

## Chapter 1

# Shin Buddhism in the Meiji Period

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Discerning changes in religion within a culture tells us as much about that culture as observing its political changes, if not more so, but unlike the latter that manifest in ways usually noticed quickly by public media, knowing how and when shifts in religious thinking occur can be immensely complicated. Although both stand on fundamental beliefs and values and express social realities as much as personal truths, religion is rarely explained by its leaders with the degree of explicitness that one commonly finds in political spokespersons, a fact that drives many to throw up their hands, yet motivates students of religion to probe deeper.

In this case, the complexity is deepened by the fact that the religious essays contained in this book also are reflective of Japan's encounter with "modernism" or "the modern world." The way in which the onset of "modern sensibility" is viewed today in hindsight differs enormously not only from nation to nation, but from viewer to viewer. Some people begin modern European history with the Spanish Inquisition, others with the American and French revolutions, to name only two perspectives. In the case of Japan, traditional views of history typically use the convenience of the Meiji Restoration in 1867–1868 to demarcate the transition from feudal to modern, but the prevalence of capitalism, the weakening of class distinctions, pervasive forms of public education, and so forth in the Edo period (1600–1867) argues against a facile "feudal" label for that era, which today is more commonly called "pre-modern," and some argue that Japan never had a true feudal period at all in the European sense of the word. But these arguments generally rest on political and economic grounds, whereas

the focus here is on religion, philosophy, or “thought” (*shisō* 思想) as the Japanese like to call it, which follows a slightly different timetable and where the adjective feudal remains relevant but is used quite differently. Although these essays are exemplary examples of Japanese religion’s encounter with modernity, the authors themselves do not explicitly frame their ideas as addressing the meaning of modernity, although the word for modern (*kindai* 現代) does occur in the sense of “today’s society.” But the reader will have no trouble discerning anxieties and problematizing that reflect not only modernism but postmodernism as well, such as Kiyozawa Manshi’s reflections on the problem of locating moral authority.

I come back to the question of modernity later, but first it is important to make clear that these essays, some of which originated as public lectures, are of a particular type of discourse akin to what we would regard in a biblical context as theology. That is, although there is great depth of historical study of doctrine and philosophy evident in all of them, these authors are not writing as professional scholars but as professional religious. What ties these essays together is an overriding concern within all four authors about the need to clarify not what Buddhism is but what Buddhism means, in their lives, at that moment. Although all were famed teachers associated with Ōtani University in one way or another, there is no pretense to “historical objectivity” here because they are speaking from inside their religious tradition, namely Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 or Shin Buddhism. This does not mean these essays lack critical perspective. Quite the opposite, in fact. A critical stance toward *their own tradition* is clearly the engine that drives the motivation of all these authors. This orientation finds expression in the felt need to address the ambiguity surrounding nothing less than the biggest questions in Buddhism in the context of this particular tradition in the modern period. Namely, what is the nature of faith, karma, and history? How do we understand the religious symbols that stir us (such as the buddha’s name)? What is the relationship between the authority of the received teachings in my tradition and the authority of my own experience? Are religious ethics and social ethics compatible in Buddhism or inevitably in conflict?

What also characterizes these essays is the assumed value of *subjective* understanding—another factor that removes them from the realm of historical scholarship that was practiced in their own time. Subjectivity is a slippery issue, for although we do not expect leaders of individual religious traditions to view their own denomination “objectively” vis-à-vis other traditions, when addressing their own they are expected to affirm common values and beliefs particular to

that tradition, and this fact demands their rhetoric exhibit at least a nod toward objectivity in their own doctrines or dogmas. In the Shin Buddhist tradition, “other-power” (*tariki* 他力) represents the transcendent power of Amida Buddha to effect spiritual change within the individual, and forms a religious doctrine as central to their religious outlook as sin or grace in Christianity. Thus, when Christian theologians speak of original sin and Shin “theologians” speak of other-power, they must both at least begin from common, received understandings of these concepts that contain a strong impersonal dimension by dint of the fact that they represent and therefore belong to their community as a whole. But after launching from this common ground, the speaker may then shift direction in order to express entirely new and different meanings that he or she has unearthed in the investigation of seeking to uncover something like the archaeological creed lying at the base of their institution’s heritage.

This is precisely the process found in these essays, and why they often are so provocative. At once traditional in terms of theme and topic, they are strikingly innovative in their interpretations. Often the authors will state that their perceptions are not new but merely corrections of contemporary misunderstandings, a move that allows them to remain orthodox, at least from their own point of view. The tension between normative doctrine and the abundant creativity in these essays was exacerbated by the very nature of the philosophical movement that formed the orientation of all the authors represented here, namely Seishinshugi 精神主義, translated here as “Cultivating Spirituality.” As envisioned by its founder, Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863–1903), Seishinshugi was the name given to a set of principles that prioritized personal, subjective experience as the basis for religious understanding, as well as the praxis that ideally brought about realization. Although the name Seishinshugi literally means something like “spirituality at the forefront,” putting these principles into practice also was of central importance to Kiyozawa. To understand what Kiyozawa was trying to do and why, we need to consider both the objective and the subjective—Japan in the Meiji period when Kiyozawa lived, and Kiyozawa the individual.

