Exploring Japanese Thought

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This book follows the Hepburn system of romanization, with long vowels indicated by macrons. The tradition of placing the family name first has been followed for Japanese, Chinese, and Korean names. Some exceptions have been made for names appearing in certain publications.

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Preface to the English Edition

This book is an introduction to Japanese thought. To know a culture, you need to understand its underlying ideas, so in this sense, this book is also an introduction to Japanese culture as a whole. As a concept, thought tends to be abstract and abstruse. To get around this, I have selected forty-five works, quoting a very short passage from each, and offered my personal take on their main points. They are arranged thematically, rather than in chronological order, to give you, the reader, a better idea of how Japanese thinkers have addressed different topics. The discussion of each work is complete in itself, so there is no need for you to read the book from the beginning. Just pick it up and start reading those sections that interest you.

Throughout history, Japanese culture has been influenced and affected by major advanced cultures beyond its borders. China was the model Japan looked to until the mid-nineteenth century, when it was displaced by the West. As a small, less-developed country, Japan found it difficult to form a genuinely independent culture. But being separated from other countries by the sea, it was able to shape and develop the various imported cultural elements into something more suitable for itself. That is what gave rise to the distinctiveness of Japanese culture.

The same pattern applies to thought. Japan imported Confucianism, Buddhism, and other teachings from China

and Korea, and this prompted the formulation of many ideas that are regarded as uniquely Japanese, such as Shinto and nativist studies (*kokugaku*). They would probably not have come into being independently without exposure to foreign ideas. Post-Meiji thought also would not have developed without the impetus of Western philosophy and Christianity. These ideas were not merely transplanted without modification, but rather underwent a significant transformation. In the process, they took on strong Japanese characteristics and, in turn, fueled the development of nationalist ideologies. Identifying the qualities that are truly Japanese has been a major theme in the world of thought.

This book gives greater weight to Buddhist-related ideas than to any other form of Japanese thought. Historians used to think that Buddhism dominated the medieval period, only to decline post-1600, leaving Confucianism, nativist studies, and Shinto to dominate early modern thought. Recent research has revealed, though, that Buddhism continued to play a major role even in the Edo period. I have thus given Buddhist texts a prominent place in this book, supplementing these with works from other currents of thought.

The Japanese edition of this book was originally published by Kadokawa in 2016, and a revised version was issued as part of the Kadokawa Sophia Bunko series in 2020. The English edition has been prepared through the collaboration of Dr. Gaynor Sekimori, who was in charge of the English translation with Festina Lente; the Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture (JPIC), which was responsible for copyediting and publishing; and Dr. John Breen and Mr. Matsunaga Daisuke, who acted as supervising editors. I would like to express my sincere thanks to these people. This English edition contains

English-language references to each of the works discussed, as well as a newly prepared book guide for further reading.

I would be delighted if this book helps you to deepen your understanding of the diversity of Japanese thought and, more broadly, to take an interest in various aspects of Japanese culture.

Sueki Fumihiko
October 2023

Introduction

There has been a resurgence of interest in Japan's traditional culture in recent years. Factors behind this trend include the inscription of *washoku* (Japan's traditional dietary culture) on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2013, a growing eagerness to wear a kimono on special occasions, and the 400th anniversary of the Rinpa school of painting in 2015. The frequent references to "tradition" by Abe Shinzō after he became prime minister for the second time in 2012 may also have been a contributing influence. His official website noted that Japan is a country that is blessed with an abundance of natural beauty and one that has fostered, throughout its long history, a unique culture and distinctive traditions. We should take pride in being Japanese, he added, rather than being self-denigrating, and talk openly about our culture in paving the way for the future.

Despite the growing interest in tradition, though, there seems to be little serious discussion about it, and almost none when it comes to philosophy and ideas. When politicians refer to the importance of tradition, they are often simply speaking of the prewar ethos in nostalgic terms. On the other hand, not a few "progressive" intellectuals will express knee-jerk contempt at the merest mention of tradition. This makes dispassionate discourse impossible.

Tradition was undeniably taboo in the postwar period.

Having been labeled a nation of twelve-year-olds by Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers Douglas MacArthur, the Japanese became ashamed of their past and did everything in their power to hide it and to catch up with the rest of the world. Japan made great economic progress under the postwar pacifist Constitution, becoming the world's second-largest economy and even prompting Western scholars to speak of "Japan as Number One." In the intellectual field, antiquated traditional thought and religion were criticized as having no relevance in the new Japan, and efforts were made to promote global standards by introducing modern Western thought—that is, rational and scientific ideas based on universal reason. People believed, as Immanuel Kant argued, that they must emerge from their self-imposed immaturity to attain enlightenment, thereby enriching society and making everyone happy. Marxism was regarded as typifying this idea, as it held that history developed according to scientific laws and, in the future, would bring about an ideal world of equality and peace.

