answer was as follows:

The power that comes from Zen training can be called forth to become military power, good government, and the like. In fact, it can be applied to every endeavour. The reason that *bushidō* has developed so greatly since the Kamakura period (1185-1333) is due to Zen, the essence of Buddhism. It was the participation of the Way of Zen which, I believe it can be said, gave to *bushidō* its great power (65).

The belief that the power resulting from Zen training can be changed into military power was to become an ever more important part of the Zen contribution to Japan's war effort. In fact, as will be seen in the following section, it was the basic assumption underlying the emergence of "Imperial State-Zen." This said, it is equally important to understand that for Sōen *bushidō*'s modern role, empowered as it was by Zen, was by no means limited to its purely military role. He emphasized this point yet again when he stated:

Today, my sixty million compatriots are in the aelstrom of a world war. It can be said that not only military men, but also industrialists, politicians, and the general populace are all equipped with a *bushidō*-like virile and intrepid spirit. As I look toward to the future economic war, however, I cannot help having some doubts as to whether . . . there will be persons who can accomplish wonderfully marvelous deeds (67).

For Sōen, then, not only was *bushidō* valuable for all segments of society, starting with the military, but it was also equally valuable in Japan's coming "economic wars."

It is important to recognize that the discussion of the relationship between Zen and *bushidō* was by no means limited to scholarly works on Zen or the writings of a few nationalistic Zen masters. On the contrary, it was to be found in even the simplest of introductory books on Zen. *Zen no tebiki* (A Zen Primer/禅の手ひき), published in 1927 by Fueoka Seisen (笛岡清泉/18??-19??), is an example of such a work. Seisen's approach to *bushidō* was characterized by a more classical examination of his subject in that it focused

on historical incidents in which the connection between Zen and *bushidō* was thought to be revealed.

Seisen began his discussion of these incidents with the following observation:

Zen was introduced into Japan at the beginning of the Kamakura period, at a time when *bushidō* had risen to power. The simple and direct teachings of Zen coincided with the straight forward and resolute spirit of *samurai* discipline. Especially the Zen teaching on life and death was strikingly clear and thorough. In as much as *samurai* stood on the edge between life and death, this teaching was very appropriate for their training. Thus, they very quickly came to revere and have faith in it (150).

One of the first incidents Seisen introduced was to become probably the most often quoted of any incident thought to prove the historical connection between Zen and the warrior spirit. It concerns an exchange between a Chinese Zen master known in Japan as Sogen (祖元/Ch. Tsuyüan/1226-86) and his lay disciple, Hōjō Tokimune (北条時宗/1251-84), Japan's then military ruler. Tokimune was faced

with a series of Mongolian invasions which extended over nearly two decades.

Hearing the news that the Mongolian invaders were seaborne and on their way to attack Japan, Seisen recorded the following exchange between Tokimune and Sogen:

"The great event has come." said Tokimune.

"How will you face it?" asked Sogen.

"*Katsu!*"<sup>1</sup> shouted Tokimune.

"Truly a lion's child roars like a lion. Rush ahead and never turn back!" replied Sogen.

If this exchange marked the first known incident in Japan of the linkage of Zen training to mental military preparedness, it also marked in Seisen's view "the enhancement of national glory" (151). Not only that, but martial incidents of this nature revealed that "the spirits of Japan's various heroes have been trained by Zen" (152). Further even, these incidents demonstrated that "Zen and the sword were one and the same" (152).

Once again, if the above discussion seemed somewhat divorced from Japan of the 1920's, Seisen wanted to make sure that his readers understood that the Zen spirit which permeated *bushidō* was, in fact, very relevant to modern Japan. He stated:

Zen enlightenment is not a question of ability, but of power. It is not something acquired through experience, but is the power that immediately gushes to the surface from one's original nature, from one's original form. . . . This power can be utilized by persons in all fields, including those in the military, industrialists, government ministers, educators, artists, farmers, etc. It underlies all of these pursuits (149).

For Seisen, as for the others who preceded him, the Zen spirit that enervated *bushidō* was far from dead or irrelevant to modern Japan. Everyone could utilize the power of Zen, just as everyone could benefit from its "strikingly clear and thorough teaching on life and death."

One of the first commentators to present a detailed exposition of the doctrinal relationship between *bushidō*

and Zen was Furukawa Kakugo. Furukawa, it will be recalled, was the popular commentator on Buddhism who had written the book, "Rapidly Advancing Japan and the New *Mahāyāna* Buddhism" in 1937. According to Furukawa, *bushidō* had eight major characteristics :

1. Great value was placed on fervent loyalty.
2. Military prowess was highly esteemed.
3. A spirit of self-sacrifice was found in abundance.
4. It was very realistic.
5. It emphasized practice based on self-reliance.
6. It esteemed order and proper decorum.
7. Truthfulness was respected; ambition was strong.
8. A life of simplicity was to be followed (155).

What, then, was the relationship between the above and Zen doctrine? The highlights of Furukawa's position on this issue are as follows:

1. The *prajñā* (Wisdom) [school's] teaching of *sūnya* (emptiness) is both the basis and gateway to Buddhism. It should, moreover, be called the fundamental principle of practically-oriented Zen. It is for this reason that Zen was able to become the driving force behind the self-sacrificing spirit of *bushidō* based on the emptiness of self.

2. The realistic, this-worldly nature of Zen is based on the teaching that life and death are themselves *nirvāna*. Zen-like total enlightenment is found in that practice which, pointing directly to the mind, enables one to see one's nature and become a *Buddha*. This simple, frank, and optimistic spirit of Zen was what enabled it to exert a profound influence on the character of the realistic and patriotic warriors of this country.
3. It was the Zen sect alone within the *Mahāyāna* school of Buddhism which faithfully transmitted the atheism and self-reliance of primitive Buddhism. Placing no dependence on the power of either *Buddhas* or gods, Zen's goal was to see one's nature and become a *Buddha* through the practice of *zazen*. This struck a deep note of resonance with the spirit of Japan's independent, self-reliant, and virile warriors.
4. Zen takes a very practical stance based on its teaching of a transmission outside of the *sūtras* that is not dependent on words. Having discarded complicated doctrines, it maintains that the *Buddha Dharma* is synonymous with one's deportment and that decorum is the essence of the faith. Once again, this is identical to the wordless practicality of *bushidō* which never speaks of theory but instead urges the accomplishment of one's duty.
5. Zen practitioners have, from ancient times, valued a simple and frugal life. This lifestyle is identical

with the plain and unsophisticated temperament of warriors, causing it to develop even further.

6. In Japan, unlike in India or China, Zen was able to pass beyond its original character of subjective and religious salvation and enter into the real world. In so doing it served as the catalyst for warriors entering the realm of selflessness. This, in turn, resulted in self-sacrificial conduct on behalf of their sovereign and their country. All of this was made possible by the Imperial Household which is the incarnation of the Wisdom of the universe. Thus, it can be said that the *Mahāyana* school didn't simply spread to Japan but was actually created here (156-61).

Furukawa's final point on *bushidō* was that it was wrong to say that the *samurai* had disappeared at the time of the Meiji Restoration. Rather, one should take the view that all of the people became *samurai* at that time. That is to say, up to then only members of the *samurai* class were allowed to carry weapons in order to fulfil their duty of protecting their sovereign and the country. Now, however, all of the people had this duty. That is to say, all Japanese men were now *samurai*.



As previously noted, Furukawa had written the above in 1937, some ten years after Seisen, and immediately following the outbreak of full scale war in China. At that time all Japanese males were subject to military conscription. This was also a period marked by increasing tension between Japan and the English-speaking countries of the U.S. and Britain. If only to protect their own economic interests in China and throughout Asia, the latter two countries were unwilling to ignore Japanese expansionism.

It was in this atmosphere that Suzuki Daisetz once again entered the picture. By this time he had written widely in both English and Japanese and established himself as a scholar of Buddhism in general and Zen in particular. Thus, in 1938 he published a book in English entitled *Zen Buddhism and Its Influence on Japanese Culture* which was reprinted after the war as simply *Zen and Japanese Culture*. Three out of this book's eleven chapters were devoted to

the relationship of Zen and *bushidō*. Given the almost universal approval this work has met with over the years in both the U.S. and Europe, it is somewhat surprising to learn that Suzuki's description of the relationship between Zen and *bushidō* is nearly a mirror image of the preceding works.

Suzuki began his description of the relationship between Zen and *bushidō* in the second chapter of his book. He described the "rugged virility" of Japan's warriors versus the "grace and refinement" of Japan's aristocracy. He then stated:

The soldierly quality, with its mysticism and aloofness from worldly affairs, appeals to the willpower. Zen in this respect walks hand in hand with the spirit of Bushido ("Warriors' Way") [30].

Like his predecessors, Suzuki did admit that "Buddhism . . . in its varied history has never been found engaged in warlike activities" (61). In Japan, however, Zen had "passively sustained" Japan's warriors both morally and philosophically.

That is to say, they were sustained morally because "Zen is a religion which teaches us not to look backward once the course is decided" (61). On the other hand, they were sustained philosophically because "[Zen] treats life and death indifferently" (61).

Suzuki is clearly taken with the idea of Zen as "a religion of the will" (61). Over and over again he returned to this theme. For example, he stated:

A good fighter is generally an ascetic or stoic, which means he has an iron will. This, when needed, Zen can supply (62).

Less than a page later, Suzuki went on to say:

Zen is a religion of will-power, and will-power is what is urgently needed by the warriors, though it ought to be enlightened by intuition (63).

Together with his fascination with the relationship of Zen and willpower, Suzuki is attracted to the relationship between Zen discipline and the warrior. He stated:

Zen discipline is simple, direct, self-reliant, self-denying; its ascetic tendency goes well with the fighting spirit. The fighter is to be always single-minded with one object in view, to fight, looking neither backward nor sideways. To go straight forward in order to crush the enemy is all that is necessary for him (62).

Although Suzuki first maintained that it was the Zen philosophy of "treat[ing] life and death indifferently" which had sustained Japan's warriors, he then went on to deny that Zen had any philosophy at all. He wrote:

Zen has no special doctrine or philosophy, no set of concepts or intellectual formulas, except that it tries to release one from the bondage of birth and death, by means of certain intuitive modes of understanding peculiar to itself. It is, therefore, extremely flexible in adapting itself to almost any philosophy and moral doctrine as long as its intuitive teaching is not interfered with. It may be found wedded to anarchism or fascism, communism or democracy, atheism or idealism, or any political or economic dogmatism. It is, however, generally animated with a certain revolutionary spirit, and when things come to a deadlock - as they do when we are overloaded with conventionalism, formalism, and other cognate isms - Zen asserts itself and proves to be a destructive force (*Italics mine*) (63).

Suzuki's statement that Zen could be found wedded to anarchism or communism is a fascinating comment in light of the fact that it was exactly this union which Uchiyama Gudō and his fellow Buddhist priests had earlier attempted to accomplish. The result of their efforts, however, was their total condemnation by the leaders of both the Sōtō and Rinzai Zen sects (not to mention the leaders of all other sects). There is no record of any kind which indicates that Suzuki opposed their execution or imprisonment.

Given this, the suspicion emerges that what Suzuki was really trying to do in the above statement was justify the close relationship which by 1938 already existed between Zen and the Japanese military. Not only did Suzuki identify Zen as a "destructive force," but he also wrote favorably of the modern relationship between Zen, *bushidō*, and Japan's military actions in China. He stated :

There is a document that was very much talked about in connection with the Japanese military operations in China in the 1930's. It is known as the *Hagakure*, which literally means "Hidden under the Leaves," for it is one of the virtues of the samurai not to display himself, not to blow his horn, but to keep himself away from the public eye and be doing good for his fellow beings. To the compilation of this book, which consists of various notes, anecdotes, moral sayings, etc., a Zen monk had his part to contribute. The work started in the middle part of the seventeenth century under Nabeshima Naoshige, the feudal lord of Saga in the island of Kyūshū. The book emphasizes very much the samurai's readiness to give his life away at any moment, for it states that no great work has ever been accomplished without going mad - that is, when expressed in modern terms, without breaking through the ordinary level of consciousness and letting loose the hidden powers lying further below. These powers may be devilish sometimes, but there is no doubt that they are superhuman and work wonders. When the unconscious is tapped, it rises above individual limitations. Death now loses its sting altogether, and this is where the samurai training joins hands with Zen (70).

As the conclusion of the above quote makes clear, Suzuki was also very concerned with the warrior's (and soldier's) use of Zen to "master death." He stated:

The problem of death is a great problem with every one of us; it is, however, more pressing for the samurai, for the soldier, whose life is exclusively devoted to fighting, and fighting means death to fighters of either side. . . . It was therefore natural for every sober-minded samurai to approach Zen with the idea of mastering death (71-2).

Another belief which Suzuki shared with his contemporaries was that *bushidō* was neither dead nor limited to Imperial soldiers, the modern equivalent of Japan's traditional warriors. He wrote:

The spirit of the samurai deeply breathing Zen into itself propagated its philosophy even among the masses. The latter, even when they are not particularly trained in the way of the warrior, have imbibed his spirit and are ready to sacrifice their lives for any cause they think worthy. This has repeatedly been proved in the wars Japan has so far had to go through (85).

Finally, Suzuki could not avoid addressing the fundamental question of how the death and destruction caused by the samurai's sword could be related to Zen and Buddhist compassion. He therefore addressed two chapters

("Zen and Swordsmanship I" and "Zen and Swordsmanship II") to that very question. He began his discussion by noting what he considered to be the "double office" of the sword.

He wrote:

The sword has thus a double office to perform: to destroy anything that opposes the will of its owner and to sacrifice all the impulses that arise from the instinct of self-preservation. The one relates itself to the spirit of patriotism or sometimes militarism, while the other has a religious connotation of loyalty and self-sacrifice. In the case of the former, very frequently the sword may mean destruction pure and simple, and then it is the symbol of force, sometimes devilish force. It must, therefore, be controlled and consecrated by the second function. Its conscientious owner is always mindful of this truth. For then destruction is turned against the evil spirit. The sword comes to be identified with the annihilation of things that lie in the way of peace, justice, progress, and humanity" (89).

It is instructive to note here that the tenor of the preceding quote is quite similar to Suzuki's writing in *A Treatise on the New [Meaning of] Religion* previously discussed. There he said:



The purpose of maintaining soldiers and encouraging the military arts is not to conquer other countries or deprive them of their rights or freedom. . . . The construction of big warships and casting of giant cannon is not to enlarge one's personal gain and trample on the wealth and profit of others. Rather, it is done only to prevent the history of one's country from being disturbed by injustice and outrageousness. Conducting commerce and working to increase production is not for the purpose of building up material wealth in order to subdue other nations. Rather, it is done only in order to develop more and more human knowledge and bring about the perfection of morality. Therefore, if there is a lawless country which comes and obstructs our commerce, or tramples on our rights, this is something that would truly interrupt the progress of all of humanity. In the name of religion our country could not submit to this. Thus, we would have no choice but to take up arms, not for the purpose of slaying the enemy, nor for the purpose of pillaging cities, let alone for the purpose of acquiring wealth. Instead, we would simply punish the people of the country representing injustice in order that justice might prevail.

Even more closely related to Suzuki's earlier quote are the sentiments of his master, Shaku Sōen. It will be recalled that at the time of the Russo-Japanese War he said:

In the present hostilities, into which Japan has entered with great reluctance, she pursues no egotistic purpose, but seeks the subjugation of evils hostile to civilization, peace, and enlightenment.

If there is some validity to the old maxim "Like father, like son" then perhaps the same thing holds true for "Like master, like disciple."

In any event, Suzuki's mental gymnastics on this issue did not stop with the above comments. He went on to directly address the seeming contradiction between Zen, the sword, and killing. He wrote:

The sword is generally associated with killing, and most of us wonder how it can come into connection with Zen, which is a school of Buddhism teaching the gospel of love and mercy. The fact is that the art of swordsmanship distinguishes between the sword that kills and the sword that gives life. The one that is used by a technician cannot go any further than killing, for he never appeals to the sword unless he intends to kill. The case is altogether different with the one who is compelled to lift the sword. For it is really not he but the sword itself that does the killing. He had no desire to do harm to anybody, but the enemy appears and makes himself a victim. It is though the sword performs automatically its function of justice, which

is the function of mercy. . . . When the sword is expected to play this sort of role in human life, it is no more a weapon of self-defense or an instrument of killing, and the swordsman turns into an artist of the first grade, engaged in producing a work of genuine originality (145).

Previous commentators, it will be recalled, have identified a Buddhist-sanctioned war as an act of compassion. As the above quotation makes clear, Suzuki agreed with this position. He further spoke with apparent approval of the Zen spirit manifested in Japan's military operations in China. Moreover, he clearly approved of a war "identified with the annihilation of things that lie in the way of peace, justice, progress, and humanity." But perhaps his most creative contribution to the discourse of his day was the assertion that the Zen-trained swordsman (and, by extension, the modern soldier) "turns into an artist of the first grade, engaged in producing a work of genuine originality."

How the Zen-inspired soldier's "originality" would manifest itself in concrete terms on the battlefield will be seen in the following section. Before preceding there, however, there is one final treatment on the relationship of Zen and *bushidō* that is worthy of consideration. It is worthy of consideration because it takes the relationship between the two entities to an even more extreme form than previous commentators, Suzuki included.

Entitled *Bushidō no kōyō* (武士道乃高揚/The Promotion of *Bushidō*), this book was published in 1942, the year following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. It was composed of a series of talks by Seki Seisetsu (関精拙/1877-1945), another allegedly fully enlightened Zen master who served both as the head of the Tenryūji (天竜寺) branch of the Rinzai Zen sect and as a military chaplain. A second Rinzai priest, Yamada Mumon (山田無文/1900-1988), edited this work. Mumon, Seisetsu's disciple, is best known as the President

of the Rinzai Zen sect-affiliated Hanazono University in postwar years.

One of the most striking features of Seisetsu's book is its cover which depicts a folk hero by the name of Momotaro dressed in *samurai* clothing and standing with his sword pinning down two devilish looking persons, i.e. Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt. This representation is clearly a reflection of the wartime slogan "*kichiku beiei*" (鬼畜米英) which literally meant "the savage Americans and English."

Like so many of his predecessors, Seisetsu began his description of *bushidō* as "being nothing other than the spirit of Japan" (21). Zen had contributed its "profound and exquisite enlightenment" to *bushidō* leading to the latter's "unique moral system" (21). Thus had *bushidō* become "the precious jewel incorporating the purity of the spiritual culture of the Orient" (21).

In what was by now a familiar litany, *bushidō* was said to "prize military prowess and view death as so many goose feathers" (22). *Samurai* "revered their sovereign and honored their ancestors" (22). They also valued loyalty, frugality, simplicity, decorum, benevolence, etc. All of these values were identical with those of modern soldiers. Not only that, these values applied equally to "the people of this country who are now all soldiers, for I believe that every citizen ought to adhere to the *bushidō* of the present age" (30).