#### Buddhism on the Defensive:

##### The Destabilizing Effects of Modernism on Shin Buddhism

Although the Seishinshugi movement may have been one of the most coherent responses to modernity within Japanese religion,

overall Japan's emergence as a modern nation-state on its religion is dominated by the attacks first on Buddhism and Buddhist institutions from a variety of voices and then on the very value of religion itself. Even State Shinto as a modern creation is, from the Buddhist point of view, just one chapter in a litany of ideological moves designed to wean Japanese spirituality from its Buddhist moorings. But when we move into the late Meiji period, that is after 1895, religion as a whole is dismissed by leading intellectuals such as Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1855–1944) as decidedly unmodern and thus feudalistic, a rhetoric that carefully does not include State Shinto because of its political implications.

The modern world's effect on Buddhist beliefs, values, practices, and institutions came very differently to each nation in Asia with a Buddhist history. In the case of Japan, attacks on institutional Buddhism brought on by the modernization of Japanese society came from three main sources: nativist and Confucian ideology, Western philosophy and religion, and political tensions arising from reform movements inside Buddhist institutions themselves. Seishinshugi grew out of a failed reform movement within the Higashi Honganji, or the Ōtani branch of the Shin tradition, but many of its ideas had an impact beyond that particular institution. Looking back on this movement from the twenty-first century, one cannot overlook the fact that among all sectarian religious forms in Japan in the Meiji period and beyond, no other school has produced so many towering intellectual figures. Beginning in the late Meiji period, Seishinshugi was thus more than a direct response to the unsettled nature of the Higashi Honganji organization in particular: it challenged Japanese Buddhism as a whole. To fully appreciate what Seishinshugi itself propounded in its historical context, we need to look in some detail at the nature of that historical context itself: that is, the external pressures on the Buddhist tradition in Japan and in this case the ways in which Shin Buddhism responded to them, both of which reflected the context within which the vision of Kiyozawa Manshi emerged.

The fall of the Tokugawa bakufu or military governing body and the establishment of the Meiji government in 1867 in effect meant the replacement of one group of samurai leaders with another, but this new oligarchy was inspired by an entirely different political ideology that had serious consequences for Japan, its neighbors, and relevant to the present study, for Buddhism and its institutions. Although there was an inherent nationalism in the *sakoku* 鎖国 policy of national isolation under the Tokugawa bakufu, the internationalization of Japan with the

Meiji Restoration resulted in a much more intense and violent form of nationalism. Although somewhat of a simplification, Christianity was the intended victim of the *sakoku* form of nationalism, and Buddhism was the intended victim of its modern form. But it was one thing to limit and eventually proscribe Christianity in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries when it had only been in Japan for two generations. It was quite another to try to purge Buddhist belief from Japan in 1868 after its religious dominance of Japanese culture for more than a millenium.

The first cause of grief for Buddhist culture and institutions in Japan was not only an ancient one, but the most serious as well: xenophobia. I am referring to the rise of nativism throughout the nineteenth century that found nearly everything in Buddhist culture abhorrent. There were a variety of streams of thought in the Edo period that contributed to this sentiment, some emotional to the point of incoherence, some rationally pragmatic, and some so overtly political that there was no attempt to hide their ambition for wealth and power. The successful seizure of power by the Meiji leaders in the name of the emperor convinced those with nativist impulses of the righteousness of their cause like nothing else could. Legitimated by history, as it were, the ideological wing of the new government put Buddhism in the cross-hairs of their initial agenda of social and political reformation, one the one hand because it had been so closely alligned institutionally with the Tokugawa bakufu, and on the other because its foreign origin stigmatized it with an irreparable alterity.

Using the Spanish model of modernism alluded to above may be a useful comparison. In Spain at the end of the fifteenth century, the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella unified enough of the peninsula to empower the court to drive out or force conversion of all Muslims and Jews, thereby defining a new "Spain" in terms of religious purity. "Modern" in this sense means using intimations of violence to define which persons, what social institutions, and most importantly what religious beliefs or affiliations were required for membership in the ethnic identity that defines a nation. The destruction of mosques and synagogues, the torture, and the ultimate exile of so many within a very short period of time was on a scale far worse than the persecution suffered by Buddhism in Meiji Japan. But there is a striking similarity with the impact of anti-Buddhist policies arising in the Mito 水戸 domain beginning in the seventeenth century, for example. To wit, such Spanish notions of the nation-state based on ethnic and religious identity over time spread to the rest of Europe, and these policies of

the Mito domain, which aimed at defining Japan as a Shinto nation with Confucian social values, similarly spread to become a national movement in the nineteenth century.

Here it is worth remembering that “modern” does not necessarily imply democratic institutions of government or even support for such ideas as sovereignty residing in the populace or laws guaranteeing freedoms and rights. The nativist thinkers who led the ideological fight to “restore the emperor” to power in the Meiji period clearly believed in class divisions and the unassailable authority of kings. Their ethical values were expressly Confucian and, not surprisingly, they demanded *more* respect for hierarchy in society, equating hierarchy with social harmony and justice. The movements to strengthen Shinto and restore the emperor to power not only deified him in a way unprecedented but the various notions of nationhood (*kokutai*, *kokka*, *kunigara*) from this period also tended to locate national sovereignty in the person of the emperor himself rather than the national populace.<sup>1</sup> If these moves represented common ideological themes of what was modern in nineteenth-century Japan, they also represented the legitimacy of privilege. By contrast, at least on a doctrinal level, the most commonly accepted Buddhist teachings in Japan such as buddha-nature, karma, the availability of a positive vision of the afterlife for everyone, and even access to the power of deities like Fudō or Kannon instead all point unambiguously to themes that are universal.<sup>2</sup> By forcing the separation of Buddhism from native Shinto and working to shrink and discredit Buddhism, the nationalists spoke of egalitarian principles and values as part of a previously repressed Shinto culture while simultaneously demanding unquestioned obedience to the male sovereign in whose name they acted.