Such expectations crumbled with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1991, but the fall of Marxism did not mean the triumph of capitalism. The subsequent rise of religious fundamentalism has shown that modern rationalism is not necessarily the sole determinant of history, but merely one of a variety of value systems. There is no longer a broadly shared belief in a utopian future, where universal reason will usher in mutual understanding, where all will embrace the same truth and live in a free, equal, and peaceful society. On the contrary, we confront the reality of needing to deal with those espousing different values and people whom we do not understand.

The period since the 1990s, both within and outside

Japan, has been one of great change. Economic growth ground to a halt during the so-called lost three decades in Japan, in which the Kobe earthquake in 1995, the Tokyo subway sarin gas attack by Aum Shinrikyō later the same year, and the Tōhoku earthquake in 2011 occurred. Faith in progress and social development languished. With a falling birthrate, an aging population, and an energy and environmental crisis triggered by the Fukushima nuclear accident, people's concerns shifted from the pursuit of progress and development to the building of a sustainable, recycling-based society.

In such a context, the "catch-up with the West" mentality that had guided Japan in the past is no longer regarded as being viable. Gone are the days when modern Western ideas and philosophies were held to be universal and the urgent task of the Japanese was to study and appropriate them. Needless to say, prioritizing the teaching of English over Japanese would be a great folly. Rather, we should look to Japan's past, learn the truly valuable ideas in its traditions, and build our own firmly grounded ideas and philosophies. The resurgence of interest in things Japanese must not be allowed to become a mere passing fad.

What we need, first of all, is a practical approach to studying traditional Japanese thought. We must read the classics with our own eyes, head, and heart. For this we require a guide to the classics to read and the perspective from which to approach them. Unfortunately, there are few easily accessible introductory works available, in contrast to the innumerable books introducing Western philosophy from Thales to Heidegger and Derrida. Indeed, when it comes to Japanese thought, there is a lack of even basic knowledge about the kind of ideas that have been expressed and their fundamental premises.

This book is an attempt to take up classical works considered important in traditional Japanese thought, and to present my own brief, personal views of them. It is not intended in any way to be an orthodox textbook on the basics of Japanese thought. Rather, I have somewhat arbitrarily selected those texts that I find personally interesting and presented my subjective reading of them. I have also arranged the excerpts according to theme, rather than in chronological order. Notable figures from Japan's history have provided many excellent clues about how to think about nature, humankind, society, and the state. I believe readers will be surprised by the diversity and originality of the thinkers I have selected. I would be delighted if, having found a passage to be of interest, readers would be moved to explore the original text.

I. PEOPLE AND NATURE

"Nature," as used in such terms as "natural science," tends to be thought of as referring to the objective, external world. In Japan, however, this is a modern usage. The Japanese word *shizen* (also pronounced *jinen*), which is used today to indicate nature, has its origins in the Chinese word *ziran*—literally, occurring naturally or spontaneously. It appeared in the *Laozi* and was more widely used in classical Daoist philosophy than in Confucianism. It does not refer to an objective—as opposed to subjective—world, but, as in the term *wuwei ziran* (without purposeful action, naturalness), it rather denotes an idealized way of being that is devoid of human agency, where human beings are also considered to be part of that nature. By contrast, Confucianism emphasizes the intentionality of human activity, though in Japan the more prevalent view is rather that the ultimate goal is to return to nature. Since Buddhism, as originally expounded, seeks enlightenment through practice, it is at odds with the approach of leaving things to nature. In Japan, though, the idea of nature is deeply embedded, as seen in Shinran's concept of *jinen hōni* (without calculation, entrusting oneself totally to Amida).

While Japan places great importance on the workings of nature, this does not mean that people sit around and do nothing. The rice farming that has sustained the country has, while relying on nature, developed through strenuous labor. Nature has its laws, but its actions are not just mechanical; at its root lies something that cannot be known through the human intellect alone, something which can sometimes cause widespread destruction to humankind. How should we deal with nature while living within it? Today, as we continue to confront natural disasters and catastrophic weather events, there is much we can learn from the ideas of the past.

Kūkai

Benkenmitsu nikyōron

The Difference between Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism

> In order to enjoy the taste of Truth himself, the Dharmakāya Buddha, in his original essence and enjoying the fruits of enlightenment, preached the Three Mysteries of body, speech, and mind to those that he himself had transformed. This is the essence of the esoteric teachings. The sphere of these Three Mysteries, being the realm of the wisdom of the Buddha's own innermost enlightenment, cannot be entered even by bodhisattvas whose enlightenment is almost equal to the Buddha's or those who have reached the last of the ten bodhisattva stages.

I traveled to my wife's family home on the western edge of Honshu for the holidays. The green ears of rice were swaying, and the sea breeze felt pleasant on my cheeks. Although depopulation is a growing problem here, and there are many other issues as well, there is still something comforting about the place. While nature nurtures living creatures and provides us with abundant blessings, it brings about disasters like earthquakes, tsunami, typhoons, droughts, and epidemics, endangering people's lives. Nevertheless, people have lived with nature, cultivating fields, fishing, and hunting in order to support themselves.