In his conclusion Sekisetsu argued that the unity of Zen, the sword, and *bushidō* had only one goal in mind. That goal was none other than "world peace." He wrote:

The true significance of military power is to transcend self-interest, to hope for peace. This is the ultimate goal of the military arts. Whatever the battle may be, that battle is necessarily fought in anticipation of peace. When one learns the art of cutting people down, it is always done with the goal of not having to cut people down. The true spirit of *bushidō* is to make people

obey without drawing one's sword and to win without fighting. In Zen circles this is called the sword which gives life. Those who possess the sword that kills must, on the other hand, necessarily wield the sword which gives life.

From the Zen vantage point, where *Māñjusrī* [the *Bodhisattva* of Wisdom] has used his sharp sword to sever all ignorance and desire, there exists no enemy in the world. The very best of *bushidō* is to learn that there is no enemy in the world rather than to learn to conquer the enemy. Attaining this level, Zen and the sword become completely one, just as the Way of Zen and the Way of the Warrior [*bushidō*] unite together. United in this way, they become the sublime leading spirit of society.

At this moment, we are in the sixth year of the sacred war, having arrived at a critical point. All of you should obey Imperial mandates, being loyal, brave, faithful, frugal, and virile. You should cultivate yourselves more and more both physically and spiritually in order that you don't bring shame on yourselves as Imperial soldiers. You should acquire a bold spirit like the warriors of old, truly doing your duty for the development of East Asia and world peace. I cannot help asking this of you (64-65).

To the belief that Zen-sanctioned war was both just and compassionate, benefiting even one's enemy, must now

be added the belief that it was all being done in the name of world peace.

## Zen and the Imperial Military

### Introduction

It will be recalled that Ketelaar pointed out that one of the chief goals of the so-called New Buddhism of the late Meiji period was to prove its loyalty to the Throne (133). This theme was further developed by the noted Buddhist scholar Yabuki Yoshitaru (矢吹慶輝/18??-19??) who wrote in 1934 that Buddhism had the potential "to become a most effective instrument for the state" (4). Holtom, for his part, emphasized that "Buddhism fosters the qualities of spirit that make for strong soldiers" (149).

If the preceding statements held true for institutional Buddhism as a whole, it should now be clear that they were particularly relevant to the Zen school as a whole. Whether it was a question of fostering loyalty to the Emperor or



making spiritually strong soldiers, leading Zen figures were demonstrably unsurpassed in their efforts. Yet, the question must be asked, was anyone listening? That is to say, were Imperial soldiers actually influenced by their words and actions?

A quantitative answer to these questions is both beyond the scope of this dissertation and, almost certainly, beyond the realm of historical research. How would one determine, some fifty years after the end of the war, either the extent or depth of such influence? This said, it is important to note that the Imperial military, the Imperial Army in particular, was more than merely receptive to the type of Buddhist support described above, it actively solicited it.

As previously discussed, the military had cooperated with frontline visits by Buddhist priests like Shaku Sōen as early as the Russo-Japanese War. From the battlefield

itself, Japanese military leaders came to the following realization:

The most important tactical lesson of the war was the critical place of 'spirit' in overcoming the physical dilemmas of the modern battlefield. . . . It thus became increasingly important for small units to bring supreme determination into the assault line - a sense of self-sacrifice based on a fanatical patriotism (Peattie 4).

Taking this lesson to heart, the military had, as early as 1909, initiated a training program for its soldiers known as *seishin kyōiku* (spiritual training/ 精神教育). This program rested on three pillars: 1) incorporating the *bushidō* spirit into the military, 2) encouraging belief in the Emperor's divinity, and 3) promoting absolute loyalty to the Throne. The ultimate objective of this training was clear - invincibility on the battlefield.

It will be recalled that an earlier popular Buddhist commentator on *bushidō*, Furukawa Kakugo, had identified himself as being engaged "in spiritual training for Army

officer candidates." His position was, in fact, no accident; for this training program was focused chiefly on the officer corps. Cadets were first exposed to it at the military preparatory school level and then further indoctrinated during their eighteen months at the Military Academy.

How effective was this spiritual training? Again that is an impossible question to answer with any degree of accuracy. A study done by Mark Peattie, however, caused him to rate it quite highly. He wrote:

With the possible exception of the pre-World War I French army, no other army articulated such an extreme code of sacrifice in the attack (5).

In this context, there was one military officer whose writings clearly indicate the type of soldier this training produced. This officer's writings serve as a powerful testimonial to the influence that the alleged unity of Zen and the sword had on both Imperial soldiers and the general

public. The officer's name was Lt. Colonel Sugimoto Gorō, a "god of war" (*gunshin*/軍神).

### **Lt. Col. Sugimoto Gorō, the Zen/Military Ideal**

A brief biographical look at Sugimoto Gorō reveals that he was born in Hiroshima prefecture on May 25, 1900. Following completion of his primary and secondary education, he joined the Imperial Army in December 1918 and was selected for officer candidate school the following year. After graduation in 1921, he was appointed to the rank of Second-Lieutenant and attached to the Eleventh Infantry Regiment.

Sugimoto continued his military education and was promoted to First-Lieutenant in 1924. He saw service in the China Incident of 1928 and was awarded the sum of 100 yen in 1929 by way of appreciation. 1931 saw Sugimoto promoted to Captain and assuming the position of battalion adjutant within the Eleventh Infantry Regiment. Shortly

thereafter he went on to become a company commander in the same regiment.

In December 1931 Sugimoto was ordered to Tienjin in northern China as part of the military response to the Manchurian Incident. He returned to Japan in July 1932 and was awarded the "Distinguished Service Medal for Creating [the Country of] Manchukuo" in March 1934. One month later he also received an award of 400 yen for his participation in that campaign.

In August 1937 Sugimoto was promoted to the rank of Major and shortly thereafter despatched to northern China once again. On September 14, 1937 Sugimoto was mortally wounded in a battle which took place in Shanxi province. He was posthumously promoted to the rank of Lt. Colonel and awarded several decorations.

As the preceding biographical account reveals, Sugimoto was in every sense "a good soldier and officer" if

not necessarily a particularly distinguished one. What made him stand out from his peers, however, were three elements: 1) his total and absolute reverence and loyalty to the Emperor, 2) his many years of Zen practice, and 3) his writings, posthumously published under the title *Taigi*(Great Duty/大義), describing the same.

The following two passages are representative of his attitude to the Emperor. The first of them is taken from the first chapter of his book and was entitled simply "The Emperor." It read in part:

The Emperor is identical with the Great [Sun] Goddess Amaterasu. He is the supreme and only God of the universe, the supreme sovereign of the universe. All of the many components [of a country] including such things as its laws and constitution, its religion, ethics, learning, art, etc. are expedient means by which to promote unity with the Emperor. That is to say, the greatest mission of these components is to promote an awareness of the non-existence of the self and the absolute nature of the Emperor. Because of the non-existence of the self everything in the universe is a manifestation of the Emperor. . . including even the insect chirping in the hedge, or the gentle spring breeze.

Stop such foolishness as respecting Confucius, revering Christ, or believing in Shākyamuni! Believe in the Emperor, the embodiment of Supreme Truth, the one God of the universe! Revere the Emperor for eternity! Imperial subjects of Japan should not seek their own personal salvation. Rather, their goal should be the expansion of Imperial power. Needless to say, they will find personal salvation within Imperial power. In as much as this is true, they must pray for the expansion of Imperial power. In front of the Emperor their self is empty. Within the unity of the sovereign and the people, the people must not value their self, but value the Emperor who embodies their self.

Loyalty to the Emperor, which is the highest moral training, should never be done with the expectation of receiving anything in return. Rather, it should be practiced without any thought of reward, for the Emperor does not exist for the people, but the people exist for the Emperor. . . . The Emperor does not exist for the state, but the state exists for the Emperor. This great awareness will clearly manifest itself at the time you discard secular values and recognize that the Emperor is the highest supreme value for all eternity. If, on the other hand, your ultimate goal is eternal happiness for yourself and salvation of your soul, the Emperor becomes a means to an end and is no longer the highest being. If there is a difference in the degree of your reverence for the Emperor based on your learning, occupation, or living conditions, then you are a self-centered person. Seeking nothing at

all, you should simply completely discard both body and mind, and unite with the Emperor (23-25).

The second quotation comes from the fifth chapter of his book, and as the chapter title suggests, it described Sugimoto's understanding of the "Imperial Way." It read in part:

The Imperial Way is the Great Way that the Emperor has graciously bestowed on us to follow. For this reason, it is the Great Way that the multitudes should follow. It is the greatest way in the universe, the true reality of the Emperor, the highest righteousness and the purest of the pure. . . . The Imperial Way is truly the fundamental principle for the guidance of the world. If the people are themselves righteous and pure, free of contentiousness, then they are one with the Emperor; and the unity of the sovereign and his subjects is realized.

Is there anything that can be depended on other than the Emperor's Way? Is there a secret key to the salvation of humanity other than this? Is there a place of refuge other than this? The Emperor should be revered for all eternity. Leading the masses, dash straight ahead on the Emperor's Way! Even if inundated by raging waves, or seared by a red-hot iron, or beset by all the nations of the world, go straight ahead on the Emperor's Way without the slightest hesitation! This is the best and shortest route to the manifestation



of the divine land [of Japan]. The Emperor's Way is what has been taught by all the saints of the world. Do not confuse the highest righteousness and the purest of the pure with the merely simplehearted. To sacrifice oneself for the Emperor is the highest righteousness and the purest of the pure. This is loyalty; this is filial piety (36-39).

If the preceding comments may be characterized as those of an extreme ethnocentric nationalist, the question naturally arises as to what connection, if any, they have to either Buddhism in general or Zen in particular. On the surface they would appear to have little connection since Sugimoto even goes so far as to advocate the cessation of belief in *Buddha* Shākṛyamuni among others. Similarly, while a whole chapter of his book is devoted to a discussion of the "Imperial Way" or the Emperor's Way (*Tennōdō*/天皇道), there is not the slightest mention of "Imperial Way-Buddhism" let alone "Imperial State-Zen."

In examining these issues it must first be noted that the concept of an "Imperial Way" was by no means an invention

of institutional Buddhism. On the contrary, from as early as the Meiji period it had been a creature of the state, especially the Department of Education. Kitagawa expressed its salient features as follows:

The underlying assumption of the "Imperial Way" was that the nation is in essence a patriarchal family with the emperor as its head. It was taken for granted that individuals exist for the nation rather than the other way around. Equally important was the assumption that some men are born to rule while others are to be ruled because men are by nature unequal (187).

In light of this definition, it can be seen that Sugimoto was simply repeating the popular conception of this term though perhaps in a somewhat more extreme form. Likewise, "Imperial Way-Buddhism," as discussed previously, incorporated the same values, the only difference being that Buddhist commentators attempted to show that Japanese Buddhism had either been the source of these values or at least was compatible with these values. But what, then, was Sugimoto's connection to all this?

First of all, Sugimoto also had this to say about Shākyamuni:

When Shākyamuni sat in meditation beneath the *Bodhi* tree in order to see into his true nature, he had to fight with an army of innumerable demons. Those who rush forward to save the Empire are truly great men as he was, pathfinders who sacrifice themselves for the Emperor (62).

While Sugimoto had little to say about Buddhism as such, he readily used Buddhist terminology to make his point. For example, he quoted the *Nirvāna Sūtra* on the importance of "protecting the true *Dharma*." He then went on to assert that "the highest and only true *Dharma* in the world exists within the Emperor" (53). Likewise, he quoted from the same *sūtra* on the need to "keep the [Buddhist] precepts." In a similar vein, he then stated that "reverently protecting the Emperor is the world's highest keeping of the precepts."

In his chapter on war, Sugimoto also revealed a Buddhist influence. He wrote:

The wars of the Empire are sacred wars. They are holy wars. They are the [Buddhist] practice (*gyō*/行) of great compassion (*daijishin*/大慈悲心). Therefore the Imperial military must consist of holy officers and holy soldiers (139).

As previously noted, the belief that war was an expression of Buddhist compassion had long been an article of faith within institutional Buddhism.

If references to Buddhism in general were relatively limited in Sugimoto's writings, the same cannot be said about his references, both direct and indirect, to Zen. As early as the introduction to his book he had this to say:

If you wish to penetrate the true meaning of "Great Duty," the first thing you should do is to embrace the teachings of Zen and discard self-attachment (19).

As to why self-attachment should be discarded, Sugimoto went on to give this explanation:

War is moral training for not only the individual but for the entire world. It consists of the extinction of self-seeking and the destruction of self-preservation. It is only those without self-attachment who are able to revere the Emperor absolutely (140).

Sugimoto also found inspiration for his beliefs in the teachings of some of Zen's greatest masters. For example, he wrote about Dōgen, the 13th century founder of the Sōtō Zen sect in Japan, as follows:

Zen Master Dōgen said, "To study the *Buddha Dharma* is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self." To forget the self means to discard both body and mind. To discard beyond discarding, to discard until there is nothing left to discard. . . . This is called reaching the Great Way in which there is no doubt. This is the Great Law of the universe. In this way the great spirit of the highest righteousness and the purest of the pure manifests itself in the individual. This is the unity of the sovereign and his subjects, the origin of faith in the Emperor (101).

Sugimoto was equally ready to enlist the greatest of the Chinese Zen masters in his cause. About Nan-ch'üan P'u-yüan (748-834/南泉普願) he wrote:

An ancient master [Nan-ch'üan] said, "One's ordinary mind is the Way" . . . . In the spring there are hundreds of flowers, and in the fall, the moon. In the summer there are cool breezes, and in the winter, snow. Laying down one's life in order to destroy the rebels is one's ordinary mind. If one does not fall victim to an idle mind, this is truly the practice of Great Duty. It is this that must be called the essence of faith in the Emperor (99).

Sugimoto subsequently went on to add that "sacrificing oneself for the Emperor is one's ordinary mind" And further, those who possess this mind are "true Imperial subjects" (143).

Beyond quotations like the above that show a direct Zen influence, Sugimoto used a number of Zen terms throughout his writing. For example, he devoted an entire chapter (Chapter 20) to the question of "life and death." In the best Zen fashion he explained that "life and death are identical" (151). As to how one comes to this realization, he stated, "It is achieved by abandoning both body and mind, by extinguishing the self" (152).

If the preceding appears to be orthodox Zen teaching, Sugimoto then went on to add:

Warriors who sacrifice their lives for the Emperor will not die, but live forever. Truly, they should be called gods and *Buddhas* for whom there is no life or death. . . . Where there is absolute loyalty there is no life or death. Where there is life and death there is no absolute loyalty. When a person talks of his view of life and death, that person has not yet become pure in heart. He has not yet abandoned body and mind. In pure loyalty there is no life or death. Simply live in pure loyalty! (153-54)

And finally, closely connected with the above sentiments is the statement for which Sugimoto was destined to be best remembered:

If you wish to see me, live in reverence for the Emperor! Where there is the spirit of reverence for the Emperor, there will I always be (156).

It might be argued that Sugimoto's understanding of Buddhism and Zen as represented above was no more than one nationalist's wilful distortion of these traditions. While this may in fact be true, to lightly dismiss it as such would

be to miss its real significance. That is to say, it would mean ignoring the fact that leading Zen masters of the day readily agreed with Sugimoto in his identification of Zen with both war and the Emperor.

First and foremost of these supportive Zen masters was Yamazaki Ekijū (1882-1961/山崎益州), chief abbot of the Butsūji branch (仏通寺派) of the Rinzai Zen sect. In one sense it is hardly surprising to find Ekijū lending his support to Sugimoto in as much as the latter had been his lay disciple. Concretely, Ekijū's support took the form of a 104 page eulogy attached to the end of Sugimoto's book. It began as follows:

I once said at a lecture I gave, "The faith of the Japanese people is a faith that should be centered on His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor." At that time Sugimoto said that he was in complete agreement with me. He then went on to add, "I had felt exactly as you do, but I had been unable to find the right words to express it. Present-day religionists raise a fuss about the need for faith, but their faith is mistaken. Buddhists say that one should have faith in the *Buddha*, or *Vairocana*,



or *Buddha Amita*, but such faith is one that has been captured by religion. Japanese Buddhism must be centered on the Emperor; for if were it not, it would have no place in Japan, it would not be living Buddhism. Even Buddhism must conform to the national structure of Japan. The same holds true for Shākyamuni's teachings."

Sugimoto continued,

"The Buddhist statues that are enshrined in temples should, properly speaking, have the Emperor reverently enshrined in the center and such figures as *Buddha Amita* or *Vairocana* at his sides. It is only all of the various branches of the Zen sect in Japan who have His Majesty enshrined in the center. . . . All of Japanese Buddhism should have His Majesty, the Emperor as their central objects of worship (160-61).

Ekijū then proceeded to compare Sugimoto's feelings of reverence to the Emperor with his own. About himself he stated:

For Japanese there is no such thing as sacrifice. Sacrifice means to totally annihilate one's body on behalf of the Imperial state. The Japanese people, however, have been one with the Emperor from the beginning. In this place of absoluteness there is no sacrifice. In Japan, the relationship between His Majesty and the people is not relative but absolute (164).

In comparing Sugimoto's and Ekijū's attitude's towards the Emperor, it can be said that they are absolutely identical in their absoluteness<sup>1</sup>. Thus, it is hardly surprising to learn that Sugimoto, who was already a seasoned Zen practitioner when he first met Ekijū, went on to train an additional nine years under the latter's guidance. With evident satisfaction in the level of realization of his lay disciple, Ekijū quoted Sugimoto as follows:

The national structure of Japan and Buddhism are identical with each other. In Buddhism, especially the Zen sect, there is repeated reference to the identity of body and mind. In order to realize this identity of the two it is necessary to undergo training with all one's might and regardless of the sacrifice.

Furthermore, the essence of the unity of body and mind is to be found in egolessness. Japan is a country where the sovereign and the people are identical. When Imperial subjects meld themselves into one with the August Mind [of the Emperor], their original countenance shines forth. The essence of the unity of the sovereign and the people is egolessness. Egolessness and self-extinction are most definitely not separate states. On the contrary, one comes to realize that they are identical with each other (167).

The "egolessness" of which Sugimoto speaks is the well-known Zen term of *muga* (無我). In his book on *Zen and Japanese Culture*, Suzuki identified *muga* as being identical with not only *musō* (no-reflection/ 無想) and *munen* (no-thought/無念), but also *mushin* (no-mind/無心) [111-127].

About these latter terms Suzuki had this to say:

*Mushin* (*wu-hsin*) or *munen* (*wu-nien*) is one of the most important ideas in Zen. It corresponds to the state of innocence enjoyed by the first inhabitants of the Garden of Eden, or even to the mind of God when he was about to utter his fiat, "Let there be light." Enō (Hui-neng), the sixth patriarch of Zen, emphasizes *munen* (or *mushin*) as the most essential element in the study of Zen. When it is attained, a man becomes a Zen-man, and . . . also a perfect swordsman (111).