This form of anti-Buddhist rhetoric championed by the radical nativist wing of the late-Edo period imperial restoration movement and implemented in government policy in the early years of the Meiji period expressed a wholesale denunciation of Buddhism that typically was not, aside from the Mito example, a dominant or even viable political voice earlier in Japanese history. Nobunaga’s attacks on Buddhist institutions, for example, had nothing to do with ideology. The one exception is the political turmoil surrounding Buddhism’s formal arrival in Japan in the sixth century, but even that opposition was more about institutional rivalry than Buddhist thought. Unlike China and Korea, until the nineteenth century Japan never experienced periods of mass antipathy toward Buddhism in which Buddhist teachings, the clerical institution or sangha, and its societal practices were condemned out of fundamentalist tendencies within Confucian, Daoist, or nativistic intellectual movements. There was inevitable



resentment among certain individuals toward the intimacy between Buddhist and governmental institutions that characterized Japanese political culture so thoroughly, but prior to the Edo period this was typically expressed in terms of personal retreat or reformist movements within Buddhism itself. People like Genshin, Kamo no Chōmei, Hōnen, Myōe, Ippen, Dōgen, Nichiren, and Ikkyū in some sense all represent this. Although undoubtedly well aware of the ideological shift among intellectuals away from Buddhism toward Neo-Confucianism and National Learning (*kokugaku* 国学)<sup>3</sup> from the Genroku 元禄 period (1688–1704) throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the aristocratic elites—emperors, shoguns, daimyos, and their extended families—continued the ancient traditions of having Buddhist funerals and joining the Buddhist sangha when they retired from political life. This persistence of the old sociopolitical paradigm only made the impact of the early Meiji persecution all the more unsettling for the Buddhist professional community.

But of course doctrines are one thing and history is another. And even in the realm of doctrine, ideas are only accessible in specific historical contexts, within which they may emerge in unexpected, even contradictory forms, often contested by believers themselves. Among the many forms of Buddhism in Japan, the Shin tradition has a particularly rich and complex history on this point, if only because it began with the repudiation of monasticism and has developed into a tradition of factionalism, contestation, heresy, and excommunication like no other. The story of the Seishinshugi movement therefore suggests a form of that same individualistic seeking that has characterized Shin from its birth, but in this case it marks a particular type of response to the historical setting of Japanese Buddhism in search of a new identity in the modern era. The topic of Buddhism under seige during the Meiji period has already been discussed in elegant detail by James Ketelaar and Richard Jaffe, among others, and the reader is directed there for a more well-rounded picture.<sup>4</sup> Here I only focus on the implications of the historical processes in the middle to late Meiji period that provided both the stimuli and in many cases the materials out of which Seishinshugi was born.

### Anti-Buddhist Rhetoric and Policy in the Tokugawa and Meiji Periods

As touched on earlier, one theme that runs down the center of Japan's entry in to the modern age is the prominence of nativist ideology. Although there was a steady growth in intellectual rhetoric attacking

Buddhism throughout the Edo period, for the first two centuries it was led by Neo-Confucians of either the Zhu Xi 朱熹 (Jpn. Shuki, 1130–1200) or Wang Yangming 王陽明 (Jpn. Ōyōmei, 1472–1528) schools, mostly the former. As hard as they argued for their philosophy being more appropriate for Japan than that of Buddhism, their source was still non-Japanese in origin and therefore whatever nativistic tendencies the Neo-Confucian writers held remained somewhat restrained. The real sting of nativist polemics begins with Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776–1843). Hirata assumed the role of ideological heir to the scholar Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801), although they never actually met, essentially exploiting Motoori's authority in pursuit of his own agenda. He urged a reconfiguring of Motoori's "school" of National Learning from something academic into a political action platform based on xenophobic religious values. Even though Motoori was passionate about bringing out native Japanese sensibility, famously rejoicing in such things as spontaneous expressions of emotion in ancient literature, he was primarily interested in poetry and philology, and his religious concerns were more about celebrating precontinental sensibilities in society and the natural world. He did not hold any overt antipathy toward Buddhism; in fact Motoori praised the linguistic studies of Buddhist monks like Keichū 契沖 (1640–1701) and Monnō 文雄 (1700–1763), and had a Buddhist funeral. If Motoori did have an ideological axe to grind, it was directed toward the overt stress on emotional self-control coming from the Neo-Confucianists, particularly the people promoting Zhu Xi.

Hirata, by contrast, was suspicious toward foreign systems of thought and regarded poetry as "an obstacle to understanding."<sup>5</sup> His project was to promote "Shinto" as the only proper religion for the Japanese people, and endeavored to realize this ideal by creating a model of Shinto that had a transcendent creator deity and a notion of the afterlife offering a positive alternative to the ancient conception of the "land of *yomi*,"<sup>6</sup> which was characterized by degeneration and pain. Hirata rejected both Buddhism and Confucianism, asserting that such external influences should be kept to a minimum; Japan was unique as a nation whose people are descended from the gods and must take care not to bespoil their native gifts. He even asserted that all gods throughout the world were born in Japan. He attacked the tradition of Shinto studies by court scholars, saying they had been corrupted by Confucian and Buddhist doctrines, and asserted his own definition of what Shinto was. There was thus a kind of messianism in Hirata, and as a result his polemics were often cruel, prompting the orthodox line of Motoori followers to reject him as a bona fide



National Learning thinker and refuting his scholarship as unsound. But many people found his cause contagious and in the end, Shinto studies were indeed altered by Hirata's views. Going into the Meiji Restoration, it was the disciples of Hirata who defined the nativist ideology of the new regime. As Hirata's critique broadened to include the Tokugawa bakufu and grew more popular in the process, his anti-Buddhist remarks grew more vituperative. The nativist attacks on the bakufu also implied an attack on Buddhism because of the cozy relationship the bakufu had with institutional Buddhism for most of the Edo period.