Seeing nature in an objective way as a landscape is a modern way of looking at it. Previously, nature was referred to by a

synonym, *tenchi* (heaven and earth); here all things are engendered and nurtured. Human beings are participants in this process. Within *tenchi* are not only visible living beings and inanimate objects but also myriad kami (deities), buddhas, spirits, and the dead. Malignant deities and spirits often run rampant beyond human control and bring disaster. It is not easy to comfort them and thereby put their power to work for the sake of people's well-being. The Gion Festival held in Kyoto in July every year is typical of festivals intended to appease and console malignant spirits.

A powerful magical, incantatory force is needed to overcome and subdue the might of dangerous, malignant spirits. Esoteric Buddhism, which Kūkai brought back to Japan from the continent, provided rituals and mantras, based on the newest and most comprehensive theory and practice, for everything from ensuring a peaceful reign to treating illnesses.

The Difference between Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism is a relatively early work in which Kūkai set out his own original ideas. Here he divides Buddhism strictly between exoteric and esoteric. The exoteric includes all Buddhism other than the esoteric. Taught by Śākyamuni Buddha, it is apparent and thus can be understood by all. Esoteric Buddhism, on the other hand, is not manifest. It is hidden and secret, and cannot be understood by human reason.

Exoteric Buddhism, after all, only teaches the law of the manifested realm; in other words, the visible world. But the world that people can see and understand with their eyes is in fact only a small part of the whole. The true world cannot be seen unless we penetrate the depths of nature and enter the unknowable realm where the invisible throbs with life. The Buddha's enlightenment is the penetration of that realm.

Only then can the unseen be controlled. Esoteric Buddhism alone is able to achieve this.

Kūkai says that the distinguishing feature of esoteric Buddhism is that it is preached by the Dharmakāya. The Dharmakāya, or the Dharma-body, is the Buddha who integrates the invisible and invisible realms; this Buddha is called Dainichi Nyorai (Skt. Mahāvairocana). The Dharmakāya does not teach using everyday language, and his words are beyond our understanding.

In a later work by Kūkai, *Shōji jissō gi* (The Meanings of Sound, Word, and Reality), the Dharmakāya's words are said to be always spoken within the five great elements, the ten realms, and the six dusts. The five great elements are earth, water, fire, wind, and space; these make up this world. The ten realms are the ten forms of existence, from the hells to buddhahood, and the six dusts are the six objects of sensation and perception: color and form, sound, odor, taste, tangibility, and objects of the mind.

Would it then not follow that everything in the world is an expression of the Buddha's teachings and that we can hear the voice of the Buddha in the great realm of nature? This might very well be true. However, this is not the "nature" we know and take for granted.

Rather, it is a more profound, vast, and mysterious world. The deep sea is a completely different, more fascinating and terrifying place than coastal waters. To reach it requires great preparation and training. The nature we normally see is the surface and nothing beyond. Esoteric Buddhism invites us to the depths of that unknowable world.

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Kūkai (774–835) was the founder of the Shingon school of Buddhism in Japan. He was born in Sanuki Province (now Kagawa Prefecture) to the family of a local official. He entered the Daigakuryō (university for training civil servants) in the capital as a scholar, but when he was about twenty he took up ascetic practice in isolated mountainous regions. He went to Tang China in 804 and studied esoteric Buddhism under Huiguo (746–805) at the Qinglong temple in Chang'an. He returned to Japan in 806. He began the construction of Kongōbuji, the Temple of the Vajra Peak, on Mount Kōya in 816 and established Tōji (Kyōō Gokokuji) in Kyoto in 823 as the main center for esoteric practice. In addition to various treatises on Buddhism, he wrote *kanshi* (Chinese-style) poetry and was a noted calligrapher. Kūkai divided the Buddhist teachings into exoteric and esoteric and taught that the esoteric teachings were superior, conveying his understanding of Buddhism in *Benkenmitsu nikyōron*, as well as in *Jūjūshinron* (The Ten Stages of the Development of Mind) and *Hizō hōyaku* (The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury). He died at Mount Kōya in 835 at the age of sixty.

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Kamo no Chōmei

Hōjōki

An Account of a Ten-Foot-Square Hut

> In our splendid capital, the houses of high and low that stand proudly side by side appear not to have changed at all down the generations, but when you inquire if this is truly so, you discover that very few have been here from of old. . . . And it is the same with the people who live in them. The houses remain in the same place, and there are just as many people, but of the twenty or thirty people who lived here in the past, only one or two remain.

Since the Tōhoku earthquake of March 2011, Kamo no Chōmei's *Hōjōki* seems to have attracted a certain amount of attention. Moreover, its opening lines, "The river flows ceaselessly, but its water never stays the same," are often quoted as typifying the Japanese idea of impermanence. The text that follows describes the desolation of the capital brought about by disasters and relocation in concise but memorable episodes.