Was Sugimoto, then, the "Zen-man" of which Suzuki wrote? It is clear that Ekijū believed he was. This master wrote:

As far as the power of his practice of the Way is concerned, I believe he [Sugimoto] reached the point where there was no difference between him and the chief abbot of this or that branch [of Zen]. I think that when a person esteems practice, respects the Way,

and thoroughly penetrates the self as he did, he could become the teacher of other Zen practitioners. That is how accomplished he was. In my opinion his practice was complete (192).

If this praise was not high enough, Ekijū later went on to write:

Altogether Sugimoto practiced Zen for nearly twenty years. Bodhidharma practiced [meditation] facing the wall for nine years. Sugimoto's penetrating *zazen* [seated meditation/座禪] was as excellent as that. He was thoroughly devoted to his unique Imperial State-Zen (219).

For Ekijū, then, Sugimoto was the modern equivalent of Bodhidharma, the traditional, if not legendary, 5th century founder of the Zen sect in China. Within the Zen tradition, this represents the epitome of praise. Not only that, Ekijū wrote for the first time about what he termed Sugimoto's "unique Imperial State-Zen (*kōkoku Zen*/皇国禪). This appears to be an appellation which Ekijū himself gave to Sugimoto's Emperor-centered faith, for nowhere in Sugimoto's writings

was that term to be found. Yet, according to Ekijū, Sugimoto did once say:

The Zen that I do is not the Zen of the Zen sect. It is military Zen [*gunjin Zen*/ 軍人禪]. The reason that Zen is important for soldiers is that all Japanese, especially soldiers, must live in the spirit of the unity of sovereign and subjects, eliminating their ego and getting rid of their self. It is exactly the awakening to the nothingness [*mu*/ 無] of Zen that is the fundamental spirit of the unity of sovereign and subjects. Through my practice of Zen I am able to get rid of my ego. In facilitating the accomplishment of this, Zen becomes, as it is, the true spirit of the Imperial military (178).

In the next passage, Sugimoto went on to explain exactly why it was that the "spiritual training" provided to the military was focused on the officer class. He said:

Within the military, officers must use this [Zen] spirit in the training of their troops. In the training of troops mere talk is not enough. If you don't set the example or put it into practice yourself, your training is a lie. . . . What one hasn't seen for oneself cannot be taught to one's troops. As the senior, one must first be pure oneself. Otherwise, one cannot serve the state through extinguishing and discarding the ego (179).

Given the above sentiments, it would appear that there was no real difference between Sugimoto's self-designated "military Zen" and Ekijū's "Imperial State-Zen." Given previous descriptions of "Imperial Way-Buddhism," it is also clear that the same spirit of absolute obedience and subservience to the Emperor's will runs through them all. This said, one question remains, i.e. what kind of soldier did Sugimoto, with all his Zen training, actually become? Was he the "perfect swordsman" of whom Suzuki wrote above?

About Sugimoto's military prowess on the battlefield, Ekijū wrote as follows:

I don't know what degree [of attainment] he had in *Kendō* [the Way of the Sword/剣道], but it appears he was quite accomplished. . . . When he went to the battlefield it appears that he used the sword with consummate skill. . . . I believe he demonstrated the action which derives from the unity of Zen and the sword (195).

Ekijū also recorded the following conversation the two men had shortly before Sugimoto went off to fight in China in 1931:

Sugimoto asked, "Master, what kind of understanding should I have as I go over there?" I answered, "You are strong, and your unit is strong. Thus I think you will not fear a strong enemy. However, in the event you face a small enemy, you must not despise them. You should read one section of the *Prajñāpāramitā Hridaya* [Heart] *Sūtra* every day. This will insure good fortune on the battlefield for the Imperial military" (182).

Intended or not, the above conversation cannot help but remind one of a similar incident that took place, as previously noted, nearly seven centuries earlier between Hōjō Tokimune and his Chinese Zen master, Sogen. This time, however, there was no shout of "Katsu!" to demonstrate the student's level of attainment. Yet, Ekijū went on to add that when Sugimoto did eventually return safely from China, he said, "I died once while I was in Tienjin." About this Ekijū commented, "Through the awareness he achieved in

becoming one with death, there was, I think, nothing he couldn't achieve" (182-83).

Finally, there was the question of Sugimoto's death on the battlefield. Based on reports he had received, Ekijū described how Sugimoto had been leading his troops into battle when an enemy hand-grenade had landed behind him and exploded. He went on:

A grenade fragment hit him in the left shoulder. He seemed to have fallen down but then got up again. Although he was standing, one could not hear his commands. He was no longer able to issue commands with that husky voice of his. . . . Yet he was still standing, holding his sword in one hand as a prop. Both legs were slightly bent, and he was facing in an easterly direction [toward the Imperial Palace]. It appeared that he had saluted though his hand was now lowered to about the level of his mouth. The blood flowing from his mouth covered his watch . . . . (254).

In Ekijū's mind, at least, this was his lay disciple's finest moment. The moment when he most clearly displayed the power which was to be gained by those who practiced Zen.



That is to say, Sugimoto had died standing up. As he explained it:

In the past it was considered to be the true appearance of a Zen priest to pass away while doing *zazen*. Those who were completely and thoroughly enlightened, however, . . . could die calmly in a standing position. . . . The reason this was possible was due to *samādhi* power (*jōriki*/定力) [255-56].

The technical term *samādhi* refers to the concentrated state of mind, the mental 'one pointedness,' that is achieved through the practice of *zazen*. It was about this meditation-derived power that Suzuki, Seisen, Furukawa et. al. had written so often. Together with Ekijū, they were all in agreement that Zen was the fountainhead of this power, a power that was available to Japanese warriors, both past and present. Sugimoto's life, and especially his death, were living proof of its effectiveness in battle.

At last Ekijū was ready to complete his eulogy of Sugimoto. He did so as follows:

To the last second Sugimoto was a man whose speech and actions were at one with each other. When he saluted and faced the east, there is no doubt that he also shouted, "May His Majesty, the Emperor live for 10,000 years!" It is for this reason that his was the radiant ending of an Imperial soldier. Not only that, but his excellent appearance should be a model for future generations of someone who lived in Zen. . . . Although it can be said that his life of thirty-eight years was all too short, for someone who has truly obtained *samādhi* power, there is no question of a long or short period. The great, true appearance of Sugimoto Gorō was of someone who had united with emptiness, embodying total loyalty [to the Emperor] and service to the state. I am convinced he is one of those who should he be reborn seven times over, would reverently work to destroy the enemies of the Emperor (Written on the 11th of February of the 2, 598th year of the Imperial reign) [256-57].

Although the preceding words mark the end of Sugimoto's book *Taigi*, they by no means mark the influence his writings were to have on the Japanese, especially the youth, of his age. As Ekijū hoped, Sugimoto did indeed become the model of a military figure who had thoroughly imbibed the Zen spirit. The publication of *Taigi* became the catalyst for a flurry of activity, including both long and

short written pieces extolling the virtues of this "military god."

Those who sought to promote Sugimoto's ideology were by no means limited to Rinzai Zen adherents. The Sōtō Zen sect found him equally praiseworthy. One example of this was an article entitled "The Zen of Clothing and Food" which appeared in the April 1943 issue of *Sanshō* (傘松), a periodical serving as the official organ for Eihei-ji, the Sōtō Zen sect's largest monastery. The article's author, Takizawa Kanyū (滝澤寛雄) wanted to encourage frugality among the Japanese civilian population in anticipation of the "decisive battle" which he believed was eminent. Looking for a Zen-inspired model of the frugality he advocated, he wrote:

In the past, there were men like military god, Lt. Col. Sugimoto Gorō. He never complained about [the quality of] his food. No matter how humble it was, he ate it gladly, treating it as a delicacy. Further, he was indifferent to what he wore, wearing tattered, though never soiled, clothing and hats. This is according to

Zen Master Yamazaki Ekijū's description of the Colonel as contained in the latter's posthumous book, *Taigi* (741).

Sugimoto's admirers, moreover, were not simply to be found within Zen circles. Needless to say, he also had the support of leading members of the Imperial military, especially its officer corps. This is clear, first of all, from the fact that two generals contributed a piece of their own calligraphy as part of the introduction to *Taigi* itself. Furthermore, when one of Sugimoto's fellow lay Zen trainees wrote a second account of his life, Lt. Col. Kōzuki Yoshio (上月良夫) of the Imperial Army, wrote one of the prefaces. This book, entitled appropriately, *Lt. Col. Sugimoto Gorō's Reverence for the Emperor and Zen* (杉本五郎中佐の尊皇と禪), was written by Ōyama Sumita (大山澄太), a government official. Lt. Col. Kōzuki's preface concluded with the following words:

For the sake of our Imperial nation there is nothing that would make me happier than for this book to result in the birth of a second and third Sugimoto (iii).

If Japanese military leaders lent their support to promoting Sugimoto's ideas, it is hardly surprising to find leading government officials doing likewise. In a second preface to the same book, the Vice-Minister of the Communications Ministry, Ōwada Teiji (大和田悌二) had this to say:

At present, all the people of our nation have risen to complete the goals of this sacred war. At such a time it is indeed felicitous for this invincible country to have obtained this book which promotes the rebirth of the Lt. Colonel's great spirit within the minds of one hundred million citizens. What an unlimited joy it is for East Asia! (vii)

For all the statements of support noted above, it was not here that the true significance of Sugimoto's life, thought, and writings was to be found. That is to say, none of the groups mentioned above needed to be convinced of the justice of Japan's sacred war. Yet there was one group who

were not necessarily convinced that this war demanded the sacrifice of their lives - the school age youth of Japan. It was with these youth that *Taigi* was destined to have its greatest impact.

In his war recollections, Okuno Takeo (奥野健男) wrote of the effect that *Taigi* had on his and his schoolmates' lives as follows:

By 1943-44 the war situation in the Pacific War had gradually worsened. Middle school students began to read Sugimoto Gorō's *Taigi* with great enthusiasm. . . . By word of mouth we got the message - read *Taigi*, it's terrific! It teaches what true reverence for the Emperor really is! I was then attending Azabu middle school [in Tokyo]. In 1943 I had taken turns in reading *Taigi*. The result of this was that I and my friends formed a student club we called the *Chikushinkai* (Bamboo Mind Society/ 竹心会) to put into practice the spirit of *Taigi*. . . . We bought in instructors from the outside and held study meetings. The same kind of *Taigi* study circles sprang up in all the middle schools in Tokyo. We then started to communicate among ourselves. . . . I later learned that in almost all middle schools throughout Japan *Taigi* had been fervently read and student study societies created (*Chūō Kōron* 77).

While there is no way to accurately assess the impact that *Taigi* had on the youth of Japan, the preceding quote makes it clear that it was a significant motivational factor. While it may be argued that these youth were, after all, still students, it should be remembered that after 1943 even students as young as fifteen came under pressure to assume a variety of wartime roles. Ienaga has written the following graphic description of this development:

In 1943 deferments were ended for students in universities, technical colleges, and higher schools. . . . Mobilization reached the lower grades informally through quotas for youth volunteers (boys fifteen to seventeen years of age) and volunteers for Manchuria-Mongolia Development Youth Patriotic Units. Made responsible for filling the quotas, teachers pressured the children directly by saying, "Any Japanese boy who doesn't get into this 'holy war' will be shamed for life." The teachers would visit a student's home and get his parents' tearful approval. Many boys in their mid-teens became youth pilots and youth tankers, or "volunteered" for service in Manchuria and Mongolia. These rosy-cheeked teenagers were put in special attack units and blew themselves up crashing into enemy ships (195-96).

The vaunted unity of Zen and the sword as advocated by the Ekijū's and Suzuki's of the Buddhist world had come to this - placing youth who were little more than children into "special attack units" (*tokkōtai*/ 特攻隊) to become the infamous *kamikaze* (神風) pilots headed on a one-way trip to oblivion.

### Zen Masters in the War Effort

It would be comforting, though incorrect, to believe that Ekijū and his "Imperial State-Zen" were somehow unique or isolated phenomenon within Zen circles during the war years. The truth is that he was merely "representative" of what both other leading Zen masters were saying and doing at this time. If there is anything that distinguished him at all from his contemporaries it was that one of his lay disciples, i.e. Sugimoto Gorō, had come to epitomize in life (or, better said, in death) what many Zen masters and scholars merely talked about in a somewhat abstract way.



Nevertheless, the importance of this "merely talked about" role of Zen masters should not be underestimated. As previously discussed, the government certainly appreciated its importance as a potential morale booster (or destroyer). Sugimoto had himself described what he believed the appropriate role of not only Zen priests but all Buddhist priests ought to be. He wrote:

Each Buddhist temple should be a training center for developing spiritual discipline within the people. Priests should be the leaders of this training. In so doing they can claim the right to be called men of religion (198).

Not surprisingly, Ekijū found that in saying this Sugimoto had displayed a "grand attitude" (198). Yet he was far from alone in the Zen world in his acceptance of this role. Zen Master Hata Eshō (1862-1944/奏慧昭), who was both administrative head of the Sōtō Zen sect and chief abbot of Eihei-ji, was also in agreement. He wrote the following in the December 1942 issue of *Sanshō*:

One full year has elapsed since the outbreak of the Greater East Asian War. It is said that the war has entered a stage of protracted fighting. In such a stage the need for materials will increase more and more. . . . We Zen priests cannot directly produce so much as a grain of rice or a sheet of paper. However, in terms of developing the spiritual power of the people, there is a way for us, incompetent though we be, to do our public duty. I believe that we should do everything in our power to go in this direction (409-10).

If there is any question as to what this most powerful Sōtō Zen master thought of Japan's war effort, or Buddhism's relationship to that effort, Eshō clarified his position in the same issue of *Sanshō*. He wrote:

On December 8th *Buddha* Shākyamuni looked at the morning star and realized perfect enlightenment while seated under the *Bodhi* tree. One year ago, on this very day, through the proclamation of the Imperial edict to annihilate America and England, our country started afresh toward a new East Asia, a great East Asia. This signifies nothing less than the enlightenment of East Asia. . . . As we now welcome the first anniversary of the outbreak of the Greater East Asian War, we realize that the future will not be easy. We must therefore renew our conviction that nothing else but certain victory lies ahead (407).

In accordance with Eshō's directions, Sōtō Zen leaders focused their efforts on "developing the spiritual power of the people." Typical of this effort was an exhortation written on January 1, 1941 by the sect's administrative head, Ōmori Zenkai (大森禪戒). His article incorporated the very same quote from Zen Master Dōgen about "forget[ting] the self" that Sugimoto had used previously. Zenkai went on to add:

The essence of the practice of an [Imperial] subject is to be found in the basic principle of the *Buddha Way* which is to forget the self. It is by giving concrete form to this essence in any and all situations, regardless of time or place, that Buddhism is, for the first time, able to repay the debt of gratitude it owes the state (*Sōtō Shūhō* 1).

The following year Zen Master Yamada Reirin (1889-1979/山田靈林) wrote a book entitled *Evening Talks on Zen Studies* (*Zengaku Yawa*/ 禅学夜話). In postwar years Reirin would go on to first become President of Sōtō Zen-affiliated Komazawa University and then the chief abbot of Eiheiiji.

Reirin began his book by pointing out that Emperor Kimmei (539-571/欽明) first allowed Buddhism into Japan because he recognized that "it would be of service to him" (25). Reirin then went on to speculate as to whether or not Buddhism was still able to render such service. He wrote:

Japan has now plunged in the most serious situation it has faced since the beginning its history. The question is whether or not Buddhism can now be of service to the Emperor. In both quantity and quality, it is necessary for Buddhism to provide such excellent service. All Buddhists, regardless of sectarian affiliation, must come forward to do their great duty in support of Imperial rule (26).

Reirin clearly believed he was doing his part in this effort because he took a whole chapter to address one of the most difficult problems on the wartime homefront - the consolation of parents whose sons had fallen in battle. Utilizing the popular folk belief in Japan concerning the transmigration of souls, Reirin provided the following explanation:

The true form of the heroic spirits [of the dead] is the good karmic power that has resulted from their loyalty, bravery, and nobility of character. This cannot disappear. . . .The body and mind that will be produced by this karmic power cannot be other than what has existed up to the present. . . . The loyal, brave, noble, and heroic spirits of those officers and men who have died shouting, "May the Emperor live for ten thousand years!" will be reborn right here in this country. It is only natural that this should occur (53-4).

Finally, like so many of his predecessors, Reirin could not forego a discussion of the "virility" Hōjō Tokimune received from his Zen training (183). He then went on to assert that it was Zen which made possible the maintenance of an adamant mind and the gushing forth of a pure and fiery spirit (190). If one would but "annihilate the ego," he wrote, then an "absolute and mysterious power and radiance would fill one's body and mind" (85). All of this, plus "an unlimited gratitude to the Imperial military" for their "wonderful fruits of battle" (81).

Sōtō Zen scholars of the period were no less supportive of Japan's war effort than were that sect's Zen masters. One of the sect's best known scholars, a specialist in the thought of Zen Master Dōgen (1200-1253/道元), was Dr. Kurebayashi Kōdō (榑林皓堂). In postwar years he would succeed Yamada Reirin as President of Komazawa University. At the outbreak of full-scale war with China in 1937, he wrote an article entitled "The [China] Incident and Buddhism."

Kurebayashi's article, appearing in the October 1937 issue of *Sanshō*, began with the now customary advocacy of the "just war" theory. "It goes without saying," he said, "that the North China Incident is a war on behalf of justice" (375). Not only that, but "all of Japan's wars since the Sino-Japanese War have been such wars" (375). And as if that were not enough, he added, "And in the future should there be further wars there is no doubt they will also be just" (375).

Aside from giving present and future Japanese governments *carte blanche* to fight wherever and whenever they wished, Kurebayashi's statement is notable for the rationale he provided to justify his position. He wrote:

The reason [Japan's wars are just] is, I dare say, because of the influence of the Buddhist spirit. The spirit of Japan which was nurtured by Buddhism is ceaselessly working towards cooperation among peoples and eternal peace in the Orient. Without the influence of Buddhism, a thoroughgoing, international fraternal spirit would be impossible (375).

Kurebayashi went on to assert that Japan's actions in China were the "practice of compassion." (376-77). Based on this, he had the following to say about the Imperial military:

Wherever the Imperial military advances there is only charity and love. They could never act in the barbarous and cruel way in which the Chinese soldiers act. This can truly be considered to be a great accomplishment of the long period which Buddhism took in nurturing [the Japanese military]. Expressed in different words, it means that brutality itself no longer exists in the officers and men of the Imperial military who have been schooled in the spirit of Buddhism (377).

Kurebayashi concluded the article by reminding his readers that "it was only the Japanese people who embodied the true spirit of Buddhism" (378). "Without a faith in Buddhism," he asserted, "this nation cannot prosper, nor can humanity find happiness" (378). One can only wonder what Kurebayashi would have said to Ienaga's well-documented assertion that "there were so many atrocities [committed by Japanese troops] that one cannot even begin to list them all" (167).