Part of Hirata's appeal in the nineteenth century resulted from a wave of insecurities that created a restless desire for change in society that eventually led to the fall of the central government itself. Inflation and natural disasters led to an unstable economy, and Westerners began to chip away at Japan's *de jure* isolation and even at its territory. The latter concern was forcefully presented by Fujita Yūkoku 藤田幽谷 (1774–1826), a central figure of Mitogaku,<sup>7</sup> the intellectual movement driving the leadership of the Mito domain that dovetailed with Hirata's agenda and figured so prominently in much of the ideology of at least the early Meiji regime. While serving as editor of the Mitogaku project of writing a massive history of Japan, Yūkoku decried the fact that Russia was taking control of the Kuril islands in the northeast of Japan in violation of Japanese declarations of sovereignty. He somehow combined an imperative of restoring the emperor to power with immediate action to restore Japan's rightful claim to the Kurils. By doing so, Yūkoku developed a stance that used strong anti-foreign fears to justify the need for restoring the emperor to power.<sup>8</sup>

The Confucian thinkers who dominated in the Edo period, unlike those of previous centuries, were generally either unsympathetic to Buddhism or overtly critical of it, especially those inspired by Zhu Xi. This trend can be seen as early as Fujiwara Seika 藤原惺窩 (1561–1619), the father of Zhu Xi studies in Japan (known as *shushigaku* 朱子学), who is quoted in a 1620 biography as having stated that Buddhism should be regarded as heresy because it eliminated any sense of humanity (*jin* 仁) or duty (*giri* 義理).<sup>9</sup> His disciple Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583–1657) and others complain that Buddhism disparages ethics in its search for truth, turning its back on not only family but all five of the core Confucian relationships. The other two lines of Confucian scholars in the Edo period—those following Wang Yangming, or *yōmeigaku* 陽明学, such as Nakae Tōju 中江藤樹 (1608–1648) and Kumazawa Banzan 熊沢蕃山 (1619–1691), and the old-school or *kogaku-ha*

古学派 people like Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁斎 (1627–1705), Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666–1728), and Dazai Shundai 太宰春台 (1680–1740)—did not see things much differently. Without delineating each position, what they shared in their complaints against Buddhism was that it failed society because of the weakness of its ethical imperative.

In short, Confucian thinkers in the Edo period no longer accepted the earlier paradigm wherein Buddhism formed Japan's central religious narrative while accommodating both Confucian principles and native kami cults as ethical, political, and magical supplements. Japanese *shushigaku* was based on Ming and Qing interpretations of *mingfen* 名分 *meibun*, a concept that stressed self-discipline, fidelity in one's social relationships, and the fulfillment of duty and obligation based on one's station in life. The underlying paradigm is that an individual's considered choices, if exercised properly, manifest principles of a cosmos naturally constructed as a rational and moral system. Accomplishing one's social duty was thus moral, ethical, humane, and affirming of life and the natural order all at the same time. Not surprisingly, proponents of these ideas were typically closest to bakufu policymakers. There also had been Buddhist efforts for some time at assimilating these Neo-Confucian feudal ethics into their religious systems: In *ōjōden* and other miracle texts,<sup>10</sup> for example, proper social behavior based on Confucian norms is part of what is karmically rewarded by the marvelous workings of Amida, Kannon, or Fudō, both in this world and the next. But intellectually, Buddhist traditional responses to Confucian presumptions of its own cosmological imperative were not as effective as in the past. Had the Japanese Buddhists any knowledge of Hinduism at that time, they would have noticed the similarity between *meibun* and the Hindu concept of *dharma*, and this might have provided them with better rhetorical means to argue the value of religion for a society conceived in Neo-Confucian terms.<sup>11</sup>

A second area of attack prior to Hirata in Confucian and nativistic movements expressed the perception that Buddhism was primarily oriented to the afterlife, whereas these competing ideologies were focused on achieving a reformation of the present world. They portrayed Buddhist thought as negative and world-denying, and their own stances as positive and world-affirming. The legal requirement of the bakufu that all families register with a Buddhist sect produced what is known as a "parishioner system," or *danka seido* 檀家制度, and as a byproduct, generations of family dead were now kept at cemeteries on temple grounds. This ensured continual ritual purification of the family dead for the parishioner and continual source of financial support for the temple. This setup, along with the formal legalization of main-

branch temple networks (*honmatsu seido* 本末制度) from at least 1632<sup>12</sup> institutionalized a hierarchical structure within each Buddhist sect in Japan that is another Edo period legacy, which continues to this day.