When plague followed famine, those more caring and loving died first. If a parent and child lived together, the parent was always the first to die. Chōmei's description of an earthquake is dramatic: "Mountains collapsed and filled up the rivers, the sea tilted up and covered the land."

In the second half of the book, Chōmei describes in idealistic terms his days spent in monk-like seclusion. In a simple

dwelling deep in the Hino Mountains, he made friends with nature and sometimes played in the hills and fields with the little boy of the mountain warden. "Although the hut is small, there is room for a bed to lie on at night and a place to sit during the day." The life of a man content with few desires seems to be an ideal even today.

The most noteworthy part of the book from the point of view of ideas is at the end. Chōmei writes that he fled the world for a life in the forests and hills in order to undertake religious practice. And while he may now look the saint, his fondness of and attachment to the hermit's life reveals, in fact, an impure mind. He makes no apologies, however, and soberly accepts his condition. The book ends with the words: "I will repeat the unapproachable name of Amida three times, and then I will stop."

According to Buddhist teachings, the feeling of impermanence should become the impetus for action, spurring one to practice asceticism to attain enlightenment and so overcome that sense of impermanence. Chōmei, however, stops halfway. He leaves the bonds of the world behind him, becomes an ordained monk, and builds a hermitage in the mountains. But instead of directing his efforts toward asceticism, he takes joy in a life of self-sufficiency. Nature can at times unleash its fury, but he loves its impermanence and feels no need to reflect deeply on the logic of life and death.

This ideal of escaping from the world and relishing the impermanence of nature became a trope for medieval recluse literature. This is in line with a statement in the *Sanjūshika no kotogaki* (Notes on Thirty-Four Items, author unknown), a representative work of Tendai *hongaku* (original enlightenment) thought of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries:

"Impermanence, while being impermanence, constantly abides and never disappears." Tragedy arises when we try to go against nature, which is impermanent. The ideal way of life is to let nature take its course and let ourselves be carried along by it in a state of impermanence.

But is this actually true? Radioactive fallout from a nuclear accident should, if things were impermanent, change and disappear, but it lingers as a grave threat. The regions that were affected by the tsunami also have problems that cannot be solved in terms of impermanence. The dead are not forgotten with the passage of time and continue to haunt the living. The theory of impermanence that prevailed in the past is no longer as valid as it once was.

The medieval period in Japan encompassed diverse ideas that could not be subsumed by the theory of impermanence, such as Nichiren's claim that the disasters that had befallen Japan had resulted from the neglect of the true teachings, or Jien's theory of invisible and visible principles that define Japanese history. At first glance, modern people may find such ideas about nature and human beings strange and difficult to accept. This is because they force us to think again about questions modern rationalism has forgotten. How should we deal with nature, at once so gentle and so destructive? If the dead do not disappear, how should they be addressed? Such important questions continue to be ignored.

But it is precisely at times like these that we need to revisit medieval thought, which confronted death and the harsh realities of nature. The *Hōjōki* and original enlightenment thought gave more than just a satisfying, superficial treatment of impermanence. Chōmei's account describes how Ryūgyō, head of the temple Ninnaji, grieving for the countless people who

were dying of famine in Kyoto, would write the Sanskrit letter "A" (first letter of the alphabet) on the forehead of each corpse, thereby helping guide that person to buddhahood in the afterlife. Only when we see the unfathomable truth of what impermanence entails does the concept truly come home to us.

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Kamo no Chōmei (1155–1216) was a poet and essayist and son of Kamo no Nagatsugu, a hereditary priest at Shimogamo Shrine in Kyoto. He retired at the age of fifty after being involved in an inheritance dispute and denied priestly advancement. Leading a life of seclusion to reflect on his life and ideas, he first went to Ōhara, north of the city, and then to Hino (Fushimi-ku, Kyoto) on the southeastern outskirts of Kyoto, becoming a Buddhist monk and taking the name of Ren'in. He wrote the *Hōjōki* in the *zuihitsu* (essay) style while living in his hermitage at Hino in 1212, when he was fifty-eight. Other works include *Hosshinshū* (A Collection of Buddhist Awakenings) and *Mumyōshō* (Nameless Treatise). He died at the age of sixty-two.

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Ninomiya Sontoku

Ninomiya-ō yawa

The Evening Talks of Old Man Ninomiya

> The human way must adhere to the principles of heaven, but man has created various divisions, calling weeds bad and rice and barley good. Everything profitable to people is labeled good, while that which is inconvenient is considered bad. This, though, is not in accordance with the principles of heaven. The disparity occurs because the human way has been created by human beings.

The intellectual historian Maruyama Masao (1914–1996), who sought the seeds of Japanese modernity in the Edo period, gave his attention (in *Nihon seiji shisōshi kenkyū* [A Study of Japanese Political Thought], 1952) to the distinction between the "natural" and the "artificial" in the thought of Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728). Zhu Xi Neo-Confucianism viewed human society and ethical standards as manifestations of the principle (Ch. *li*) that is consistent with nature. This meant that the social order and ethics are determined from the beginning, and there is no way they can be altered. Sorai, on the other hand, contended that the human social order was created by the sages of ancient China. Human society therefore does not accept nature as it is, but creates an order that differs from it. This makes it possible for human beings to build society through their own efforts, rather than as a result of natural determinism.