Kurebayashi was not, of course, the only Zen scholar to voice his support of Japan's war efforts. Dr. Hidane Jōsan, a professor at the Rinzai Zen sect-affiliated university, RinzaiGakuin, also wrote an article about the same "incident." His article was entitled, revealingly, "The Current Incident and the Vow and Practice of a *Bodhisattva*." It appeared in the October 1937 issue of *Zenshū*, a monthly periodical



jointly supported by all thirteen branches of the Rinzai Zen sect.

Hidane began his article with the assertion that up to this point Japan's modern wars had been a matter of "self-defense" (19). "It is impossible," he wrote, "to find any other meaning to either the Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War, or the Manchurian Incident [of 1931]" (19).

The current fighting, however, was different:

Speaking from the point of view of the ideal outcome, this is a righteous and moral war of self-sacrifice in which we will rescue China from the dangers of Communist takeover and economic slavery. We will help them live as true Orientals. It would therefore, I dare say, not be unreasonable to call this a sacred war incorporating the great practice of a *Bodhisattva* (19).

There is one other lineage (or school) of Zen Buddhists whose wartime words and actions are noteworthy. As Sharf has noted, this lineage, though relatively small in number, has been quite influential in spreading their version of Zen in the West, especially the United States (40). The founder

of this group was Zen Master Harada Daiun Sogaku (1870-1961/原田大雲祖岳). Philip Kapleau, a prominent descendant in this lineage, included the following description of this master in his now famous book, *The Three Pillars of Zen*:

Nominally of the Soto sect, he [Daiun] welded together the best of Soto and Rinzai and the resulting amalgam was a vibrant Buddhism which has become one of the great teaching lines of Japan today. Probably more than anyone else in his time he revitalized, through his profound spiritual insight, the teachings of Dogen-zenji, which had been steadily drained of their vigor through the shallow understanding of priests and scholars of the Soto sect in whose hands their exposition had hitherto rested. . . . Like all masters of high spiritual development, he was the keenest judge of character. He was as quick to expose pretense and sham as he was to detect it. Exceptional students he drove mercilessly, exacting from them the best of which they were capable. From all he demanded as a *sine qua non* sincerity and absolute adherence to his teachings, brooking not the slightest deviation. Casual observers often found him rigid and narrow, but disciples and students who were faithful to his teachings knew him to be wise and compassionate (273-74).

Another prominent member of this lineage, Maezumi Hakuyu Taizan (1930-), founder of the Zen Center of Los Angeles, had this to say about Daiun:

Daiun Harada Roshi was a Zen master of rare breadth and accomplishment in the twentieth-century Japan. . . . He became abbot of Hosshinji and during the next forty years, until his death in 1961, made the monastery famous as a rigorous Zen training center, known for its harsh climate, its strict discipline and its abbot's keen Zen eye (Maezumi and Glassman 194).

Whatever else he may have been, the fact is that Daiun was also one of the most committed Zen supporters of Japan's military actions. If, as Kapleau claims, Daiun "revitalized" Zen, he did so by creating something he designated as "War Zen" (*sensō Zen* / 戦争禅) as early as 1915. It was in this year that he published a book entitled *A Primer on the Practice of Zen* (*Sanzen no kaitei* / 参禅の階梯) of which "War Zen" formed the eleventh chapter.

The first subtitle of this chapter was entitled "The Entire Universe is at War" (112). In this section he noted

that while "it was unavoidable that Japan had entered the [First] World War, happily, in one part of the [Chinese] province of Shandong, Japan had reached the point where it was singing the song of victory" (112). It was this environment, he wrote, that had led him to talk about "War Zen" instead of "Peace Zen."

For Daiun there was nothing strange about Japan being at war for "if you look at all phenomena in the universe you will see that there is nothing which is not at war" (112). In the natural world, for example, plum seeds try to take over the world for plums, while rice grains try to take over the world for rice, etc. The human world is the same, with politicians struggling with one another to take over the political world, merchants struggling with one another to take over the business world, etc.

Buddhism is also not exempt from struggle, according to Daiun, the proof being that *Buddha* Shākyamuni had himself

conquered demons in the course of realizing enlightenment. Thus, "it can be said that without plunging into the war arena, it is totally impossible to know the *Buddha Dharma*" (116).

Based on the above, Daiun then went on to point out that "in all of the phenomena of either the ordinary world or the spiritual world, there is not one where war is absent. How could Zen alone be free of this principle?" (117) "It is impermissible," he wrote, "to forget war for even an instant" (117).

In fairness to Daiun it must be pointed out that aside from his initial praise for Japan's military success, the "War Zen" of which he wrote was centered on what he believed should be the appropriate mental attitude of Zen practitioners in their search for enlightenment. In support of this interpretation is the fact that one of his concluding statements pointed out: "The Great Way of the *Buddhas* and

[Zen] Patriarchs is neither in war nor peace. . . " (117-18).

This said, it is also true that the military-like attitude he displayed here toward Zen training formed the basis of what Ichikawa Hakugen would later refer to as his "fanatical militarism" (*Nihon* 15).

One of Daiun's quotes on the relationship of Zen and war whose meaning is quite clear is the following. It appeared as part of an article he wrote in the March 1934 issue of the magazine *Chūō Bukkyō* (Central Buddhism/中央仏教). It read:

The spirit of Japan is the Great Way of the [*Shintō*] Gods. It is the substance of the universe, the essence of the Truth. The Japanese people are a chosen people whose mission is to control the world. The sword which kills is also the sword which gives life. Comments opposing war are the foolish opinions of those who can only see one aspect of things and not the whole. Politics conducted on the basis of a constitution are premature, and therefore fascist politics should be implemented for the next ten years. Similarly, education makes for shallow, cosmopolitan-minded persons. All of the people of this country should do Zen. That is to say, they should all awake to the Great Way of the Gods. This is *Mahāyāna* Zen" (177).

By 1939 Daiun no longer found it necessary to even discuss anti-war thought. "The One Road of Zen and War" is an article he wrote for the November 1939 issue of the magazine *Daijō Zen* (*Mahāyāna Zen*/ 大乘禪). It read in part:

[If ordered to] march: tramp, tramp, or shoot: bang, bang. This is the manifestation of the highest Wisdom [of Enlightenment]. The unity of Zen and war of which I speak extends to the farthest reaches of the holy war [now under way]. Verse: I bow my head to the floor in reverence of that whose nobility is without equal (197).

By the beginning of 1943 the tide of war had clearly turned against Japan. The government called on Buddhist leaders to do their utmost to mobilize the entire civilian population in the war effort. Under these circumstances Daiun wrote the following in the February 1943 issue of the periodical *Zen no Seikatsu* (The Zen Life/ 禪の生活):

It has never been as necessary as it is today for all one hundred million people of this country to be committed to the fact that as the state lives and dies, so do they. . . . We must devote ourselves to the practice of Zen and the discernment of the Way. We must push

on in applying ourselves to "combat *zazen*," the King of meditation [*samādhi*/ 三昧] (252).

By the latter part of 1944 the outlook for Japan had become bleak. The unthinkable was becoming thinkable, the home islands could be subject to invasion. In this situation every able-bodied citizen, both young and old, and armed often with no more than bamboo spears, was being trained to repel the invaders. In response, Daiun wrote the following article entitled, "Be Prepared, One Hundred Million [Citizens], for Death with Honor!" which appeared in the July issue of that year's *Daijō Zen*:

It is necessary for all one hundred million citizens [of Japan] to be prepared to die with honor. . . . If you see the enemy you must kill him; you must destroy the false and establish the true - these are the cardinal points of Zen. It is said that if you kill someone it is fitting that you see their blood. It is further said that if you are riding a powerful horse nothing is beyond your reach. Isn't the purpose of the *zazen* we have done in the past to be of assistance in an emergency like this? (283).



Chronologically speaking, there was still one year left before Japan's final surrender. This was the period when the *kamikaze* suicide attacks, already mentioned, came to the fore as the last desperate, yet futile, attempt to stave off defeat. By early 1945 most Buddhist-related publications had closed down as part of the overall effort to funnel all available resources to the military effort. Thus, for the most part, Buddhist leaders, Zen and otherwise, lost their printed voice. In general, however, newspapers were still being printed and, on occasion, Buddhist viewpoints were still to be found.

One of the last Zen-related voices to be heard was that of Dr. Masunaga Reihō (增永靈鳳), a Sōtō Zen priest and scholar who in the post-war years would publish substantial works in English. From May 25 to June 1, 1945 Masunaga wrote a series of articles in the *Chūgai Nippō* (中外日報)

entitled "The Source of the Spirit of the Special Attack Forces." His argument was as follows:

The source of the spirit of the Special Attack Forces lies in the denial of the individual self and the rebirth of the soul which takes upon itself the burden of history.

From ancient times Zen has described this conversion of mind as the achievement of complete enlightenment (295).

In the Japanese language there is the phrase "*iku tokoro made itta*" (行くところまで行った) which roughly means "to go as far as one can go." In equating the suicidal spirit of *kamikaze* pilots with the complete enlightenment of Buddhism, it can be safely said that Masunaga had taken Zen as far as it could go.

### **Zen Sectarian Activities**

As mentioned in the beginning, this dissertation makes no pretense at being a complete history of either the words or actions of Zen (or Buddhist) adherents and organizations during the wartime years. Its focus has been, instead, on an

exploration of the ideas that motivated recognized Zen leaders. Having said this, it is also true that Zen leaders had long set store on the importance of knowledge being united with action. Thus, though cursory at best, there is a need to see in what way their ideas were translated into actions.

In examining this issue, the first thing that must be recognized is that to a great extent the actions taken by Japan's two major Zen sects closely paralleled those taken by other sects irrespective of doctrinal differences. Many of these, having to do with social relief at home and missionary work abroad, have already been alluded to. Others, however, have yet to be examined.

One example of Zen sectarian war-related action was the holding of special religious services designed to ensure victory in battle. The belief in the efficacy of such services predated the introduction of Buddhism into Japan, and was

connected to the belief that "merit," a type of spiritual compensation, was created as a result of meritorious acts, as for example the copying or recitation of *sūtras*, the building of temples, etc. Not only could merit be created, but it could be transferred to others. Furthermore, in the *Mahāyāna* tradition the idea of merit transference became a normative standard of conduct for a *bodhisattva*, having been incorporated into the perfection of morality (*shīla*), one of six such perfections.<sup>2</sup>

In Japan the conduct of these special services was pan-Buddhist in nature and thus not limited to the Zen tradition alone.

In fact, the Zen tradition had originally been opposed to such services with their attendant prayers for worldly favors. However, as Nakamura Hajime (中村元) has pointed out:

From the time of Tokiyori Hōjō (1227-1263) and Tokimune Hōjō (1215-1284) onwards, the nobility, patrons of the Zen sect, assailed priests with demands for prayers whenever they worried themselves even over trivialities. Thus, the temples of the Zen sect were going to be a sort of seminary of prayers (583).

Under these circumstances, the most common practice in Zen temples came to be the recitation, in whole or in part, of the *Prajñā-pāramitā* (Perfection of Wisdom) *sūtras*. As Rinzai Zen sect-affiliated Imai Fukuzan (今井福山) pointed out in the January 1938 edition of *Zenshū*, these *sūtras* were thought to be particularly efficacious "because they teach that wherever these *sūtras* are circulated, various disasters and demons will disappear to be replaced by good fortune" (18). Because these *sūtras* consisted, in their Japanese version, of some six hundred volumes, it was also typical in ceremonial use to read only a limited number of passages from the total collection.

The following passage describes one such service held at Sōjiji (総持寺), the second of the two head monasteries of the Sōtō Zen sect. It appeared on the front page of the November-December 1944 issue of the *Sōtō Shūhō* (曹洞宗報), the sect's administrative organ. In this case the focus of the service was on the completion of a sect-wide effort to make millions of hand-written copies of the very short *Prajñāpāramitāhridaya sūtra* which was considered to contain the essence of the teachings contained in the larger collection. As already noted, the hand-copying of *sūtras* was seen a merit-producing act, especially when done on such a massive scale. The highlights of the article, beginning with its title, are as follows:

**The Service to Pray for Certain Victory [Based  
on the Completion of] the Consecrated Copying of  
Ten Million *Prajñā Pāramitā Hridaya Sūtras*. . . .**

The great victory that was recently achieved off the coasts of Taiwan and the Philippines can be said to have astonished the world. Yet, in spite of that, the severity of the terrific counterattack by the American and British enemy, who depend on massive amounts of materials, increases day by day. Outside the country, extremely fierce fighting is going on the Philippine island of Leyte. Within the country, the ugly enemy lawlessly dares to bomb the Imperial capital and reconnoiter our Imperial land. The national crisis on the war front is unprecedented. There has never been a fall as severe as this one, nor has there ever been a greater need for all one hundred million Imperial subjects to rouse themselves.

It was our sect that first proposed zealously uniting together for the purpose of the consecrated copying of 10 million copies of the *Prajñā pāramitā hridaya sūtra*. The goal of this effort is our fervent prayer for certain victory. Burning with enthusiasm, our whole sect, clerics and lay alike, applied themselves to this project with the result that they greatly exceeded the planned ten million copies by some one million three hundred and eighty thousand. Some of the copies were written in blood and others were sealed in blood. Some of the copies were written in braille by wounded soldiers who had lost their sight. We were also deeply moved

by the unsurpassed honor to have copies bestowed on us by members of the Imperial Family. For seven days beginning from September 1, [1944], the Great Prayer Service was solemnly held at the great monastery of Sōjiji. Reverently we prayed for the health of His Majesty, the well-being of the Imperial lands, and the surrender of the enemy countries (1).

One of the notable features of the preceding quotation is the way in which the then current war situation was woven into the description of this 'religious service.' Even soldiers who had lost their sight in battle were given a prominent role. What needs to be further examined, however, is the meaning of the term "prayer" (*kitō*/ 祈祷) as used in the service.

Lacking a personal 'God' to whom entreaties can be made, Buddhism uses the doctrine of 'merit transference' to insure its 'prayers' are answered. In the case of both the Rinzai and Sōtō Zen sects, they actually changed (or sometimes restored) elements of the concluding 'merit transfer verse' (*ekōbun* / 回向文) to reflect the nation's war



priorities. This done, the merit that was generated by the ceremonial recitation of one or more *sūtras*, or making handwritten copies thereof, could then be applied to the realization of military goals.

According to the April 15, 1942, edition of the *Sōtō Shūhō*, that sect's newly approved *ekōbun* included such phrases as 1) unending martial fortune and health for the officers and men at the front, 2) continuing victory in the holy war, 3) enhancement of national prestige, etc. And of course there was the phrase, "May the sacred life of His Majesty, the Emperor extend for ten thousand years and may He be in good health" (6).

As for the Rinzai Zen sect, Imai Fukuzan, mentioned above, pointed out: "In our sect, religious services have been performed during wartime for more than six hundred years with the goal of enhancing military power" (17). It was only after the beginning of the Meiji period, he further

noted, that this custom had momentarily fallen into disuse. The reason for this was that these military verses were considered to be disloyal by some senior officials of the new government. These officials knew of their earlier association with the local armies of feudal lords (who often doubled as temple patrons), rather than being exclusively dedicated to the person (and army) of the Emperor.

Imai pointed out that there was no longer any reason to be hesitant about resurrecting the military-oriented *ekōbun* of the past. On the contrary, nothing could be more appropriate in light of the outbreak of war with China. A comparison of the pre-Meiji verse he proposed as a model for the Rinzai sect with that subsequently adopted by the Sōtō sect reveals little in the way of substantive difference.

There was, however, one difference. That is, the *Mahāyāna Bodhisattva* of compassion, i.e. *Avalokiteshvara* (J. *Kanzeon*/觀世音) was transformed into a military figure.

*Avalokiteshvara* was 'elevated' in the Rinzai verse to no less than the rank of general. (J. *Kanzeon Shōgun Bosatsu/* 觀世音將軍菩薩) [21-22]. With *Avalokiteshvara* as its protector, if not its head, how could the Imperial military be anything less than compassionate?

While the conduct of the type of religious services described above may be considered an intangible contribution to Japan's war effort, such services were only one part of a much larger effort. On the tangible side must be listed the fund-raising activities undertaken to provide a number of aircraft to the military. These fund-raising activities were undertaken by the leaders of both the Sōtō and Rinzai Zen sects, not to mention other sects.

In the case of Sōtō Zen, the fund-raising effort began on the fourth anniversary of full-scale war in China, i.e. July 7, 1941. Within two weeks sufficient funds were raised to buy one fighter plane "of the latest model" for the Imperial

Navy and two hospital transport planes for the Imperial Army. These planes were named "Sōtō No. 1, No. 2," etc. The September 1, 1941 issue of *Sōtō Shūhō* contained the following comments about this effort:

In accordance with the national policy of constructing a fully-armed state, our sect, united as one, has contributed [airplanes named] "Sōtō" with the hope that the sincerity of this act will turn into the majestic form of these planes flying high in the sky of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. . . . and believing this will contribute greatly to the stimulation and growth of the people's spirit (3).

The Rinzai Zen sect, specifically the Myōshinji branch (妙心寺派), was not to be found wanting in this effort. Thus, although this branch was considerably less than one-third the size of the undivided Sōtō sect, it had, by July 1944, contributed two fighter aircraft to the Imperial Navy. In light of: 1) the Zen-oriented "spiritual training" being provided to soldiers, especially officers, of the Imperial Army, and 2) the fact that the Sōtō and Rinzai sect's fighter

planes were donated to the Imperial Navy, it can be said that the Allied Forces fought "Zen" on the ground, in the air, and at sea.

In terms of their material significance, these donations of a few aircraft were marginally significant at best. However, as the earlier quote from the Sōtō sect pointed out, they were designed primarily as a method to enhance the "people's spirit." As has already been pointed out, this was, both at home and abroad, and within the military itself, where the bulk of the Zen (and overall Buddhist) effort was placed.

In June 1942 the Sōtō sect had established "The Wartime Center for the Development of an Instructor Corps to Train Imperial Subjects" (戦時下皇民鍊成指導班員養成所). The November 1, 1943 issue of *Sōtō Shūhō* used its front page to describe the principles upon which this center was based. The main principle or goal was "Increase fighting power," under which

a total of sixteen sub-principles were arranged hierarchically. The first eight sub-principles were, broadly speaking, all war-related and read as follows:

1. Promotion of the Belief in Certain Victory
2. The Establishment of Wartime Life
3. The Practice of Volunteering Oneself for Public Duty
4. Clarification of [the Concept of] Our National Structure
5. Guard and Maintain the Prosperity of the Imperial Throne
6. Respect the [Shintō] Deities and Revere One's Ancestors
7. Train the Subjects of the Emperor
8. Recompense the Debt of Gratitude Owed the Emperor

Taken as a whole, the preceding sub-principles, especially Nos. 3-8, show the unmistakable influence of the themes first developed in the "National Doctrine" of the Meiji period. Zen priests, like all Buddhists priests in Japan, were simply being called upon to continue their role as "Doctrinal Instructors," with the added duty of promoting belief in "certain victory."