To make matters worse, many Buddhist institutions in the Edo period were in a close administrative relationship with the bakufu and this also engendered resentment. When the *koseki* census was revived in the seventeenth century, the bakufu assigned this function to Buddhist institutions, requiring all families to register members' names and class status with their family temple. This also had the effect of certifying a fixed list of Buddhist schools as orders or sects (eleven in total), who became motivated by the social, political, and doctrinal rectification agendas urged by bakufu leadership. The bakufu also exploited temple networks by rewarding those temples that were geographically convenient for various monitoring functions in society, which in turn resulted in promoting what had been relatively insignificant temples to centers of administrative activities within the sects themselves. Once these "modernization" moves were institutionalized, they grew over time to become entrenched, ossified, and in some cases even reactionary, effects that were to a certain degree the result of bakufu hostility to anything new within the Buddhist world, including temple construction.<sup>13</sup> Because these newly configured Buddhist institutions were used by the bakufu to implement its policies of social control, a tight relationship developed between the two that only served to deepened the animosity toward what outsiders viewed as an institution deeply integrated into the political status quo in society. A third aspect of Buddhist-rejectionist ideology emerged in the second half of the Edo period when an economic argument was added. In language similar to that found in Chinese persecutions of Buddhism, monks, nuns, and their monasteries were decried as drains on societal wealth. It was demanded that the ordination of monks and nuns and the number of temples should be significantly reduced and held in check by a regulatory mechanism similar to the Ritsuryō system of the Nara period.<sup>14</sup>

Kashiwahara Yūsen, a specialist in early modern Japanese Buddhism, feels a strong sense of individual self-assertion pervaded Japanese society at the end of the Sengoku 戦国 period (1467–1568), pushing Japan toward a modernist condition of human-centered ideologies.<sup>15</sup> This tendency only grows throughout the Edo period, resulting in a valorization of pragmatic values that is exploited by the Neo-Confucian and National Learning movements who, by labeling Buddhism "other-worldly," use this shift to justify their anti-Buddhist attacks. But it is not until the nineteenth century when frustration

over bakufu policies seen as unfair and contradictory combine with xenophobic sentiments to produce the toxic mix that ultimately explodes in the form of wholesale persecution of Buddhism in the early Meiji period. Kashiwahara points out that as early as the 1660s the Mito, Okayama, and Aizu domains had to some degree already begun to implement policies of destroying Buddhist temples, but it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century when policies to shrink the number of Buddhist temples by people such as Tokugawa Nariaki 徳川齊昭 (1800–1860), daimyo of the Mito domain, had noticeable effect.

The early Meiji period was dominated by social upheaval and the need for all social institutions to transition to a new political ideology, but it was particularly trying for Buddhism. Many people who study Meiji-period religion follow the model devised by Yoshida Kyūichi of dividing the experience of Buddhism in Japan during the Meiji reign into three periods: 1868–1885, 1886–1899, and 1900–1912.<sup>16</sup> But in a description of events written in 1921, Shimaji Daitō 島地大等 (1875–1927) separates off the first five years of the Meiji period as a unique period of “Shinto tyranny” toward Buddhism,<sup>17</sup> today referred to as *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈, or “drive out Buddhism, destroy Śākyamuni.” It began with the order to force a separation between Buddhism and Shinto known as *shinbutsu hanzenrei* 神仏判然令, initiated on the twenty-eighth day of the third month of 1868 (Keiō 4). Buddhist rituals were abruptly ended in the imperial palace and the Buddhist statue that had been enshrined there was moved to Sennyūji 泉涌寺 in Kyoto. Begging and cremations were forbidden, legal restrictions forbidding women from monasteries and preventing monks from eating meat, marrying, or wearing regular clothes were eliminated. Temples were forcibly “merged” in a process called *haigōji* 廃合寺, which actually began in the Mito domain during the Edo period. The regions where the most damage occurred were Toyama, Kagawa, Matsumoto, Kagoshima, and Sado island. It is recorded that in only the first year of Meiji, for example, the number of Buddhist temples on Sado was reduced from more than five hundred to a mere eighty. The extreme nature of this *shinbutsu hanzenrei* edict can be seen in the fact that the Nichiren sect was forbidden from conducting their traditional ritual prayer to Amaterasu and Hachiman, who are included in their *daimandara* 大曼荼羅, because they are Shinto deities in origin. Certain governors endeared themselves to the new government by adding yet more oppressive interpretations to the law, giving themselves the power to not only reduce the number of Buddhist temples within their political purview, but destroy texts and images as well.

In 1870, the Office (later Ministry) of Shinto created a system called *daikyō senpu* 大教宣布 to grant official titles to “national teachers” of Shinto empowered by the state in a national campaign to spread the religion. But by 1872, the separation policy was abandoned as too divisive and its jingoist advocates were pushed out of the ruling Meiji clique. It was replaced by a newly conceived fusion policy wherein centers were to be constructed to train priests in one common national religion that would blend Buddhism and Shinto together. Regional centers were established around the country for this purpose, but the main training ground for these new “evangelicals” (*kyōdōshoku* 教導職) was the Daikyōin 大教院 (Abbey of the Great Teaching), a school built on the grounds of Zōjōji, the regional headquarters for the Jōdoshū in Tokyo and the temple of personal refuge for Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616). This was funded and controlled by the newly formed Ministry of Teaching, which was in effect nothing more than a new moniker for the Ministry of Shinto. In practice the Daikyōin proved immediately insulting to the Buddhists who were forced to participate. It took over most of the space inside the main worship hall at Zōjōji where a new altar was set up that removed the four Buddhist statues that had served as central images (*honzon* 本尊), for centuries and replaced them with four Shinto deities. The curriculum centered around revering the kami, promoting the ethics of loyalty, and protecting the state, three principles that were entirely devoid of Buddhist doctrine and whose connections to Buddhism reflected only its previous political accommodation with secular authority.<sup>18</sup>