Maruyama attempts to see here the principle behind the formation of modern society.

In postwar Japan, Maruyama's view had a strong impact on young people seeking to build a new society, and it determined the direction taken by research into the intellectual history of the Edo period. Today, though, scholars realize that the ideas of Zhu Xi and Sorai cannot be schematized in such a simple manner.

Though Sorai spent his youth in a farming village in Kazusa (now Chiba Prefecture), fundamentally he was an urban intellectual, close to the center of power, and there are authoritarian overtones in his ideas. The backbone of Japanese society, however, was agriculture, whose realities precluded an easy distinction between the "natural" and "artificial." Farming was always at the mercy of nature and demanded tireless labor. Thus it was that Andō Shōeki urged a return to nature (see section 4)—a way of thinking born of his experience of famine brought about by the harsh natural conditions of Japan's north.

Ninomiya Sontoku, on the other hand, worked to restore devastated villages in the Kantō region and succeeded in reviving their economies. The name Sontoku probably calls to mind for many the statues of Ninomiya Kinjirō (i.e., Sontoku) that once stood on the grounds of primary schools throughout Japan. The figure of a young boy, walking along with firewood on his back and reading a book, established the image of Kinjirō. He studied even as he sought to contribute to his poverty-stricken family's finances. This image was further popularized through moral education in prewar Japan. Sontoku first restored the fortunes of his own household and was then employed by the Hattori family, chief retainers of the Odawara domain, to organize its finances. This brought him a commission

Statue of Kinjirō in Odawara, Kanagawa Prefecture. Courtesy of Hōtoku Ninomiya Jinja.

from the domain to revive its sub-domain in the Sakuramachi district of Shimotsuke Province (now Mōka, Tochigi Prefecture), which was governed by the Utsu family, a cadet branch of the Odawara domain's daimyo. Sontoku also succeeded in carrying out relief work during a time of famine. In his later years, he found employment with the shogunate.

Sontoku's ideology, called "repaying virtue" (*hōtoku*), merges Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shinto to promote practices that accord with the supreme "ultimate" (*taikyoku*; Ch. *taiji*). This is not an abstract theory but an extremely pragmatic idea that was formed within the practice of restoring agriculture and rebuilding the economy. Sontoku did not separate the natural and the artificial, as Sorai had done, nor did he act completely in accordance with nature, as Shōeki had advocated. While he did act in accordance with nature, he did not simply leave

things to nature. Success, he believed, is achieved when nature and artifice are well harmonized through human ingenuity.

According to Sontoku, nature does not distinguish between good and bad. Wind, rain, cold, and heat have no volition of their own. However, people cannot live in nature as it is. By building houses and making clothes, they can avoid the wind, rain, cold, and heat and live a life befitting a human being. This is the "human way" as opposed to the "way of heaven." For Sontoku, good and bad are determined by whether something is expedient for human beings or not. Although Sontoku is often thought of as the embodiment of feudalistic and old-fashioned morality, he actually developed a rational and pragmatic way of thinking that was forged through numerous failures and by trial and error. He is a thinker who needs to be rediscovered today.

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Ninomiya Sontoku (1787–1856), an agricultural thinker of the late Edo period, was born with the name of Kinjirō into a farming family in Kayama, Ashigarakami-gun, Sagami Province (now Kayama, Odawara, Kanagawa Prefecture). After the death of his parents, he was taken in by his uncle at the age of sixteen, and, while struggling to complete his studies, restored his family's household. At the age of twenty-six, he went to work for the Hattori family, chief retainers of the Odawara domain, and restored

the family's fortunes. At the age of thirty-six, he was ordered by the Odawara daimyo to revive Sakuramachi, a sub-domain in Shimotsuke Province, and succeeded in doing so. At the age of fifty-eight, the shogunate ordered him to oversee the revitalization of the holdings of the Nikkō Tōshōgu Shrine, and while engaged in that, he died of illness at the age of seventy. Sontoku's comments about restoring devastated farming villages and urging economic revival are both specific and powerful.

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Miyazawa Kenji

Nijūrokuya
The Twenty-Sixth Night

> "Namu Shisshō Tairiki, namu Shisshō Tairiki." Everyone cried out loudly. Their voices resounded through the forest. The cloud came closer and closer. The Body-Abandoning Bodhisattva seemed to be ten *jō* tall. His shining left hand was outstretched as if beckoning. Then, all at once, an indescribably pleasant fragrance filled the air, and both the purple cloud and Shisshō Tairiki disappeared. There was only the golden moon of the twenty-sixth night hanging peacefully in the clear bellflower-colored sky.