It is also noteworthy that the first clearly Buddhist element in this hierarchical list did not make its appearance until the ninth sub-principle. It read, "Take refuge in the Three Treasures [i.e. The *Buddha*, *Dharma*, and *Samgha* ]." This is, of course, the one tenet of belief shared by Buddhists everywhere. In wartime Sōtō Zen evangelization efforts, however, it and other Buddhist/Zen doctrines ranked in the lower half of concern.

As Japan's situation grew ever more critical, Zen priests were called upon to do more than just engage in what was

also popularly called "thought war" (*shisōsen*/思想戦). Thus, in January 1944, those Zen priests who had not been drafted or otherwise involved in the military effort as chaplains, continental missionaries, etc. were called upon to leave their "*Dharma* castles," i.e. temples, take up factory work, and "aid in the increased production of military goods" (1).

This call appeared in the February 1, 1944 issue of *Sōtō Shūhō*, but had been issued by the multi-sect Great Japan Buddhist Federation (*Dainihon Bukkyōkai*/大日本仏教会). It thus applied to all Buddhist priests between the ages of sixteen and forty-five. The heart of the announcement read as follows:

As has been said, "The buildup of military power comes from spiritual power." It is for this reason that we ask for a total of approximately ten thousand leading priests from each of the sects to come forth as volunteers and directly engage in production in important industrial factories. At the same time they will be expected to provide spiritual training and guidance to the industrial warriors [in these factories] (1).



To the bitter end, the "code of the warrior," i.e. *bushidō*, would play an important role in critical aspects of Japanese society. As the 'spiritual advocates' of this code, Zen priests, and the priests of other sects, would continue to discharge their duties in this regard even as they joined the ranks of the "industrial warriors."

Six months later, however, time had finally run out for both "Imperial Way-Buddhism" and its sub-branch "Imperial State/ Imperial Military-Zen." In warfare, at least, the 'power of the spirit,' even with Zen's '*samādhi* power' attached, was no match for the 'power of the atom' (plus the determined resistance of all those opposed to Japanese militarism).

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>The shouted word "*Katsu*" by itself is meaningless. It has traditionally been used in the Rinzai Zen tradition to express a state of mind that has transcended dualism, cutting through false notions of self and other, and manifesting Enlightenment itself.

<sup>2</sup>The six perfections of morality associated with the conduct of a *Bodhisattva* are as follows: 1) donation, 2) morality, 3) patience, 4) vigor, 5) meditation, and 6) wisdom.

# CHAPTER 10: THE POST-WAR JAPANESE RESPONSES TO "IMPERIAL WAY-BUDDHISM"

## General Introduction

As noted above, Japan's surrender on August 15, 1945 marked the formal collapse of both Imperial Way-Buddhism and Imperial State-Zen. The various sects composing institutional Buddhism even changed aspects of their daily liturgies to reflect the demise of these movements. The question which remains to be answered is simply this - how should these movements be understood, i.e. were they an authentic or orthodox expression of the *Buddha Dharma*?

The answer or answers to this question are, of course, quite complex. To begin with, there are in Japan alone thirteen major sects and more than fifty subsects. A complete answer would therefore require a detailed study of each and every major sect if not some of the more

important subsects. Then there is the question of an examination of the *Mahāyāna* school itself to which all of Japan's Buddhist sects belong. This school in turn is found not only in Japan but throughout the countries of east and central Asia.

Such a study as described above is far beyond the scope of this dissertation. Yet, in the postwar years there have been a few attempts, both by individual Buddhist leaders and scholars, and even a small number of the Japanese Buddhist sects involved, to come to grips with the question posed above. While the following examination of these attempts cannot be considered as providing anything like a definitive answer, they do at least mark the beginning of the search.

### **D.T. Suzuki's Response(s)**

In as much as it was D. T. Suzuki who had been a leader in calling for the punishment of "obstreperous heathens,"

it is noteworthy that he was probably the first Buddhist leader in the postwar period to address the moral questions related to Buddhist war participation. Yet, it must be stressed that at no time up to Japan's defeat did Suzuki ever write critically in any of his many books about Japan's war effort, or Buddhism's support for that effort.

Not only did Suzuki fail to criticize Japan's war effort, he continued to advocate the efficacy of Zen training in warfare throughout the war years. In 1941, for example, he published a book entitled "One True World" (*Isshinjitsu no sekai*/一眞実の世界). Here he stated that "the essence of the warrior is to die" (188). He then went on to state: "I think the quickest and best way to be prepared to die is found in Zen" (212).

As to any questions of morality that might enter the mind of the Zen-trained warrior, Suzuki had this to say:

Zen dislikes subterfuge. One must, directly employing body, mind and life itself, go straight ahead, that is to say, thrusting the sword directly, into the work at hand. . . . Whether what one does is right or wrong can be looked at later. This is the life of Zen which must, at the same time, be the life of the warrior" (189-90).

As later as 1944 Suzuki wrote encouragingly of the relationship between Buddhism and *bushidō* in a book entitled *Nihonteki reisei* (Japanese Spirituality/日本の靈性). Here Suzuki extended the relationship between warriors and Buddhism to include the Pure Land schools of Buddhism as well as Zen. He wrote:

At the time of a mission, when making preparations to meet the enemy, the warrior recites the phrase "*Namu Amida Butsu*" (Adoration to *Buddha Amita* /南無阿彌陀仏) and then plunges [into battle], recites the phrase once again and plunges [into battle]. Entering [into battle] with perfect freedom is known as "Plunging [into battle] calling on *Buddha [Amita's]* name." Having cut off [all thought of] good and bad, right and wrong, all of one's action becomes a repetition of the preceding phrase. This is known as the practice of single-mindedly calling on *Buddha [Amita's]* name, or the universal calling on *Buddha [Amita's]* name" (144-45).

In these words can be heard an echo of what Shin sect scholar Ōsuka Shūdō had written in 1905: "Truly, what could be more fortunate than knowing that, should you die, a welcome awaits in the Pure Land [of *Buddha Amita* ].

If there was anything that distinguished Suzuki's writings from those of his contemporaries it is that he did not advocate absolute submission to the will and edicts of the Emperor. Nor did he employ the jingoistic slogans then associated with Japan's "sacred war." This said, there is absolutely nothing to suggest that he had any misgivings or reservations about the use of Buddhism in general, or Zen in particular, as the basis for the spiritual arming of the modern Japanese warrior. On the contrary, he wrote again and again of the importance and appropriateness of doing so, especially as attendant questions of morality were, for him, of little or no concern.

Returning to the immediate post-war period, it was in October 1945 that Suzuki first broached the topic of Buddhist war responsibility. He did this in his new preface included in the reprint of the book mentioned above, i.e. *Japanese Spirituality*. He began by assigning to *Shintō* the blame for providing the "conceptual background" to Japanese militarism, imperialism and totalitarianism. He then went on to discuss the Buddhist role as follows:

It is strange how Buddhists neither penetrated the fundamental meaning of Buddhism nor included a global vision in their mission. Instead, they diligently practiced the art of self-preservation through their narrow-minded focus on "pacifying and preserving the state." Receiving the protection of the politically powerful figures of the day, Buddhism combined with the state, thinking that its ultimate goal was to subsist within this island nation of Japan. As militarism became fashionable in recent years, Buddhism put itself in step with it, constantly endeavouring not to offend the powerful figures of the day. Out of this was born such things as totalitarianism, references to [*Shintō*] mythology, "Imperial Way"- Buddhism, etc. As a result, Buddhists forgot to include either a global vision or concern for the masses within the duties they performed. In addition, they neglected to awake within



the Japanese religious consciousness the philosophical and religious elements, and the spiritual awakening, that are an intrinsic part of Buddhism. While it may be said that Buddhism became "more Japanese" as a result, the price was a retrogression in terms of Japanese spirituality itself. That is to say, the opportunity was lost to develop a world vision within Japanese spirituality that was sufficiently extensive or comprehensive (6-7).

One of the striking features of the above statement is that nowhere does Suzuki discuss his own role in any of Japanese Buddhism's failings. As will be seen shortly, this was not always the case. In fact, he started to allude to his own responsibility in the very next paragraph following the preceding quote. He wrote: "I believe that a major reason for Japan's collapse was truly because each one of us lacked an awareness of Japanese spirituality" (7).

According to the above, if Suzuki himself had any personal responsibility for Japan's collapse, he shared that responsibility equally with each and every Japanese. Could

his writings be in any way responsible for what happened to Japan? About this Suzuki wrote:

This work [*Japanese Spirituality*] was written before Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allies. It was therefore unable to give clear expression to the meaning of Japanese spirituality (7).

This one sentence was the closest that Suzuki would ever come in the postwar years to admitting that anything he had ever written might have influenced the course of events. Even here Suzuki went on to explain that the reason this particular book lacked clarity was due its "academic nature," coupled with its "extremely unorganized structure." This does not mean, however, that Suzuki never again spoke of his own responsibility.

In 1947 Suzuki published a book entitled *Nihon no reseika* (The Spiritualizing of Japan/ 日本の靈性化). This book was a collection of five lectures that he had given at Shin sect-affiliated Ōtani University in Kyoto during the month

of June 1946. The focus of his talks was on *Shintō*, for by this time he had decided that the blame for Japan's militaristic past lay in this religion. According to Suzuki, *Shintō* was, among other things, a "primitive religion" that "lacked spirituality" (34). It was factors like these that had led to Japan's "excessive nationalism" and "military control" (34). The solution to this situation was, in Suzuki's eyes, quite simple - "dispose of *Shintō*" (1).

As mentioned above, this is not to say that Suzuki denied all responsibility for what had happened. He said:

This is not to say that we were blameless. We have to accept a great deal of blame and responsibility. . . . Both before and after the Manchurian Incident [of 1931] all of us applauded what had transpired as representing the growth of the Empire. I think there were none amongst us who opposed it. If some were opposed, I think they were extremely few in number. At that time everyone was saying we had to be aggressively imperialistic. They said Japan had to go out into the world both industrially and economically because the country was too small to provide a living for its people. There simply wasn't enough food; people would starve. I have heard that the Manchurian Incident was fabricated

through various tricks. I think there were probably some people who had reservations about what was going on, but instead of saying anything they simply accepted it. To tell the truth, people like myself were just not very interested in such things (5-6).

There are a number of noteworthy statements in the above quotation including the fact that Japan had been "aggressively imperialistic." Yet, as Suzuki went on to write, "It was Europe which had originally taught imperialism and colonialism to Japan" (7). Furthermore, Japan's imperialism may be said to have occurred almost by popular acclaim, except for those "extremely few" who opposed it. As for Suzuki himself, he tells us that he was "just not very interested in such things." This, of course, is the very same Suzuki who right up to the end of the war continued to write books extolling the unity of Zen and *bushidō* and the usefulness of this combination on the battlefield.

Even in the midst of Japan's utter defeat Suzuki remained determined to find something praiseworthy in

Japan's war efforts. He described the positive side of the war as follows:

Through the great sacrifice of the Japanese people and nation, it can be said that the various peoples of the countries of the Orient had the opportunity to awake both economically and politically. . . . This was just the beginning, and I believe that after ten, twenty or more years the various peoples of the Orient may well have formed independent countries and contributed to the improvement of the world's culture in tandem with the various peoples of Europe and America (7).

In an echo of his prewar writings, Suzuki continued to praise the "great sacrifice" the Japanese people allegedly made to "awake" the peoples of Asia. What one finds missing in Suzuki's writings, however, is any mention of what it "cost" in terms of millions of lives lost for the peoples of Asia to be "awakened."

To his English-reading audience, Suzuki offered a different interpretation of the war. The following appeared in an autobiographical account of his life edited by Abe Masao :

The Pacific War was a ridiculous war for the Japanese to have initiated; it was probably completely without justification. Even so, seen in terms of the phases of history, it may have been inevitable. It is undeniable that while British interest in the East has existed for a long time, interest in the Orient on the part of Americans heightened as a consequence of their coming to Japan after the war, meeting the Japanese people, and coming into contact with various Japanese things (*Zen* 24).

Added to the awakening of the peoples of Asia, Suzuki tells us that another positive side of the war was the increased American presence and interest in Japan. In sum, it would seem that all parties involved benefited in some way from Japan's "great sacrifice."

It is also noteworthy that Suzuki did not find war itself "ridiculous" but only the Pacific War, which was "probably" unjustified although somehow "inevitable." Nowhere in Suzuki's writings does one find the least expression of regret for Japan's earlier colonial efforts in such places as Korea or Taiwan. For Suzuki it would appear that things started to go wrong only after the Manchurian Incident of 1931.

One is left to speculate as to what it was that made the Pacific War so "ridiculous."

While the number of intellectuals, especially in the West, who have praised Suzuki are legion, a small but growing number of critics have been concerned both by Suzuki's [and Zen's] apparent lack of moral awareness. Arthur Koestler was one of the first to raise these concerns in a book published in 1960 entitled *The Lotus and the Robot*.

He began his discussion of Zen as follows:

Zen was introduced into Japan in the late 12th century - more than five centuries after Confucianism and earlier forms of Buddhism. It took immediate roots; but it became radically transformed in the process, and the flower was characteristically Japanese. By a feat of mental acrobacy, of which perhaps no other nation would be capable, the gentle, non-violent doctrine of the Buddha became the adopted creed of the murderous samurai. . . . How was this possible? The secret is not in the Buddha's smile, but in a simple formula applicable to all these diverse activities, the panacea of Zen: trust your intuition, short-circuit reflection, discard caution, act spontaneously. It is amazing what wonders this prescription can achieve (242-43).

Koestler later went on to discuss both Suzuki and some of the Western intellectuals like Alan Watts and Christmas Humphreys who considered themselves to be his disciples. Koestler first noted that both Watts and Humphreys found *Alice in Wonderland* to be imbued with the spirit of Zen. Koestler then wrote:

This brings me back, for almost the last time, to Professor Suzuki and the question whether he and his disciples are trying to fool the reader or themselves. Since *Alice* is now being used as a Zen manual, I may as well confess that I have always been puzzled by Dr. Suzuki's striking spiritual resemblance either to Tweedledum or Tweedledee, whose twin suchnesses are no doubt meant to symbolize the identity of tea and no-tea, arrow and target, author and reader, the deluding and deluded mind (259-60).

Although Koestler was a journalist and not a scholar, Suzuki's writings were also of concern to two noted scholars, Paul Demiéville and R. J. Zwi Werblowsky. Demiéville, a specialist in East Asian Buddhism, noted his concerns in a 1966 review of Suzuki's *Zen and Japanese Culture* while



Werblowsky wrote an article in 1967 entitled "Some Observations on Recent Studies of Zen."

Writing from a Jewish context, Werblowsky was particularly troubled by Suzuki's statement in *Zen and Japanese Culture* that "[Zen] may be found wedded to anarchism or fascism, communism or democracy" (63). After quoting this passage, Werblowsky went on to add, "Dr. Suzuki forgot to add to the list of possibilities also Nazism with its gas chambers (as the annoying Mr. Koestler has rudely pointed out)" (321). What both of these men found unacceptable was the way in which Suzuki placed Zen above all moral considerations. Beyond that, they also criticized Suzuki for his suggestion that Zen could be identified with practically all of Japanese culture.

In a more recent article by Zen scholar John McRae of Cornell University, Suzuki is criticized for having promoted an understanding of Zen in which "anything is acceptable as

long as it is bizarre and incomprehensible" (536). McRae continued:

I suggest that this is a direct result of Suzuki's description of Zen as something experiential, irrational, mystical, and completely above the constraints of human history. . . . The ultimate irony of Suzuki's contribution to our understanding of Zen is that his unswerving emphasis on the non-dogmatic nature of Zen was accepted by him and others as inviolable dogma. The champion of absolute freedom was completely enchained by his own rigid preconceptions (537).

Finally, in writing about Suzuki and other modern Japanese proponents of Zen, Robert Sharf had this to say: "Western enthusiasts systematically failed to recognize the nationalist ideology underlying modern Japanese constructions of Zen" (39). Writing specifically about Suzuki, Sharf added:

Suzuki held that the cultural and spiritual weaknesses of the Occident virtually precluded the possibility of Westerners' ever coming to truly comprehend Zen. One is led to suspect that Suzuki's lifelong effort to bring Buddhist enlightenment to the Occident had become inextricably bound to a studied contempt for the West,

a West whose own cultural arrogance and imperialist inclinations Suzuki had come to know all too well (29).

There is very little consolation for either Suzuki or the West in the preceding quotation. As to Suzuki's underlying attitude toward Westerners, the following revealing statement is included in his book entitled *Tōyōteki ichi* (Oriental Oneness/東洋的一) published in 1942:

There is a Zen master who said, "Thrust your sword into the boundless sky, whether it reaches it or not is of no importance." Zen has any number of such fine expressions. This particular one ought to be the view of life of Orientals. In the development of such things as science, philosophy, machinery, and industry, the Orient, as of today, is still not equal to the Occident. However, when it is a question of spiritual and religious life, where is there an Occidental who can fully understand the preceding statement? Whether that Occidental be a rare wise man or a contemporary saint, he would be like a deaf mute in the face of this expression. In truth, there are many Orientals about whom the same can be said. However, one can only find those who are capable of understanding this statement among Orientals (79-80).

In light of these sentiments one can only wonder why Suzuki even bothered writing so many books in English on

Buddhism and Zen. Was this a reflection, as Sharf maintains, of his "studied contempt for the West"? Or did he, perhaps, simply write what he thought his Japanese- or English-speaking audiences wanted to hear. Whatever position one takes on this issue, his ethnocentric if not racist attitude is clear. Given this, as well as his professed belief in the unity of Zen and the sword, the question must also be asked as to whether Suzuki and others like him "truly comprehend Zen"?

## **The Shin Sect's Declaration of War Responsibility**

### **Introduction**

In the postwar years there have only been four declarations dealing with war responsibility or complicity by the leaders of traditional Buddhist sects. The first of these four was by the Higashi Honganji branch of the Shin sect in 1987, while the Nishi Honganji branch followed suit four years later in 1991. In 1992 the Sōtō published a

"Statement of Repentance" (*zangemon*/懺悔文) apologizing for its wartime role. (It will be discussed in greater detail in the following section).

The latest statement by a sect concerning its wartime role was issued on June 8, 1994 by the Jimon branch (寺門派) of the Tendai sect (天台宗), the smallest of that sect's three branches. Its admission of war responsibility amounted to one short phrase contained in "An Appeal for the Extinction of Nuclear [Weapons]." It read: "Having reached the 50th anniversary of the deaths of the atomic bomb victims, we repent of our past cooperation and support for [Japan's] war of aggression" (*Nihon Shūkyōsha* 54).