Defying government requirements, in February 1875 all branches of Jōdo Shinshū—who in combination represented the largest religious population block—walked out on the Daikyōin and later that same year the enterprise itself was abandoned, a dismal failure. Although the promotion of what came to be called State Shinto continued, heavy-handed attempts to force a new relationship between Buddhism and Shinto, be they separation or fusion, were no longer seen. Instead the government found a willingness to negotiate with the major Buddhist institutions and, as calmer heads prevailed, discovered it was more profitable to enlist their support for its policies than to overtly suppress the faith as whole. Buddhist institutions, for their own part, remained happy to see this change because the core values their leadership had forged in the Edo period were essentially intact. In other words, they were only too happy to return to some semblance of the feudalistic king’s law–buddha’s law (*ōbō-buppō* 王法仏法) paradigm that allowed for mutually supportive public

personas for both institutions. The middle years of the Meiji period were thus characterized by a political and ideological rapprochement wherein Buddhist institutional leaders generally endorsed the “enrich the nation and strengthen the military” (*fukoku kyōhei* 富国強兵) rhetoric that had become such an often heard slogan at the time. Many Buddhist leaders also found their voice again in the 1870s and 1880s by expressing strong anti-Christian feelings that allowed them to side with xenophobic sentiment while simultaneously creating an opportunity to make their case that Japanese culture was inconceivable without Buddhism, so deeply was it engrained in its language and customs.

### Religion and Philosophy in the Meiji Period

Although it is obvious that the persecution of Buddhism in the first years of the Meiji period was a political act by a new oligarchy demonstrating its power, it also reflected broader changes in the nature of Japanese religion and society. The rhetorical attacks on Buddhism by Neo-Confucianists and nativists always reflected deeply held beliefs about the nature of mankind within larger conceptions of reality that fundamentally differed from the Buddhist view, but even these conceptions were overtaken by the impact of capitalism and materialism on society. Atsutane was perhaps the first nativist to see the possibility of replacing the Buddhist worldview with something more “modern,” but arguably the most coherent fusion of religious and occupational obligations appropriate to the new market economy emerging in the middle Edo period began in the popular Shingaku 心学 movement founded by Ishida Baigan 石田梅岩 (1685–1744).<sup>18a</sup>

A century later as Atsutane and his followers worked to transform the National Learning movement into a Shinto revival ideology that demanded the political rehabilitation of the emperor, new religions that repackaged traditional kami cults into formalized “Shinto” sects also were emerging. Those we know most about from the nineteenth century are noteworthy for being dedicated to saving Japan. They were “universal” in the sense that their gods spoke through their mediums not only for their local communities but for the entire nation. This reflected a new understanding of something called “Shinto” as a national religion whereby local kami develop national profiles, akin to Weber’s term *henotheism* to describe a similar development in Hinduism. The rise in popularity of shrine pilgrimage, especially to Ise, beginning in the eighteenth century no doubt contributed to this perspective. Best known of these Shinto-derived new religions dating



from the end of the Edo period were Kurozumikyō 黒住教, Tenrikyō 天理教, and Konkōkyō 金光教, the former having spread among the samurai class, and the latter two succeeding primarily in rural areas among farmers.

After the Meiji Restoration, new religions continue to sprout up and, as is well known, the trend continues to this day. There is much good scholarship on this phenomenon, but there are a couple of points to keep in mind relevant to the specific movement of Seishinshugi under discussion here. First is the development of a national religious consciousness of Shinto mentioned earlier. Here it should be pointed out that although the invention of an institutionalized nativist religion by the Meiji government drew on that emerging consciousness, these efforts were widely seen as more political than religious. Second is that the enduring nature of the syncretic quality of Japanese religion runs very deep and did not suddenly disappear in the nineteenth century. Even the so-called Shinto-based new religions all incorporated some degree of Buddhist religious culture. Local kami cults, even in the context of their instantiation in shrines, were rife with Buddhist language, iconography, and ritual. Buddhists temples typically employed symbolic representation of a protecting kami somewhere on their property, and there were of course a great many fusion examples such as the various cults surrounding the god Hachiman who, although originating in Korea as a local deity, became transformed in image and name as a bodhisattva by the major temples of the Nara and Heian periods, and then morphed into a Shinto god of war in the Kamakura period. The extreme rhetoric of some of the Atsutane-inspired leaders of the Meiji government reflected in policies that criminalized this kind of centuries-old fusion sewed deep seeds of doubt about religion and its role in society in general. Thus, the overt anti-Buddhist policies of the early Meiji regime were not only profoundly disruptive to an ancient religious paradigm about which the vast majority of Japanese felt comfortable, but to many became symptomatic of the passing of the “old” order of things as well.

The success of the new religions also revealed a profound crisis within institutional Buddhism itself which, for at least the first three years of Meiji rule, had to worry about its very survival. Of course there were (and are) Buddhism-dominated new religions as well, and relative to the identity crisis going on within the traditional, sectarian sanghas, it is no accident that the most famous new Buddhist religion, Sōka Gakkai, has always been essentially a lay movement. Japan was fast becoming a society dominated by materialistic values, and the government was quickly trying to fashion a national identity based

on a kind of faux religious ideology that affirmed this new outlook as a source of national pride. The Buddhist tradition was ultimately called to redefine its own relevance to this new Japan, and all of the essays contained here may certainly be read as contributions to that collective effort.