When you visit the Miyazawa Kenji Memorial Museum in Hanamaki, Iwate Prefecture, you are greeted by a statue of an owl perched on a pedestal. It is rather unassuming as a monument adorning the entrance to a museum, and you can easily miss it. If you realize that this is Shisshō Tairiki from the short story "The Twenty-Sixth Night," you must be quite a Kenji fan. White, opaque, and silently motionless, the statue gazes out sadly as if it has soaked up all the sorrow and suffering of the world.

Shisshō Tairiki is a bodhisattva who abandoned his body. He was originally a sparrow who gave up his body to save a human parent and child in a time of famine. Through the merit of this action he became a bodhisattva of great power, able to save all from any hardship.

Statue of the owl Shisshō Tairiki from "The Twenty-Sixth Night." Courtesy of the Miyazawa Kenji Memorial Museum.

However, the protagonist of "The Twenty-Sixth Night" is not Shisshō Tairiki. In the story, the bodhisattva is mentioned in a sutra (fictitious, of course) called the "Owl Protection Chapter" that is being preached by an owl monk to the owls in a forest near the Kitakami River from the twenty-fourth to the twenty-sixth of the sixth lunar month. This sutra describes in detail how birds suffer from a fear of human beings and of stronger birds of prey due to the evil karma of preying on weaker creatures.

Hokichi, a young owl who had been listening to the monk's sermon most attentively, is caught by a human child. The child treats him as a mere toy; he ties him up, breaks his legs, and then discards him. Those attending the service are in an uproar, and some of the owls are emphatic that the human's

house should be burned down in revenge. In the meantime, as the crescent moon of the twenty-sixth night rises in the eastern sky, Shisshō Tairiki appears with an attendant. Hokichi then draws his last breath.

Against the background of Nijūrokuya-machi (waiting for the moon to appear on the night of the twenty-sixth), a cruel story unfolds. In Kenji's original and magical portrayal of nature, human beings are replaced by owls. As the "Owl Protection Chapter" explains, owls live off weaker birds and insects, yet are powerless before humans and are killed just out of mischief. Is this unavoidable in terms of karma? But why should the victim be a helpless child, the innocent Hokichi? Is this not unjust?

The notion of an ecological cycle wherein the strong survive by eating the flesh of the weak continued to distress Kenji. He explores the same theme in another short story, "The Nighthawk Star" (*Yodaka no hoshi*). Here, a troubled nighthawk refuses to eat and climbs into the sky to become a star. This echoes developments in Kenji's own life, as he abstained from the consumption of meat.

In his later years, Kenji turned his attention to working for people's happiness more in the real world than in the world of ideas. He worked as a technician and passionately endeavored to develop and popularize new fertilizers. In a late masterpiece, *Gusukōbudori no denki* (The Life of Gusukōbudori), the protagonist throws himself into a volcano to make it erupt and eject carbon dioxide in order to save people from damage caused by cold weather. The idea here was to bring about a richer, more fertile world by warming the climate.

In the midst of crop damage caused by cold summer temperatures in the Tōhoku region, Kenji dealt with religion and

grappled with science, writing in a poem the words "Wandering at a loss during a cold summer." However, global warming, for which the hero sacrificed himself to bring happiness to the people, has now become a new affliction for the planet. Nuclear power, which many looked to as an antidote to global warming, has given rise to even greater tragedy. Wherever we go, the vicious circle continues. Can it not be stopped?

This vicious cycle is compounded by the natural cycle of the strong preying on the weak in a battle for survival. If human beings arrogantly trample the world as the "lords of creation," they will in turn be crushed by a greater force, as nature is not subordinate to man. Shisshō Tairiki must be watching the vicissitudes of the world with sadness in his eyes.

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Miyazawa Kenji (1896–1933) was a poet and author of children's literature. He was born to a family running a pawnbroking and used-clothes shop in present-day Hanamaki, Iwate Prefecture. Fed up with this business and the Shin (True Pure Land) school to which his family was devoted, he became fascinated with the Lotus Sutra and joined the Kokuchūkai, a Nichiren Buddhist group. He left home for a time, but returned to Hanamaki when he was twenty-six and was employed as a teacher in the agricultural school there. He resigned his post five years later to take up farming and the arts, setting up the Rasuchijin Society. He fell ill with tuberculosis when he was thirty-two and died five years later in Hanamaki.

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Minakata Kumagusu

Dogi Hōryū ate shokan

Letters to Dogi Hōryū

> There is hope in Mahayana. What if I were to return to Dainichi [Skt. Mahāvairocana] and enjoy without end the macrocosm that still contains the inexhaustible, unplumbed, unexplored macrocosm of the macrocosm? Should you buy a microscope, you could enjoy looking at it all your life long. Nirvana is a rather negative word. Already tired of this world, you look forward to nirvana. But once you enter nirvana, you will tire of it, too. And those who tire of this world beg for it to be postponed. Such thoughts are erratic, inconsistent, and self-contradictory. Therefore, I most certainly disagree that Mahayana believers experience any great joy in being regarded the same as Hinayana believers.