What all of these statements share in common is the fact that even the earliest of them, i.e. the Higashi Honganji branch's declaration of 1987, was not issued until more than forty years after the end of the war. By comparison, the first Christian organization in Japan to issue a similar

statement was twenty year's earlier in 1967. This statement was entitled "A Confession of Responsibility during W.W. II by the United Church of Christ in Japan." Even this recognition of wartime complicity by Japan's largest Protestant organization was more than a generation in the making (*Nihon Shūkyōsha* 6).

It should also be readily apparent that the four current statements of Buddhist war complicity represent only a small percentage of Japanese Buddhism's thirteen major sects with their numerous branches. For example, none of the branches of the Rinzai Zen sect have yet to formally address this issue in any manner. In that sense, it can be said that the statements included below represent the beginning rather than the end of this important, if not crucial, issue for institutional Japanese Buddhism.

## The 1987 Declaration of the Higashi Honganji Branch

The following admission of war responsibility was made as part of the "Memorial Service for All War Victims" held on April 2, 1987. The statement was read by Koga Seiji (古賀制二), administrative head of the branch. It read in part:

As we recall the war years, it was our sect that called the war a "sacred war." It was we who said, "The heroic spirits [of the war dead] who have been enshrined in Yasukuni Shrine<sup>1</sup> have served in the great undertaking of guarding and maintaining the prosperity of the Imperial Throne. They should therefore to be revered for having done the great work of a *Bodhisattva*." This was an expression of deep ignorance and shamelessness on our part. When recalling this now, we are attacked by a sense of shame from which there is no escape. . . . Calling that war a "sacred war" was a double lie. Those who participate in war are both victims and victimizers. In light of the great sin we have committed, we must not pass it by as being nothing more than a "mistake." The sect said to revere things that were never taught by Saint [Shinran]. When we who are priests think about this sin, we can only hang our heads in silence before all who are gathered here (*Nihon Shūkyōsha* 34).

## The 1991 Declaration of the Nishi Honganji Branch

The following statement was issued by the administrative assembly of the Nishi Honganji branch on February 27, 1991. It was entitled "The Resolution to Make Our Sect's Strong Desire for Peace Known to All in Japan and the World." In as much as the Gulf War was mentioned in the opening sentence, it is clear that this, together with the question of nuclear warfare mentioned in paragraphs two and three, was the central focus of this declaration. The fourth paragraph, however, included the following:

Although there was pressure exerted on us by the military-controlled state, we must be deeply penitent before the *Buddhas* and Patriarchs, for we ended up cooperating with the war and losing sight of the true nature of this sect. This can also be seen in the doctrinal sphere, where the [sect's] teaching of the existence of relative truth and absolute truth was put to cunning use (*Nihon Shūkyōsha* 39).



## Other Commentators

There have been very few commentators in any language who have written extensively on the general question of institutional Buddhism's war responsibility. Instead, what one finds are scattered comments here and there which touch on this topic. Typical of these is the following statement by the noted historian Ienaga Saburō who wrote simply: "Buddhism had always lacked the capacity to challenge the state, and Japanese Buddhism rallied behind the war" (123).

As brief as the preceding statement is, the assertion that "Buddhism had always lacked the capacity to challenge the state" suggests that the root cause of institutional Buddhism's collaboration with the state was to be found somewhere deeply embedded in this religion, either in its doctrinal content or in its historical development (or both). This area is clearly worthy of future research, but the sheer

size and scope of such research places it outside the boundaries of this dissertation. This topic will, however, be revisited in the final "Issues Awaiting Further Research" section.

One of the first postwar scholars of Buddhism to address the general question was Yoshida Kyūichi in his 1970 book entitled *Nihon no kindai shakai to Bukkyō* (Modern Japanese Society and Buddhism/日本の近代社会と仏教). His comments, of course, predate all of the sectarian statements introduced above. He wrote:

In general it can be said that the relationship of Buddhism and war was one of ready compromise. Even in postwar society the question of [the meaning of] August 15, [1945] was hardly discussed [in Buddhist circles]. Here, too, the easy road was taken. . . . The result was that within the [postwar] context of the collective penitence of one hundred million [citizens], the precepts of Buddhism were lost sight of. . . . Furthermore, after the war [the question of] the religious responsibility for that war was nonexistent (259-61).

A second Buddhist scholar and priest to look at this question was Kaneoka Shūyū (金岡秀友), a professor at Tōyō University. His book, published in 1973, was entitled *Bukkyō no fukken* (The Rehabilitation of Buddhism/仏教の復権). His writings, too, predate the sectarian admissions previously introduced. He wrote:

In the previous great war, Buddhism, which ought to love peace, underwent a complete change and rushed into [a stance of] war cooperation, praying for "Confusion to the hated enemy" and "Surrender of the enemy country." Furthermore, when great numbers of soldiers went off to the front, it prayed for their "unending martial fortune". . . . If one holds on to Buddhism's original position of loving peace, there is no way these kinds of prayers could have been made. I cannot, under any circumstances, accept the fact that the attitude held by Buddhist adherents of that time was one of seeking peace. Similarly, I cannot accept the fact that, with peace now restored, [these same Buddhists] use the pretense that Buddhism is a religion of peace to conceal everything they have done. Without exposing the predisposition [in Buddhism] which produced a logic giving easy affirmation to war, it doesn't make any difference how much the facade is changed, the world will still remain a scene of carnage. . . . The logic which was employed by [then] Buddhist adherents to justify their affirmation and cooperation

with war was that of "sacred war" and "just war." This war, [they claimed,] was a "just war." "Killing one in order to save many" was in accord with the mind of Lord *Buddha*. "Soldiers, go to the battlefield and sacrifice yourselves for the Imperial nation!" was the logic of this affirmation of war. . . . But for [true] Buddhists there can never be something like a "just war." In Buddhism there is no "war-affirming logic." There is nothing I can add to this point. The question is whether or not this self-evident logic can be implemented" (109-111).

Unfortunately, Kaneoka did not go on to identify what he meant by the phrase "the predisposition [in Buddhism] which produced a logic giving easy affirmation to war." He may well have been alluding to something similar to Ienaga's earlier statement. One thing he did make clear, however, was his unhappiness with postwar institutional Buddhism's unwillingness to address its complicity in the war. As will be seen in the following section, he was not the only one who felt this way.

Finally, there are the comments of a lay Buddhist attorney, Endō Makoto (1930-遠藤誠). In 1986 he published

a book entitled *Ima no otera ni Bukkyō wa nai* (There Is no Buddhism in Today's Temples/今のお寺に仏教はない). As the title suggests, Endō was highly critical of contemporary institutional Japanese Buddhism, one of whose many shortcomings he sees as its wartime collaboration with militarism and its postwar reluctance to take responsibility for that collaboration. He wrote:

During the Pacific War some forty years ago, were there Buddhist organizations which opposed that war on the basis of the fundamental Buddhist commandment not to kill living things? Were there any Buddhist organizations opposed to that war? Were there any Buddhist priests opposed to that war? . . . Apart from the Youth League for the Revitalization of Buddhism led by Senō Girō, there were none. Without exception, all of the traditional Buddhist organizations, together with newly-established Buddhist organizations, prayed for "the successful conclusion of the sacred war [and] the surrender of the savage Americans and English." They also sent chaplains to the battlefield who said, "If you die I'll make sure you go to Paradise, so kill the enemy while you're still alive!"

Following the war, these same "high priests," espoused peace and ended up occupying important positions in their respective sects. From the mid-1920's through

August 15, 1945, it was these priests who had willingly dashed off magazine articles and books saying, "Japan is the land of the gods. This is a just war so kill the Chinese soldiers and the savage Americans and British for the sake of His Majesty, the Emperor". . . . Even today Buddhist organizations throughout the country continue to hold daily religious services in which they pray for the long life of Emperor Hirohito (49-52).

In Endō's opinion, the preceding was but one example of the following:

The teaching for the salvation of humanity which the great teacher, *Shākyamuni*, expounded two thousand five hundred years ago has completely disappeared from today's temples (3).

It is now time to examine how "Imperial State/Military-Zen" fared upon examination in postwar Japan.

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup>As the text indicates, Yasukuni Shrine (靖国神社) is a *Shintō* sanctuary located on Kudan Hill in Tokyo. When first established on June 29, 1869, it was known as the Tokyo Shōkonsha (東京招魂社). In 1879 it was granted its present name by Emperor Meiji. The Chinese character for *yasu* means “peaceful,” the implication being that the shrine safeguards the peace and well-being of the nation. Since 1875 all the "heroic spirits" (*eirei*/ 英霊) of the nation's war dead have been enshrined here.

# CHAPTER 11: THE POST-WAR JAPANESE RESPONSES TO "IMPERIAL STATE-ZEN"

## Introduction

In terms of sheer volume it can be said that far more has been written on the relationship of the Zen school and war than on any other single school or sect of Japanese Buddhism. The reason for this is not that it has been such a popular topic of Buddhist writing, but, instead, is due to the voluminous writings of one man, the late Zen scholar and (former) Rinzai Zen priest, Ichikawa Hakugen (1902-1986/市川白弦). In the postwar years it can be said that he almost single-handedly brought this topic before the public and made it an area of scholarly research. His writing, in turn, has sparked further investigation of related issues within other sects as well.

Before investigating Ichikawa's writings however, it would be helpful to get a 'lay of the land' by looking at the



comments made by other Zen adherents to get some idea of the overall tenor of the discussion. Doing this should help to put the breadth and depth of Ichikawa's contribution to this topic in clearer focus. Following this, an examination of the Sōtō Zen sect's relatively recent statement on its war responsibility will show how one of the Zen school's two major sects is struggling to come to grips with this problem.

### **Yanagida Seizan's Response**

Yanagida Seizan (1922-/柳田聖山) is one of the best known Zen scholars of the postwar period. He started life as the son of a Rinzai Zen priest in a small village temple in Shiga prefecture. As an adult he went on to become the director of the Institute for Humanistic Studies of Kyōto University. Following retirement, he next founded and became the first director of the International Research Institute for Zen Buddhism located at Hanazono University. In 1989 he

presented a series of lectures on Zen at both Stanford University and the University of California, Los Angeles.

In 1990 Seizan published a book entitled *Mirai kara no Zen* (Zen from the Future/未来からの禅). This book, containing a number of lectures he had presented in the United States, is relatively unusual in Zen scholarship in that its contents included material that was both personal and confessional in nature. This included his own personal experience as a young Rinzai Zen priest during and immediately after the war. The highlights of this experience are as follows:

When as a child I began to become aware of what was going on around me, the Japanese were fighting neighboring China. Then the war expanded to the Pacific region, and finally Japan was fighting the rest of the world. When Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945, I had thus experienced two major wars. As someone who was brought up while these wars were expanding, I did not have the luxury of thinking deeply about the relationship between the state as a sovereign power engaged in war and Zen Buddhism. No doubt this was largely due to the fact that I had neither the opportunity to go to the battlefield nor directly engage in battle. Furthermore, having been brought up in a remote Zen

temple, I was completely ignorant of what was happening in the world. In the last phase of W. W. II, I was training as a Zen monk at Eigenji [英源寺], proud of being away from the secular world and convinced that my total devotion to Zen practice would serve the state.

At any rate, with Japan's defeat I became aware of my own stupidity for the first time, with the result that I developed a deep sense of self-loathing. From 1945 to 1950, I did not see any point to human life, and I was both mentally and physically in a state of collapse. I had lost many of my friends; I alone had been left behind. We had fought continuously against China, the home country of Zen. We had believed that it was a just war without harboring the slightest doubt. In a state of inexpressible remorse, I could neither physically nor mentally find rest and was day after day ill at ease, not knowing what to do. There is no need to say how total is the contradiction between the Buddhist precepts and war. Yet, what could I, as a Buddhist, do for the hundreds of millions of my fellow human beings who had lost their lives in the war? At that time, it dawned on me for the first time that I had believed that to kill oneself on the state's behalf is the teaching of Zen. What a fanatical idea!

All of Japan's Buddhist sects - which had not only contributed to the war effort but had been one heart and soul in propagating the war in their teachings - flipped around as smoothly as one turns one's hand and proceeded to ring the bells of peace. These sectarian leaders had been among the leaders of the country

who had egged us on by uttering big words about the righteousness [of the war]. They acted in a totally shameless manner. In as much as Japan was supposed to have become a civilized country overnight, there was nothing I could do about their actions. In my own heart, however, there was a wound which would not heal. I am not talking about what the state or others should have done, but as far as I was concerned, my actions were unpardonable. Again and again I thought of committing suicide (56-57).

Seizan did not, of course, commit suicide, but in some sense it is refreshing to meet a Buddhist, a Zen adherent, who was so moved by his earlier support for the war that he entertained the idea of killing himself. The irony is that by comparison with the numerous Zen/Buddhist leaders who have been previously introduced, Seizan bore very little responsibility for what had happened. Yet, in what might be called the idealism of youth, he felt obliged to take the sins of his elders on his own shoulders. In so doing he neither sought to ignore what had happened nor place the blame on someone else.

A major point Seizan shared in common with the previously introduced postwar commentators on Buddhism was his disdain for the way in which the previously pro-war leaders of the various sects had so abruptly abandoned their war cries and become peacemakers. That such Buddhist leaders did exist has been well documented.

Ichikawa Hakugen is one of those who recorded numerous statements made by these instant converts to peace. One of his examples dealt with Masanaga Reihō. It will be recalled that Reihō was last heard from as he extolled the virtues of Japan's *kamikaze* pilots. On September 15, 1945, exactly one month after Japan's surrender, Reihō wrote the following:

The cause of Japan's defeat . . . was that among the various classes within our country there were not sufficient capable men who could direct the war by truly giving their all. . . . That is to say, we lacked individuals who, having transcended self-interest, were able to employ the power of a life based on moral principles. . . . It is religion and education that have the

responsibility to develop such individuals. . . .We must develop patriotic citizens who understand [the Zen teaching] that both learning and wisdom must be united with practice. They will become the generative power for the revival of our people. . . . and we will be able to preserve our glorious national structure. . . . It is for this reason that religionists, especially Buddhists, are required to bestir themselves (*Nihon* 311).

In peace as well as war, it would seem, Buddhists were required "to bestir themselves." And, of course, required "to preserve our glorious national structure."

Be that as it may, Seizan never questioned what mechanisms in either Zen or Buddhism had made these leaders' earlier fervent support of the war possible in the first place. Was it simply a moral failure on their part, or was there more to it than that? As deeply affected by these issues as Seizan was, he failed to investigate them further. Instead, he spent his scholarly life investigating the early development of Zen (Ch. *Ch'an*) in China.

## Yamada Mumon's Response

It will be recalled that Rinzai Zen master Yamada Mumon was the editor in 1942 of a strongly pro-war book by Seki Seisetsu entitled *The Promotion of Bushidō*. As already noted, in postwar Japan Mumon went on to become both President of Hanazono University and chief abbot of Myōshinji, the largest branch of the Rinzai Zen sect.

In 1964 a collection of Mumon's sayings was published in English under the title *A Flower In The Heart*. Although not meant in any sense to be a scholarly work, Mumon nevertheless made some noteworthy observations about both modern Buddhist history and Japan's participation in the Pacific War. His historical comments were as follows:

The only time when Buddhism in Japan met a suppression by the hand of a government was during the Meiji restoration period. Then, its teachings were denounced and the sacred images desecrated. Only the desperate efforts of their leaders saved it from the fate of an utter extinction, but the price they had to pay for its survival was high, for the monks, they agreed, would

take up arms at the time of national emergencies. The dealing was surely regrettable. If these celebrated priests of the Meiji era had been deceived by the name of loyalty and patriotism, we of today were taken in by the deceitful name of holy war. As a consequence, the nation we all loved lost its gear and turned upside down. This teaches us that we must beware not so much of oppression as of compromise (11).

As interesting as the preceding quotation is, it described the events from what is basically an outsider's, or third party's point of view. That is to say, nowhere does Mumon take personal responsibility for what happened. Yet, later on he did broach this topic. He wrote:

For a long time I have entertained a wish to build a temple in every Asian nation to which we caused so much indescribable sufferings and damages during the past war, as token of our sincere penitence and atonement, both to mourn for their dead and ours and to pray for a perpetual friendship between her and our country and for further cultural intercourses (28).  
[English left uncorrected]

In the preceding quote Mumon does at least admit to a collective responsibility for what happened though still without any discussion of his personal role. In fact, Mumon



eventually went on to try, at least to some degree, to justify the war. He wrote:

The sacrifices listed above were the stepping stones upon which the South-East Asian peoples could obtain their political independence. In a feeble sense, this war was a holy war. Is this observation too partial? . . . "If it were for the sake of the peace of the Far East," a phrase in one of the war-time songs, still rings in my ears (31).

In light of the above, one cannot help but recall the colloquial expression "Will the real Yamada Mumon please stand up?" If this question can be fairly asked about the contradictions inherent in the previous English quotes, the question is put into even sharper relief by a subsequent statement made by Mumon, this time in Japanese. This statement was distributed at the inaugural meeting of the "Association to Repay the Heroic Spirits [of Dead Soldiers]" (*Eirei ni kotaeru kai*/英靈にこたえる会) which was held on June 22, 1976. Mumon was one of the founders of this association whose purpose was to lobby the Japanese Diet for

reinstatement of state funding for Yasukuni Shrine. As previously noted, this Shintō shrine was designed to venerate the "heroic spirits" of all Japan's war dead.

Mumon's statement was entitled "Thoughts on State Maintenance of Yasukuni Shrine." It contained the following passage:

Japan destroyed itself in order to grandly give the countries of Asia their independence. I think this is truly an accomplishment worthy of the name "holy war." All of this is the result of the meritorious deeds of two million five hundred thousand heroic spirits in our country who were loyal, brave, and without rival. I think the various peoples of Asia who achieved their independence will ceaselessly praise their accomplishments for all eternity (49).

To his English-speaking audience Mumon described the war as having been in some "feeble sense" a holy war. To his Japanese audience, however, these words disappeared to be replaced with "meritorious deeds," "heroic spirits," "ceaselessly praise," etc. In light of this, there can no longer be any question of who the real Mumon was, at least to his

Japanese audience. In the introduction to *A Flower In The Heart*, Umehara Takeshi (梅原猛) described Mumon as "one of those rare monks from whose presence emanates a sense of genuine holiness" (7). A genuine holiness, it would appear, that was strong enough to extend the belief in "holy war" directly into the postwar period.

Mumon was, of course, by no means the only one who thought as he did. The idea that Japan had done a favor to those Asian nations it forcefully occupied became an article of faith among Japan's postwar conservative politicians and commentators. As recently as May 31, 1995, an article in the *New Zealand Herald* pointed out: "Hard-line conservatives . . . argue that Japan fought the war to help Asian liberation from Western colonialism" (8). The only thing missing in comments like these is proof that significant numbers of citizens in those formerly occupied countries happen to agree.