### The Impact of Christianity and Western Philosophies of Religion on Buddhism in the Meiji Period

One important change in Japanese Buddhism in the Meiji period is that its intellectuals could no longer ignore Christian theology and history. Christianity is present explicitly and implicitly to various degrees in these essays, and ideas from Western philosophy are even more prominent. Thus, even while the number of Christians in Japan has remained small, its impact on Japanese religion, especially Buddhism, has been significant since its arrival in the sixteenth century, and there is ample evidence of Buddhist influence on Japanese Christianity as well. Western philosophy first came into Japan within Christianity in the late sixteenth century, but its impact was minimal due to the suppression of Christian and Western learning throughout the Edo period. But in 1862, even before the Meiji Restoration, Tsuda Mamichi 津田真道 (1829–1903) and Nishi Amane 西周 (1829–1897) managed to get on a boat to Holland where they studied philosophy at Leiden for four years. It was Nishi who coined the word *tetsugaku* 哲学 to represent Western philosophy, which became a popular subject in universities in the second half of the Meiji period. But although it fascinated Japanese intellectuals, especially the thought of Hegel, Marx, and Mill, prior to the 1950s *tetsugaku* did not penetrate into public education and had minimal impact on Japanese society as whole.

By contrast, although the number of Japanese converts to Christianity prior to its proscription in 1638 remained relatively small, rhetorical clashes with Christian missionaries did shake up the somewhat complacent Buddhist world just as sectarian institutions were beginning to restructure themselves with the outbreak of peace brought by Tokugawa Ieyasu. Kashiwahara even goes so far as to state that the ensuing institutional changes in Edo-period sectarian Buddhism were the direct result of its encounter with Christianity and the challenges it posed, and points out that the sect most affected was Jōdo Shinshū. Even after the banning of Christian activities, Christian attacks on Buddhist cosmology may have inspired a similar critique by Tominaga Nakamoto 富永仲基 (1715–1746) in his *Shutsujō kōgo*

出定後語 (Words Spoken after Meditation), a work used by Hirata Atsutane and his followers in their much more overtly aggressive anti-Buddhist attacks. After the Christians were free to proselytize again in 1875, they immediately began to publish works insisting Buddhist notions of heavens, hells, and pure lands were false. Christian writers and their ideas were in turn attacked in print by such well-respected Buddhist intellectuals as Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919) and Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838–1911), to name but a few. But these responses were ultimately tinged with the same defensiveness and smugness that, like the missionaries, assumed the righteousness of their own positions. In short, there was no real dialogue until the mid-1890s when Buddhist intellectuals attained enough understanding of Western philosophy to appreciate its underpinnings within Christian thought. And one of the first persons to realize that his own understanding of Buddhism might be deepened from a study of both philosophy and religion in European history was Kiyozawa Manshi.

One could even argue that Seishinshugi thinkers did alter their conception of the ultimate as a result of their study of Western thought. For example, Kiyozawa often employs a writing style that uses Western terms or categories for religious concepts, and by the very nature of that language he poses a new kind of question for Japan. In some contexts he may use traditional Buddhist vocabulary and in others he may use Japanese translations of Western terms. In fact, determining, for example, if he means the same thing by the terms *buddha*, suchness (*shinnyo* 真如, Skt. *tathatā*), or *dharmā-ness* (*hosshō* 法性, Skt. *dharmatā*) in one context and *the infinite* (*mugensha* 無限者) in another, can be difficult. But when Kiyozawa asks how the finite self can know the infinite and comments on the imperative nature of this self–other relationship not as a philosophical but as a religious question, we are in a new form of discourse that presages Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 (1870–1945), who had some personal contact with Kiyozawa. On a purely conceptual level, Soga Ryōjin 曾我量深 (1875–1971) similarly ponders the meaning of history for religion in a way that was never part of traditional Buddhist hermeneutics. It is not that Buddhism had no notion of infinity or history, but the way these questions are asked often reflects Greek or Judaic ways of thinking about religion and philosophy that developed over the course of the Abrahamic religions. Similarly, Kaneko Daiei 金子大栄 (1881–1976) argues that the Pure Land itself is best understood, that is, functions best religiously, when it is understood as something like a Platonic ideal that impacts those who ponder it now, rather than as an actual physically existing place where one aims to be reborn after death. Kaneko further draws

from the *Avatamsakasūtra* (*Huayan jing* 華嚴經 *Kegonkyō*) in using the concept of *dharmadhātu*<sup>19</sup> to explain his Platonic understanding of the Pure Land as nirvana, or as the sacred nature of everything beyond discrimination and description. Such ideas were highly innovative and yet upsetting to many at the time, particularly in the context of their religious institution, Shinshū Ōtani-ha, who expected these men to be futhering the cause of *shūgaku* 宗学, the academic study of scriptures based on established sectarian interpretation that continued (and continues) as a legacy of Edo-period orthodox doctrine. Kiyozawa, Soga, and Kaneko all had to undergo a period of expulsion from their institution for ideas that, as time passed, grew to gain recognition as some of the most interesting and inspirational of their time.