The period that followed the establishment of the Meiji state in 1868 was a time of severe trial for Buddhism. In the push for modernization and Westernization by the Japanese government, Buddhism was seen as a premodern superstition, and was criticized on that account. Buddhism for its part strove to survive by promoting rationalization and modernization. The model for modernization was Western Protestantism, and the Shin Buddhist school, which was similar in reconstructing itself as a faith-centered belief, moved quickly to the forefront of Buddhist modernization.

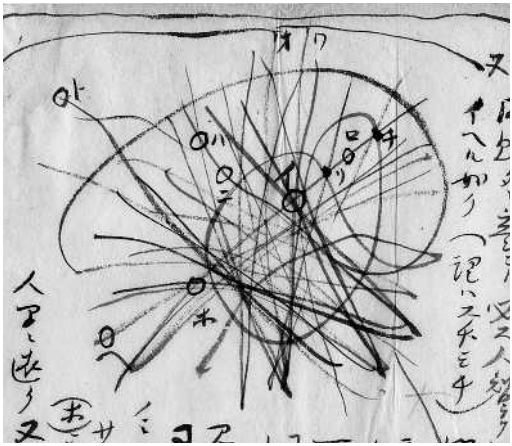
By contrast, esoteric Buddhism was viewed most negatively

of all the schools and branches of Buddhism, being regarded as an impure religion that sought trivial, this-worldly benefits. It relied on irrational magic and mantras. Esoteric Buddhism was also associated with indigenous kami beliefs and with the government of the day. The so-called Kamakura New Buddhism, such as Zen and *nenbutsu*, flourished because it rejected esoteric Buddhism and promoted the rationalization and purification of religion. Until around the 1970s, there were only a handful of books on esoteric Buddhism outside specialist sectarian works, and it was not until the 1980s that esoteric Buddhism came to be reevaluated.

At a time when esoteric Buddhism was still held in low esteem, Minakata Kumagusu advocated actively for it. He was a lifelong independent scholar who left behind an enormous amount of work that went far beyond the bounds of his specialization. But at the root of his multifaceted activities was a grand esoteric worldview.

One of the people who best understood the unconventional Kumagusu was the scholar and Shingon priest Dogi Hōryū (1854–1923), who served as head of the seminary Kōyasan Gakurin and as president of a federation of various Shingon schools. He and Kumagusu met in London when Kumagusu was twenty-seven years old, and the two men exchanged a great deal of correspondence. Kumagusu availed himself of the goodwill of Hōryū, who was more than ten years older than himself, and expounded his own theories without reserve. In particular, his letter to Hōryū dated July 18, 1903, is noteworthy for its depiction of the "Minakata mandala."

Kumagusu was also a natural scientist known for his research on slime molds. In this letter he pointed out the limitations of science, saying "Science, as far as I know, is actually



"Minakata mandala" from one of Kumagusu's letters to Dogi Hōryū. Courtesy of the Minakata Kumagusu Archives (Tanabe City).

only a minute part of Shingon." He understood that Shingon esoteric Buddhism revealed a vast world far beyond science. The "Minakata mandala," with its jumbled lines drawn like a child's doodle, is an attempt to depict this esoteric worldview visually.

The diagram shows that matter and mind, and the whole phenomenal realm, exist in a complex interrelationship, a structure Kumagusu describes using the word *fushigi* ("mystery"). These "mysteries," however, are "always knowable through human intelligence if we only understand their laws." In other words, they can be explained by unraveling the points where the lines intersect.

At the very top of the diagram, however, there is drawn a single line, and since it does not intersect with any other line, it is impossible to explain it from its connection to anything

else. Human intelligence can only guess at it, even when it approaches it. This is nothing other than the "great mystery of Dainichi," which goes beyond everything in the knowable world, and which is the basis of all things and the source from which they arise.

Kumagusu is often regarded as a pioneering ecologist, but as we can see, his view of nature was not simple. The world, born from Dainichi Nyorai at its fundament, includes not only nature and human beings but also invisible things like the hells and supernatural entities. It is a complex mixture of ambiguous, chaotic, and fluid parts. The slime molds studied by Kumagusu move and transform the boundary between animal and plant, the animate and the inanimate, and they exhibit "mysteries" that cannot be identified as either one or the other. The natural landscape of Wakayama, beloved of Kumagusu, was a treasury of "mysteries" surpassing human intellect.

It is undeniable that today, following the Tōhoku earthquake and the Fukushima nuclear accident, we are being overwhelmed by the "mysterious" forces of nature that cannot be easily controlled by humans. Should we nonetheless continue to prioritize the economy and destroy nature? Will nature not once again retaliate against those who do not treat it with due reverence?