## Asahina Sōgen's Response

Asahina Sōgen (1891-1979/朝比奈宗源) was both the abbot of Engakuji (円覚寺) and the administrative head of the Engakuji branch (円覚寺) of the Rinzaï Zen sect. It will be recalled that Shaku Sōen had earlier been an abbot of this same temple. Though Sōgen had never been his disciple, their thinking was quite similar. Further, like Yamada Mumon, Sōgen had been active in conservative causes in the postwar years, most notably as one of the founders of the "Association to Protect Japan" (*Nihon o mamoru kai*/ 日本を守る会) (Maruyama 71).

In 1978 Sōgen published a book entitled *Kakugo wayoika* (Are You Ready?/覚悟はよいか). The last part of this book was very autobiographical in nature and included extensive comments about the war, its historical background, and his own role in it. As with so many of the books previously introduced, Sōgen began his discussion by praising the

thirteenth century military ruler Hōjō Tokimune and his Chinese Zen master Mugaku Sogen. According to Sōgen, the roots of both Zen involvement in prayer services and the subsequent close relationship between Zen and the state can be traced back to this period. He wrote:

The reason that Japanese Zen began to chant *sūtras* in both morning and evening services was due to the Mongol invasion. Although other temples were making a big deal of their prayers [to protect the country], Zen priests were only doing *zazen*. They were out of step [with the other sects] and said to be indifferent to the affairs of state. The result was they commenced to recite *sūtras* (151-52).

Jumping more than six hundred years to the nineteenth century, Sōgen wrote that the Sino-Japanese War had been caused by China's having tried to "put Japan under its thumb" in Korea (155). The subsequent Russo-Japanese War was, in his opinion, due entirely to Russian actions. "Russia rapidly increased its armaments and intended to destroy Japan without fighting. It was decided that if Japan were going to

be destroyed without fighting, it might as well have a go at it and be destroyed" [*Italics mine*] (157).

The preceding comments were, of course, only a warm-up for his lengthy discussion of the Pacific War. He began this discussion with the following comments:

Shortly after the [Pacific] War started, I realized that this was one we were going to lose. That is to say, the civil and military officials of whom the Japanese were so proud had turned into a totally disgusting bunch (150).

Now here is something unprecedented - a Zen master who was critical of the military! Was it because of the mass killing they engaged in? Their occupation of other people's countries? Sōgen explained it as follows:

I'm not going to mince words - the top-level leadership of the Navy was useless. I know because living in Kamakura as I did, I had met many of them. . . . For example, two close friends of [Admiral] Yamamoto Isoroku (d. 1943/山本五十六) told me the following story: After the great victory Yamamoto achieved in the air attack on Pearl Harbor, he had a meeting with [General] Tōjō Hideki [1885-1948/東条英機]. Yamamoto told him that this was no longer the era of battleships with

their big guns. Rather, it was unquestionably the era of the airplane. Therefore every effort should be made to build more airplanes. Yamamoto was right, of course, in having said this. Tōjō, however, being the kind of person he is, in addition to being an Army General, was consumed with jealousy, for, unlike the Navy, the Army had yet to achieve any major victories. The result was that, due to his stubbornness, Tōjō told Yamamoto that he refused to accept orders from him in as much as the latter was merely the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet while he [Tōjō] was the nation's Prime Minister [1941-44]. They were like two children fighting. Yamamoto's two friends claimed that because Japan wasn't building more airplanes, it was losing the war.

I [Sōgen] said to them, why wasn't Yamamoto willing to risk his position in opposing him? Why didn't he tell Tōjō he would resign his position as Combined Fleet Commander? . . . If I had been there, I would have let go with an explosive "Fool!" . . . The Army and the Navy don't exist for themselves, they exist to defend the country. . . . With people like these at the top how can they accomplish what is expected of them. We're already losing. With people like them as commanders, we cannot expect to win. . . . They're only thinking about themselves (163-64).

Here, then, was Sōgen's analysis of why Japan lost the war. It was all very simple - the nation's military/political leaders were thinking only of themselves and their

respective military branches. It was their self-centeredness as opposed to the Zen ideal of "egolessness" and "no-mindedness" that had spelled Japan's doom. Questions of the morality of Japan's wartime actions, its invasion and control of other Asian countries, etc. had, in Sōgen's view, nothing to do with it.

Even though Sōgen claimed to have realized that Japan faced defeat at an early stage of the war with the Allies, this did not mean that he subsequently withdrew his support for the nation's war effort. On the contrary, he wrote of numerous instances in which he gave lectures and led "training camps" (*renseikai*/ 錬成会) to help maintain the people's morale. One such lecture was given at the Naval Technical Research Institute in Tokyo.

With evident pride, Sōgen twice mentioned that all the members of this institute were university graduates and that it was the most important center for naval



technology in Japan. His lecture was given to all two hundred workers at the institute and lasted for a full three hours and twenty minutes. Although he did not give the details of his talk, he claimed there was not so much as a cough from his audience the entire time. "I'll be satisfied if what I've said has been of even a small benefit to the state," he concluded (168).

As an example of one the training camps he led, he wrote about a military-sponsored visit of some forty-four wounded war veterans to Engakuji. They underwent Zen training as best they could for a one week period. When it came time for them to leave, Sōgen addressed them as follows:

Even though you have sustained injuries to your eyes or to your hands, you are still brave and seasoned warriors. This is now a time when the people must give everything they have to the state. You, too, have something precious to give. That is to say, transfer your spirit to the people of this nation, hardening their resolve. You were not sent to a place like this to be

pampered. I took charge of you because I wanted you to have the resolve and the courage to offer up the last thing you possess [to the state] (171).

"They cried," Sōgen went on, "all of them" (171). As well they might, for the Japanese state was not satisfied with just an eye or an arm, it literally wanted all of you. And Zen masters like Sōgen were ever ready to assist the state in making sure it got what it wanted.

Finally, Sōgen was not critical of all those in leadership positions during the war. There was one institution, or figure, for whom he had unwavering respect both during and after the war. That person was, of course, the Emperor. As to why this was so, Sōgen wrote: "The debt of gratitude owed the Emperor . . . is so precious that there is no way to express one's gratitude for it or to repay it" (183).

Although Sōgen didn't discuss Emperor Hirohito's wartime role, he had nothing but praise for his actions following Japan's defeat. It was the Emperor's "nobility of

spirit," Sōgen maintained, that so moved General Douglas MacArthur, head of the Occupation Forces, that he decided to treat Japan leniently, maintaining its integrity as a single country. It was in this spirit that Sōgen left his Japanese readers with the following parting thought:

The prosperity and everything we enjoy today is completely due to the selflessness and no-mindedness of the Emperor's benevolence. I want you to remember this. Human beings must never forget the debt of gratitude they owe [others] (189).

Based on the above, it can be fairly said that Sōgen, like Yamada Mumon, demonstrated that though the name "Imperial State-Zen" might have disappeared at war's end, it's spirit was anything but dead. This explains, at least in part, why, even today, not a single branch of the Rinzai Zen sect has ever publicly discussed, let alone apologized for, its wartime role. To do so would inevitably call into question the modern history of that sect and possibly its entire seven hundred year history in Japan.

## Ichikawa Hakugen's Response

The irony of the preceding comments is that while the Rinzai Zen sect has spawned some of the strongest advocates of "Imperial State-Zen," it has also produced some of its most severe critics. While Yanagida Seizan may be considered one such critic, his was, as already noted, a limited critique at best. The same, however, cannot be said of Rinzai Zen-affiliated Ichikawa Hakugen.

Hakugen's classic statement on the role of Buddhism, particularly Zen, in the wartime era was entitled *The War Responsibility of Buddhists* (*Bukkyōsha no sensō-sekinin/ 仏教者の戦争責任*), published in 1970. He developed his ideas still further in a series of articles and books including *Religion under Japanese Fascism* (*Nihon Fashizumu ka no shūkyō/ 日本ファシズム下の宗教*), published in 1975, and a major article included in *Buddhism During the War* (*Senji ka no*

*Bukkyō/ 戦時下の仏教*), published in 1977, and edited by Nakano Kyōtoku (中濃教篤).

In *Religion under Japanese Fascism*, Hakugen justified his call for a critical evaluation of the relationship between Buddhism and Japanese militarism in the following way:

In recent times, Japanese Buddhists talk about Buddhism possessing the wisdom and philosophy to save the world and humanity from collapse. However, I believe Buddhism first has to reflect on what kind of doctrines and missionary work it advocated during the Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa periods to oppose exploitation and oppression within Japan itself, as well as Korea, Taiwan, Okinawa, China, and Southeast Asia. Beyond that, Buddhism has the duty and responsibility to clarify individual responsibility for what happened and express its determination [never to let it happen again] (22-23).

In the preceding work, as well as many of his other works, Hakugen set out to do just what he said needed to be done. He not only clarified individual responsibility but also looked at those doctrinal and historical aspects of both Zen and Buddhism which he believed lent themselves, rightly or wrongly, to abuse by supporters of Japanese

militarism. One of the individuals whom Hakugen felt was most responsible for the development of what he called "Imperial Way-Zen" (*Kōdō Zen*/ 皇道禪) was none other than Suzuki Daisetz.

Hakugen felt that Suzuki's position as expressed in *A Treatise on the New [Meaning of] Religion* in the latter part of the Meiji period helped form the theoretical basis for what followed. In justification of this assertion, he quoted the same passage from that treatise previously introduced in this dissertation. He stated that Suzuki had been speaking of China when he mentioned a "lawless country" in this treatise (35). Hakugen then went on to say:

[Suzuki] considered the Sino-Japanese War to be religious practice designed to punish China in order to advance humanity. This is, at least in its format, the very same logic used to support the fifteen years of warfare devoted to "The Holy War for the Construction of a New Order in East Asia." Suzuki didn't stop to consider that the war to punish China had not started with a Chinese attack on Japanese soil, but, instead, took place on the continent of China. Suzuki was unable

to see the war from the viewpoint of the Chinese people whose lives and natural environment were being devastated. Lacking this reflection, he considered the war of aggression on the continent as religious practice in the name of religion. . . . The logic that Suzuki used to support his "religious conduct" was that of "the sword that kills is identical with the sword that gives life" and "kill one in order that many may live." It was the experience of "holy war" which spread this logic throughout all of Asia. It was Buddhists and Buddhist organizations that integrated this experience of war with the experience of the emperor system (35).

Needless to say, Suzuki was not the only Zen adherent who Hakugen believed shared responsibility for the war. Mention has already been made, for example, of Harada Daiun Sōgaku who Hakugen identified as a "fanatical militarist." As for Sugimoto Gorō and Yamazaki Ekijū, Hakugen had this to say:

In the first instance Sugimoto and Yamazaki used Zen as nothing more than a means for the practice of the Imperial Way. Not only that, but by forcing the meaning and tenets of Zen to fit within the context of a religion centered on the Emperor, Zen itself was obliterated (87).

As mentioned above, Hakugen's research did not stop with merely identifying those individual Zen adherents whom he believed were responsible for what had transpired. He is unique among postwar Zen (and Buddhist) scholars in trying to determine what long-standing Buddhist doctrines or pre-Meiji historical developments might have either contributed to or facilitated Buddhist war collaboration.

One example of a contributing historical development is contained in his book *Zen and Contemporary Thought* (*Zen to gendai-shisō*/ 禅と現代思想). He wrote:

In the Edo period [1600-1867] a Zen deepening of *Shintō* was attempted by Munan [1603-76], Hakuin [1685-1768] and Tōrei [1721-92]. This was accompanied by the further assimilation of Zen in Japan. This assimilation took place at the same time as the establishment of the power of the emperor system, with the result that Zen lost almost all of its independence. The completion of this transformation took place as a result of the impact of the so-called "High Treason Incident" on the Zen world (177).



On the doctrinal side, Hakugen looked for those Buddhist ideas that seem to have made Buddhism susceptible to militaristic manipulation. One example he gave of such an idea concerned the Buddhist teaching of "wago" (和合) or harmony. Out of harmony, he postulated, had come Buddhism's "nonresistance" and "tolerance." He continued:

With what has modern Japanese Buddhism harmonised itself? With State *Shintō*. With the power of the state. With militarism. And therefore, with war. To what has modern Japanese Buddhism been nonresistant? To State *Shintō*. To the power of the state. To militarism. To wars of aggression. Toward what has modern Japanese Buddhism been tolerant? Toward the above mentioned entities with which it harmonized. Therefore, toward its own war responsibility. And I should not forget to include myself as one of those modern Japanese Buddhists who did these things (111-12).

Hakugen's great strength was the way in which he tenaciously uncovered layer after layer of causal factors (including those within himself) that precipitated, if not enabled, Buddhism, especially Zen, to unite with militarism. Nowhere is this clearer than in his examination of the

historical character of Japanese Buddhism which was included in his book *The War Responsibility of Buddhists* (150-54). In addition to his preceding comments, Hakugen claimed there were a total of twelve historical characteristics which, developing over the centuries, produced in Japanese Buddhism a receptiveness to authoritarianism.

The first of these characteristics was the subservience of Buddhism to the state. Hakugen pointed out that there were a number of *Mahāyāna sūtras* originating in India which emphasized the role of Buddhism as the "protector of the state." These *sūtras* had been particularly welcomed in Japan where this aspect of Buddhism became even more pronounced. During the Edo period Buddhism came under total government control and, mixed together with *Shintō*, became what was essentially a state religion.

As a state religion Buddhism became a mere shell of its former self with its attention focused on ancestor veneration in the form of funerals and memorial services. Thus, it became a religion with a limited social nexus - the extended family. Not surprisingly, it was antagonistic to Christianity because of the latter's transnational and modern character. The repression Buddhism itself experienced at the beginning of the Meiji period only served to reinforce its opposition to not only Christianity but socialism as well. It further served to strengthen its subservience to a nationalism based on the emperor system and militarism.

Hakugen's second characteristic concerned Buddhist views on humanity and society. On the one hand, Buddhism emphasizes the equality of human beings based on their possession of a Buddha-nature, that is to say, the innate potential to realize Buddhahood. On the other hand, the doctrine of *karma*, with its corollary belief in good and bad

karmic retribution, tends to serve as a kind of moral justification for social inequality. Differences in social status, wealth, happiness, etc. are seen as just rewards for good or bad conduct both in this and previous lives, having nothing to do with the political or social structure of society.

Understood in this light, social inequality is not only just, but represents true equality. It is, furthermore, only natural for Buddhism to protect a society with clear differences in social status since such a society facilitates the working out of past *karma*. Socialism, on the other hand, advocates the purposeful leveling of these social differences, thus becoming the proponent of "evil equality." As such, it must be rejected.

The third characteristic was concerned with the question of social morality, i.e. the encouragement of good and the punishment of evil. In this context Hakugen discussed one of Japan's oldest quasi-legal documents, the "Seventeen

Article Constitution" of Prince Regent Shōtoku (573-621/聖德太子), allegedly promulgated in 604. This Constitution contained the following warning:

"If you receive an Imperial command, it must be obeyed without fail. The Sovereign is Heaven, and Imperial subjects are the earth. . . . Should the earth seek to overthrow Heaven, there will only be destruction."

Hakugen maintained that as a semi-state religion from this period onwards, Buddhism sought to protect not only the state, but its hierarchical social structure as well. On the basis of having internalized this essentially Confucian logic, Buddhism became a faithful servant of the Meiji government's conservative social policies, working to create the ideal Imperial subject.

The fourth characteristic concerned both human rights and justice. The Buddhist doctrine of dependent co-arising, according to Hakugen, means that all phenomena are in a constant state of flux, being born and dying without any

permanent substance to them, that is, they are "empty." When this doctrine is applied to the self it produces the concept of "egolessness" or "no-self," leaving no room for the independence of the individual.

The end result of this was that the Western principle of "natural law" did not develop within Buddhism, leaving the modern concepts of human rights and justice without a foundation. In the aforementioned Seventeen Article Constitution, there is an admonition to "turn one's back on self-[interest] and embrace the public-[good]." In Hakugen's view there exists a direct connection between this and the wartime slogan "exterminate the self and serve the public" (*messhi hōkō* / 滅私俸公). The "public" referred to, he maintained, was none other than the state and Emperor. Thus, "The teaching of 'no-self' became both a theory and ethic serving Mikado Imperialism" (152).

The lack of Buddhist dogma was the fifth characteristic Hakugen identified. Lacking a transcendent, personal God who had to be worshipped and defended, Buddhism failed to establish the type of compelling basic dogma a believer would fight to preserve. In Japan, this resulted in the neglect of both thought and theory. Instead, Buddhism concentrated on the inner self with the individual's subjective feelings playing the central role. There was little concern for the results of external actions.

The sixth characteristic concerned the idea of "*on*" (恩). Forming the heart of Buddhist ethics, *on* is the teaching that a debt of gratitude is owed to those from whom favors are received. Traditionally, *on* was owed to four classes or types of individuals: 1) one's parents, 2) the king, 3) all sentient beings, and 4) either Heaven and earth, or the Three Treasures of Buddhism, i.e. the *Buddha*, *Dharma*, and *Samgha*. Hakugen argued that in Japan the debt of gratitude owed

one's parents had converged with that owed one's Sovereign. This produced a corresponding weakening of the sense of indebtedness to "all sentient beings."

The Buddhist belief in the mutual interdependence of all things formed the seventh characteristic. Hakugen stated that this belief led in modern Japan to an organic view of the state coupled with a feeling of intimacy towards it. Encompassed within this viewpoint was the recognition of the pre-eminence of the state, with the individual being no more than a constituent element. In similar fashion, it meant that capitalists, too, were preeminent, with workers being subsumed beneath them in an extended family system that emphasized harmony and cooperation.

Hakugen's eighth characteristic focused on the doctrine of the Middle Way. He maintained that the Middle Way doctrine of early Buddhism in India had become the operating principle for social development in modern Japanese



Buddhism. This did not mean, however, some type of compromise between extreme left-wing and right-wing political ideology. Instead, it became a constant search for compromise that sought to avoid confrontation before it occurred. In the end, this led to a very vague theory of social reform.

The ninth characteristic centered on the tradition of ancestor veneration. As "nation-protecting" Buddhism assimilated itself to Japan, it promoted the customs and virtues of ancestor veneration. The end result was that the entire nation came to be regarded as one large family in which loyalty between subject and Sovereign was the chief virtue. This logic was extended and employed as a support mechanism for the sacred war as voiced by the wartime slogan "the whole world under one roof" [*hakkō ichiu*/八紘一宇].

The spirit of "aging" formed the tenth characteristic. The Middle Ages in Japan gave rise to a culture in which old and mature things were valued. Out of this came such aesthetic concepts as "*wabi*" (rustic antiqueness/わび) and "*sabi*" (ancient solitariness/寂び). An extension of this way of thinking saw proposals for social reform branded as childlike and immature. To become a mature adult meant to dismiss such proposals, especially if they challenged the existing order, and become accepting, obedient, and uncritical of the status quo.