Thus, what distinguishes these Seishinshugi thinkers is their willingness to use European religious and philosophical concepts to deepen their personal understanding of Buddhist truth at a time when the study of Western philosophy and what came to be called “Buddhist philosophy” remained more or less distinct. Notice the commonality with Nishida’s approach of using Western philosophical categories to explain Buddhist experience. Why the use of non-Buddhist ideas would prove so influential particularly in the Ōtani branch of Shin in the Meiji and Taishō periods is one of the enigmas of this history, but it established Ōtani University as arguably the leading intellectual Buddhist institution in Japan during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>20</sup>

It all started with Kiyozawa Manshi, and at least part of the explanation for this freedom of inquiry within what was essentially a modern seminary was the nature of Kiyozawa himself as a religious thinker. A student in the Philosophy Department at Tokyo University in the 1880s when Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908) was teaching, Kiyozawa’s core interests seem to have been Kant, Hegel, and Schelling, but he also read John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer. Most of Kiyozawa’s personal collection of Western language books are kept at Saihōji 西方寺, his temple in Mikawa. Among his books, there are many by Mill and Spencer, which reflect the interest in Utilitarianism in Meiji-period thought. Kiyozawa’s time at Tokyo University also coincided with the tenure of Katō Hiroyuki 加藤弘之 (1836–1916) as its president. Katō is famous for ceasing the publication of his earlier works that argued for the belief in the inherent rights of man so that he could advocate for the doctrines of Social Darwinism, which is itself a theory of social conflict and resultant hierarchy based on the ideas of Spencer. Katō’s “conversion” became public with his publication in 1882 of *Jinken shinsetsu* 人權新説 (New Explanation of Human Rights) during Kiyozawa’s time at the university. Kiyozawa is unflinching in

his abhorrence at Japan's general fascination with Spencer and Mill, which he understood as resulting from the popular embrace of the government's policy goals of increasing materialism and militarism. The worldview of the expansionist Meiji regime, based on the idea that man's natural state was one of conflict and violence, is echoed in their decision to launch a war with China just before Kiyozawa arrived at his conception of Seishinshugi. One can only wonder what he thought of Katō who, with age, seems to have sacrificed his empathy at the altar of ambition.

Katō's ideological reversal is a reflection of the society's ambivalence about how it needed to redefine itself and reposition itself within the international community. Obsessed with instilling the value of loyalty, when the Meiji government finally enacted its constitution in 1889, which it called "The Great Japan Imperial Constitution" (*Dainihon teikoku kenpō*), it made history by explicitly granting freedom of religion for the first time, but it also made it equally clear that the country was to be ruled by the emperor, that he was sacred (*shinsei* 神聖), and that no one was allowed to act in violation of either principle. The following year, the Imperial Rescript on Education was announced: a short, general aphorism, which implied quite clearly that each citizen's ethical duties are defined in part by demonstrable loyalty to the sovereign. Here is part of that text:

Our subjects, ever united in loyalty and filial piety, have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of our empire, and herein also lies the source of our education. . . . Should an emergency arise, you must offer yourselves courageously to the State, and guard and maintain the prosperity of the Imperial Throne.<sup>21</sup>

As Sueki Fumihiko notes, taken together these two documents liberally guarantee freedom of religion on the one hand but on the other lay down stringent ethical requirements within a clearly defined political context, in effect implying that ethics is much more important than religion.<sup>22</sup> Considering the intense concern with religion in the early Meiji period, what we see at this juncture, some twenty years later, is that a compromise has been reached in which the Shinto-Emperor paradigm is still central to government propaganda but it has now been reclassified as an ethical rather than religious concern. The creation of a jingoistic notion of Shinto at this point becomes an ethical ideology for ordering society based on a newly politicized

myth of an ancient past when the ancestors lived their lives in perfect sacrifice for the very same goals of prosperity and military strength.

Although government and educational leaders used idealistic moral rhetoric in placing high value on ethics and ethics education, their use of the term *dōtoku* 道徳 to mean correct behavior was filled with a politically charged subtext that implied submission to authority. Ethics was a major focus for a wide variety of writers in the middle and late Meiji periods because the term brought forth one of the central conundrums of the age: for all the modern advances in “individual liberty” such as the legal elimination of classes and freedom of religion, why did it seem that everyone’s sense of duty and obligation had become so heavy that as individuals they felt so constricted? In this context intellectuals used the concept of ethics as the framework to launch their own theories or advocacies. For example, Inoue Tetsujirō, chairman of the Philosophy Department at Tokyo University published a well-read treatise in 1902 entitled *Rinri to shūkyō to no kankei* 倫理と宗教との関係 (*The Relationship of Ethics and Religion*) in which he argued that religions had value only insofar as they could be turned into ethical systems.<sup>23</sup> And Katō’s agenda promoting the natural selection of humans was further elaborated in a 1912 publication entitled *Shizen to Rinri* 自然と倫理 (*Nature and Ethics*).<sup>24</sup>

Another important ideological milestone during Kiyozawa’s student years was the *lèse majesté* offense that ruined the career of the famous Christian convert Uchimura Kanzō 内村鑑三 (1861–1930). The Imperial Rescript on Education was issued on October 30, 1890, when Uchimura was teaching at the prestigious First Higher School (Daiichi Kōtō Gakkō) in Tokyo, which served as a kind of undergraduate training academy for Tokyo University. At the opening ceremony for the new school year held the following January, the Rescript was read aloud; after which everyone bowed in respect, but Uchimura refused, feeling it violated his Christian beliefs. The press, including Buddhist newspapers, reported the incident as scandalous and Uchimura was put under enormous pressure to recant and apologize. By April, he had resigned his post and two months later his wife died of influenza. The incident made plain the fact that when religious freedom ran up against ethics construed as political loyalty, ethical duty was paramount, even if it meant ruining a respected teacher’s life merely for abstaining from a ritual. But just as Katō’s newfound strength in Darwinian social values led him down the path of ultranationalism, Uchimura’s life-changing event of asserting his right not to express loyalty to a divine authority he did not accept later brought him to