The eleventh characteristic involved Buddhism's emphasis on "peace of mind" rather than justice. Lacking a God as the author of transcendental principles, Buddhism was not compelled to build a kingdom of God based on justice here on earth. Furthermore, because Buddhism is a religion based on the idea of the "emptiness" (Skt. *shūnyatā*/空) of things, it had almost no basis for maintaining an

antagonistic attitude towards State *Shintō*. Buddhism's focus on individual peace of mind also contributed to its failure to establish the will to reorganize society.

Hakugen's twelfth and final characteristic concerned the Buddhist logic of "*soku*" (即), a copula that literally means "just as it is" and is roughly equivalent to 'suchness' and non-duality. Ichikawa contended that the logic of *soku*, appearing as it does throughout Buddhist thought, leads to a static, aesthetic perspective, a detached subjective harmony with things. In Hakugen's view, Buddhism lacks a dynamic theoretical basis for either confronting reality or promoting social change.

It is clear that each one of the twelve characteristics noted above involves assumptions and viewpoints that are clearly open to extensive scholarly debate. The defense or critique of these alleged characteristics would be a monumental task in itself. This task, once again, extends

beyond the confines of this dissertation. This said, it is equally clear that Hakugen has raised some challenging issues with his critique that are worthy of further scholarly investigation. At the very least, his critique strongly suggests that the issue of Buddhism's collaboration with Japanese militarism is one with very deep roots within Buddhist history and doctrine. For this insight, if for nothing else, future students of this topic will remain indebted to this pioneering scholar.

## **The 1992 Sōtō Zen Sect's Declaration of War Responsibility**

### **Introduction**

If the Rinzai Zen sect has been unwilling to face its past, it cannot be claimed that the postwar leadership of the Sōtō Zen sect was any more anxious to do so. Yet, a series of allegations concerning human rights abuses by this sect had the cumulative effect of forcing it to face its

past in spite of its unwillingness to do so. Unquestionably the single most important event in this series of allegations was the sect headquarters' publication in 1980 of the *History of the Sōtō Sect's Overseas Evangelization and Missionary Work* (*Sōtō-shū kaigai kaikyō dendō shi*/曹洞宗海外開教伝道史).

In the January 1993 issue of *Sōtō Shūhō*, the sect headquarters announced that it was recalling all copies of the above mentioned publication. The reason given for this was as follows:

The content of this book consists of the history of the overseas missionary work undertaken by this sect since the Meiji period, based on the reports of the persons involved. However, upon investigation, it was discovered that this book contained many accounts that were based on discriminatory ideas. There were, for example, words which discriminated against peoples of various nationalities. Furthermore, there were places that were filled with uncritical adulation for "militarism" and "the policy to turn [occupied peoples] into loyal Imperial subjects (26).

Immediately following the above announcement was a "Statement of Apology" (*Shazaibun*/謝罪文) issued by the

administrative head of the sect, Ōtake Myōgen (大竹明彦).

The statement contained a passage which clearly shows how the preceding work served as a catalyst for what amounted to the sect's repentance of its wartime role. Its highlights are as follows:

We, the Sōtō sect, have since the Meiji period and through to the end of the Pacific War, utilized the good name of "overseas evangelization" to violate the human rights of the peoples of Asia, especially those in East Asia. This was done by making common cause with, and sharing in, the sinister designs of those who then held political power to rule Asia. Furthermore, within the social climate of "ceasing to be Asian and becoming Western," we despised the peoples of Asia and their cultures, forcing Japanese culture on them and taking actions which caused them to lose their national pride and dignity. This was all done out of a belief in the superiority of Japanese Buddhism and our national structure. Not only that, but these actions, which violated the teachings of Buddhism, were done in the name of *Buddha* Shākyamuni and the successive Patriarchs in India, China and Japan who transmitted the *Dharma*. There is nothing to be said about these actions other than that they were truly shameful.

We forthrightly confess the serious mistakes we committed in the past history of our overseas missionary work, and we wish to deeply apologize and

express our repentance to the peoples of Asia and the world.

Moreover, these actions are not merely the responsibility of those people who were directly involved in overseas missionary work. Needless to say, the responsibility of the entire sect must be questioned in as much as we applauded Japan's overseas aggression and attempted to justify it.

Even further, the Sōtō sect's publication in 1980 of the *History of the Sōtō Sect's Overseas Evangelization and Missionary Work* was done without reflection on these past mistakes. This meant that within the body of the work there were not only positive evaluations of these past errors, but even expressions which tried to glorify and extol what had been done. In doing this, there was a complete lack of concern for the pain of the peoples of Asia who suffered as a result. The publication involved claimed to be a work of history but was written from a viewpoint which affirmed an Imperial historical understanding, recalling the ghosts of the past and the disgrace of Japan's modern history. We are ashamed to have published such a work.

At the same time, we cannot escape a deeply guilty conscience in that this work was published some thirty-five years after the end of the Pacific War. The reason for this is that since the Meiji period our sect has cooperated in waging war, sometimes having been flattered into making common cause with the state, and other times rushing on its own to support state policies. Beyond that, we have never reflected on the

great misery that was forced upon the peoples of Asia nor felt a sense of responsibility for what happened.

The historian E. H. Carr has said: "History is an endless conversation between the past and the present." Regretfully, our sect has failed to engage in this conversation, with the result that we have arrived at today without questioning the meaning of the past for the present, or verifying our own standpoint in the light of past history. We neglected to self-critically examine our own "war responsibility" as we should have done immediately after having lost the war in 1945.

Although the Sōtō Sect cannot escape the feeling of being too late, we wish to apologize once again for our negligence and, at the same time, apologize for our cooperation with the war. . . . We recognize that Buddhism teaches that all human beings are equal as children of the *Buddha*. And further, that they are living beings with a dignity that must not, for any reason whatsoever, be impaired by others. Nevertheless, our sect, which is grounded in the belief of the transference of Shākyamuni's *Dharma* from master to disciple, both supported and eagerly sought to cooperate with a war of aggression against other peoples of Asia, calling it a holy war.

Especially in Korea and the Korean peninsula, Japan first committed the outrage of assassinating the Korean Queen [in 1895], then forced the Korea of the Lee Dynasty into dependency status [in 1904-5], and finally, through the annexation of Korea [in 1910], obliterated a people and a nation. Our sect acted as an advanced guard in



this, contriving to assimilate the Korean people into this country, and promoting the policy of turning Koreans into loyal Imperial subjects. When human beings exist as human beings, they cannot help but seek a place where they belong. People feel secure when they have a guarantee of their identity coming from such things as their own family, language, nationality, state, land, culture, religious belief, etc. Having an identity guarantees the dignity of human beings. However, the policy to create loyal Imperial subjects deprived the Korean people of their nation, their language, and, by forcing them to adopt Japanese family and personal names, the very heart of their national culture. The Sōtō sect, together with Japanese religion in general, took upon itself the role of justifying these barbaric acts in the name of religion.

In China and other countries, our sect took charge of pacification activities directed towards the peoples who were the victims of our aggression. There were even some priests who took the lead in making contact with the secret police and conducting spying operations on their behalf.

We committed mistakes on two levels. First, we subordinated Buddhist teachings to worldly teachings in the form of national policies. Then we proceeded to take away the dignity and identity of other peoples. We solemnly promise that we will never make this mistake again. . . . Furthermore, we deeply apologize to the peoples of Asia who suffered under the past political domination of Japan. We sincerely apologize that in its overseas evangelism and missionary work

the Sōtō sect made common cause with those in power and stood on the side of the aggressors (28-31).

In reading the above statement it is difficult to escape the feeling that forty-eight years after the end of the war it was, in the words of the preceding text, also "too late" for a leader of the Zen tradition to address the issue of war responsibility. This said, it is clear that without this statement of apology it would have been impossible for the Sōtō sect to have restored Uchiyama Gudō's priestly status as it subsequently did in April 1993, some eighty-three years after having deprived him of it.

In spite of the positive good that has issued from the Sōtō sect's statement of apology, Zen scholars like Ichikawa Hakugen make it clear that the rationale for Zen (and Buddhism's) support of Japanese militarism in particular, and state-sponsored warfare in general, is far more deeply entrenched in Zen and Buddhist doctrine and historical

practice, especially in its *Mahāyāna* form, than any Japanese Buddhist sect has yet to publicly admit.

Of all the Japanese Buddhist sects to date, the Sōtō sect's statement of apology is certainly the most comprehensive. Yet, it almost totally ignores the question of the doctrinal and historical relationship between the Buddhism and the state, let alone between Buddhism and the emperor. Is, for example, "state-protecting Buddhism" (*gokoku bukkyō*/ 護国仏教) an intrinsic part of Buddhism or merely a historical accretion? Similarly, is the vaunted unity between Zen and sword an orthodox or heretical doctrine? Is there such a thing as a physical "life-giving sword" or is it no more than a Zen metaphor that Suzuki and others have terribly misused out of context?

The Sōtō Zen sect has made a beginning, even a good beginning, in addressing some of the many issues involved in the modern historical relationship between itself

(representing symbolically, at least, institutional Buddhism as a whole) and Japanese militarism. But, like this dissertation itself, it is only a beginning. It represents no more than the first step in what will, if continued, require a fundamental re-evaluation of what have heretofore been considered intimate parts, if not essential parts, of Zen and Buddhist thought and practice. It remains to be seen when, and if, such a fundamental re-evaluation will take place.

## CHAPTER 12: ISSUES AWAITING FURTHER RESEARCH

### Introduction

The most important area requiring further research centers on the question of whether or not the support Japanese Buddhism provided for the state's war efforts as demonstrated in this dissertation was an unprecedented phenomena in Buddhist history. As has been seen, Ichikawa Hakugen in particular argued that such support should be considered an outgrowth or extension of certain historical and doctrinal antecedents. In his view, these antecedents were to be found in Japan in the first instance but with roots reaching back as far as India, the birthplace of Buddhism.

Hakugen is by no means the only scholar of Zen to have voiced his concern about the seeming lack of social and moral awareness in this Buddhist school. Neither is he alone in seeing this issue as having its roots in pre-modern

Zen history. Abe Masao, previously introduced, is a contemporary Zen scholar who has come to similar conclusions. He writes:

It is undeniable . . . that through its long history Zen did not sufficiently or systematically clarify how to save others in their individual and social life beyond the problem of awakening to each person's true self. Zen has provided a basic framework for the relationship between self and others but almost no definite form of human morality or social ethics except monastic regulations. This is due largely to its overwhelming emphasis on individual self-awakening. This relative lack of concern with individual and social ethics becomes an increasingly serious problem as Zen begins to confront issues in contemporary society and enter Western cultures ("Foreword" *viii*).

A third Zen scholar, this time a Westerner, has also expressed his support of Hakugen's and Abe's conclusions. This scholar is Christopher Ives whose book *Zen Awakening and Society* was written specifically to address the relationship between Zen Buddhism and ethics, especially in society. He states:

Without careful reflection - grounded in self-critical examination of Buddhist texts, principles, and values - Zen may continue to wander through a range of social orientations, some of which may run contrary to the principles and spirit of the tradition. Historically, monastic Zen has not studied, analysed, or responded self-critically to the full range of suffering in the social world. This lack of a critical spirit has contributed to problematical support of the status quo, whether the aristocracy, samurai dictators, militarists, or certain large corporations (ix).

There are, however, dissenting voices to the view that Zen's modern-day moral lapses have long-standing historical antecedents. One such voice is that of Robert Sharf, whose article on "*Zen and Japanese Nationalism*" has been previously quoted . He writes:

The "Zen" that so captured the imagination of the West was in fact a product of the New Buddhism of the Meiji. . . . Western enthusiasts systematically failed to recognize the nationalist ideology underlying modern Japanese constructions of Zen [*Italics mine*] (39).

Sharf further argues against the ancient origins of the alleged unity between Zen and *bushidō* for the simple reason that "the term *bushidō* itself is rarely attested in pre-Meiji

literature" (6). He goes on to state, however, that "[this] did not discourage Japanese intellectuals and propagandists from using the concept to explicate and celebrate the cultural and spiritual superiority of the Japanese" (6).

Sharf's opinion notwithstanding, Stewart McFarlane points to a somewhat older relationship between Zen and the martial arts. He writes:

The application of Zen theory and practice to the training of martial skill and technique, and the investing of the warrior life with spiritual values, are really Tokugawa [i.e. Edo period] phenomena. . . . Zen formed only one element in the process (404).

Thomas Cleary, on the other hand, appears to agree with Sharf in finding modern causes for Zen's war cooperation. In his book *The Japanese Art Of War* he states that it was militarism itself which "distorted" Zen. He writes:

Militarism has distorted Zen along with the rest of Japanese culture, producing aberrations in which various forms of Japanese machismo or masochism are regarded as not only having some relation to Zen, but even as being products or manifestations of Zen



"practice" or "realization." Furthermore, Japanese people today are just as susceptible to being deceived by deviant Zen as are Westerners, with the result that the various conflicting elements in modern Zen are generally not analyzed for what they really are (119).

Unfortunately, Cleary does not go on to provide an in-depth analysis of what these "various conflicting elements in modern Zen" might be. Yet, unlike Sharf, he does find one historical culprit which has "infected Zen over the centuries." Namely, the *Shintō* religion. He writes:

The Shintoistic elements that have infected Zen over the centuries may be briefly stated as follows: fetishism, including ritualism and attachment to paraphernalia; devotion to persons living and dead; fondness for rice wine, a sacramental libation in *Shintō* worship; hierarchy and authoritarianism; a tendency to regard the physical body as real; racism; and local sectarianism. [Italics mine] (118).

In finding *Shintō* to blame for many of Zen's shortcomings, Cleary takes a position similar to Suzuki's in the latter's postwar critique of Buddhist war collaboration. It will be recalled, however, that many Meiji period

proponents of *Shintō* were equally convinced that it was Buddhism and Zen that had corrupted their religion. "Deviance," like beauty, it would seem, lies in the eye of the beholder. This said, it would be interesting to know which modern Japanese and Westerners Cleary believes have been "deceived by deviant Zen."

Included in Cleary's deviant Zen is the alleged connection between Zen and *bushidō*. Cleary is anxious that the two are not viewed as being identical. He writes:

An examination of relevant primary literature makes it clear . . . that *Bushidō* is spiritually and pragmatically different from Buddhism, even if some of its practitioners did learn something about Buddhism and apply it to their arts.

The participation of warriors and strategists in shaping the format of Zen in Japan is one way to explain the cloud of mystery surrounding Zen, as the appearance of a ruse, part of the *art of the advantage*, one that has historically been used to dress certain alien and un-Buddhist elements of *Bushidō* in the dignity of Buddhism. Many Japanese themselves have unknowingly been deceived by this maneuver, to say nothing of Westerners (117).

If Cleary fails to identify exactly who it is that has been deceived, he also fails to explain who or what it is that is doing the deceiving.

Unlike Cleary who believes such things as militarism and *Shintō* "distorted" Zen, Winston King, author of *Zen and the Way of the Sword*, takes a position not unlike Suzuki's. That is to say, Zen could not be distorted, at least not ethically, for Zen has no ethics to distort! He writes:

Warrior-Zen took on the coloring of the warrior-dominated culture and institutions of medieval and Tokugawa Japan, becoming more fully Japanese even if not more Buddhist in the process. Thus the ethics of the sword could and did, at least for a time, become the ethics of Zen, not uncongenial with the Confucian statecraft ethic adopted by the Tokugawa regime but showing little of its "Buddhist" quality. For essentially Zen, with its slight regard for scripture and literary or ritual tradition, has no means of checking its "Buddhist" quality from time to time or maintaining a consistent witness to a good or holy life-pattern. In a word, it has no intrinsic ethical quality or inner monitor, but . . . historically seems to be primarily a psychological technique for maximizing the visceral energies whatever their orientation (190-191).

If this is indeed what Zen is all about, there can be little doubt that somewhat like Lt. Col. Sugimoto Gorō should be considered to have mastered it in every respect. That is to say, had he not mastered this "psychological technique for maximizing the visceral energies whatever their orientation"?

In an extended description of Japan's modern military, King did claim to have found a "whiff of Zen influence." He writes:

Sometimes this sense of Japanese spiritual superiority of the Japanese (Eastern?) spirit over American (Western?) technical superiority that would in the end prevail over immense physical odds - perhaps a whiff of Zen influence here - found its way into military manuals. In an Imperial Japanese Army manual, given to the users of the lunge mine, we find this advice: "attack 'with spiritual vigour and steel-piercing passion'" (223).

Had King studied this issue further, one can only wonder at what point the whiff of Zen would have turned into something a little stronger smelling? But then again, if as

King claims Zen has "no intrinsic ethical quality," what is there to smell?

Finally, with regard to the connection between Zen and ultra-nationalism at a more general level, Nakamura Hajime, one of Japan's best known contemporary Buddhist scholars, has this to say:

Japanese ultra-nationalism did not suddenly appear in the post-Meiji period. Its beginnings can be traced to the very remote past. . . . Many Buddhists of later date believed that Japan was superior to all other lands, as we can see clearly in the following line from a poem by Ean (1225-1277), a Kamakura Zen monk: "To the end of the end of the last generation will this land of Ours surpass all other lands" (434).

If there is any common thread to be found in all of the preceding quotes, it is that reaching a scholarly understanding of the origins and development of the relationship between Zen and the state, and Zen and the sword, are fraught with controversy, both within and without Japan. This is, furthermore, likely to be the case for some

time to come, given the potential depth and breadth of the areas which must be researched to reach such an understanding. Needless to say, that study is clearly beyond the confines of the present dissertation. It may, however, be helpful to at least look at the direction such future research should take.

Future research should begin, first of all, with a detailed examination of the position(s) taken by the historical founder of Buddhism, *Buddha* Shākyamuni, towards warfare and towards the state. This would be followed by an examination of subsequent relevant doctrinal developments in Buddhist thinking, particularly within the *Mahāyāna* tradition. It would also be useful to compare these *Mahāyāna* developments with their counterparts in the Southern school of Buddhism. Is there something uniquely *Mahāyāna* in what transpired? Or uniquely Zen?

Finally, it would be necessary to take an in-depth look at the actual pre-modern history of Buddhist - state relations in both India and the countries of East Asia, including China and Korea as well as Japan. Once again, comparing and contrasting this history with that of the countries adhering to the Southern school would prove helpful. Only following such a thorough study would it be possible to make normative judgements on such phenomena as "Imperial Way-Buddhism" and "Imperial State-Zen."

That is to say, only then could one determine, with any degree of certainty, whether these phenomena were heretical aberrations of Buddhist thought and practice or merely extensions of previously existing ideas and historical relationships. It is, of course, quite possible that there could be elements of both.

While such a major study as described above is beyond the confines of this dissertation, the author does recognize

a responsibility to continue research in these areas in the future. Failure to do so, would, in some sense, betray the promise of what has already been accomplished. In this endeavor, the author looks forward to the advice and support of colleagues as he continues his quest for a deeper understanding of the relationship between Buddhism, the state, and the sword.



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