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Minakata Kumagusu (1867–1941) was born to a merchant family in the present-day city of Wakayama. He dropped out of the preparatory school for Tokyo University (Tōkyō Daigaku Yobimon) when he was eighteen, and at the end of 1886 went to the United States to study. In 1892 he journeyed to England. There he worked at the British Museum and contributed articles to the science journal *Nature*. He left the British Museum in 1898 and returned to Wakayama two years later. He spent his time subsequently collecting and studying botanical specimens and slime molds, as well as folklore, in Kumano. He died in Tanabe, Wakayama Prefecture, at the age of seventy-four.

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II. QUESTIONS FROM THE DEAD

Since the Tōhoku earthquake, talking about "the dead" has suddenly become commonplace. This is a topic on which I began focusing more than a decade ago. Back then, I was often met with disapproving looks whenever I raised the issue, as if I had broached a subject best avoided. Making an issue of the dead was taboo. That Buddhism had become preoccupied with funeral ceremonies was considered a corruption of its true aims, for it was common knowledge that the value of Buddhism lay in its teachings for the living. But then suddenly the situation changed in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami; it became almost fashionable to talk about the dead.

Now, though, the question arises whether we should speak so casually about the dead. Anyone who has been shocked by the death of someone close to them will be uncomfortable. They know keenly from their own experience how painful parting can be and how there is no choice but to endure the sorrow in silence.

In other words, the dead continue to live on in our hearts and minds. They can threaten us and make us feel insecure. They can shake us to our very core. Whether we like it or not, we have to engage with them and take appropriate action. How we deal with the dead remains an ever-present concern.

In fact, it is only in modern times that the dead have been pushed aside and forgotten. Before then, people in Japan associated with the dead as a matter of course. The manifest (*ken*) realm of the living was only a very small part of reality, while the hidden (*myō*) realm, which includes the dead, was far vaster. Japan's modernization and prosperity were built on the abandonment of this vast hidden realm, which may now be taking vengeance on the living by unleashing devastating natural disasters. The issue of the dead is becoming more pressing day by day.

Genshin

Ōjōyōshū

The Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land

> The flesh is simply a box of suffering. Do not dwell on what it craves. Mountains are closing in from all sides, and there is nowhere to escape, yet people are entangled in greed and deeply attached to the five desires that arise from the five senses of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch. They think eternal that which is ephemeral and pleasurable that which is not bliss. . . . And even more, the hells of the mountain of swords and fiery heat are fast approaching.

In the Tōhoku region there is a practice called *mukasari ema*. When a young person dies unmarried, people offer to the temple a small wooden votive tablet (*ema*), on which a picture of a wedding ceremony has been painted, in order to secure for him or her a happy marriage in the realm of the dead. This practice began in the mid-nineteenth century and continues to the present. The tablets have an uncanny realism and a certain sense of nostalgia about them.

In Tōhoku, interaction with the dead and supernatural beings has long been a part of everyday life. At Osorezan, for example, people can communicate with the dead through mediums called *itako*, and in the Dewa Mountains, self-mummified ascetics known as *sokushinbutsu* draw many pilgrims to the temples where they are enshrined. As well, paired figurines

called *oshirasama* are venerated as household divinities. Here unfolds an intense world that is beyond the domain of formal Buddhist theory. About twenty years ago, I had a chance to visit the Tōhoku region while taking part in a joint research project supported by a grant from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. This experience had such a great impact on me that it changed my view of the world and my approach to research.

I then went to live in Kyoto. This, too, is a city where the world of the dead can be felt close by, and there is even an entranceway that leads to hell. In fact, one might make the argument that it is a modern metropolis like Tokyo, which lacks ties to the other world, that is aberrant. People have coexisted with the dead and supernatural beings for centuries, and this is an important fact that cannot be dismissed as superstition.

From its beginnings as the nation's capital, Kyoto was haunted by the angry ghost of Prince Sawara (younger brother of Emperor Kanmu), who is alleged to have taken his own life after being implicated in a plot against the court. Apart from such beliefs in malevolent spirits (*goryō*), though, it was only around the tenth century that the individual's afterlife became a topic of concern. A major catalyst for this was the appearance of Genshin's *The Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land*.

The description of Buddhist hells in the first chapter is famous for the realism of its horrors. The view of the cycle of birth and death as transmigration through the six realms of rebirth (hells, hungry spirits, animals, belligerent demigods, human beings, and heavenly beings) was depicted in paintings and expounded in sermons, and so took root among the Japanese people.

Sukhāvatī—the Pure Land of Amida (Skt. Amitābha)

Buddha—was considered to be paradise in contrast to the suffering of transmigration. To attain rebirth in the Pure Land, a person had to give up all attachment to this world, keep the Buddha constantly in mind, and face the end without perturbation. The Pure Land teachings that spread from around the tenth century were not abstract ideas; rather, they involved extremely realistic, sincere prayers.

The Samadhi Society of Twenty-five (Nijūgo Zanmai-e) was an association of twenty-five monks, probably under the leadership of Genshin himself, who pledged to help one another on their deathbeds to achieve rebirth in Amida's Pure Land. Those who had died were obliged to appear to the living members in their dreams to let them know whether or not they had achieved this goal. As unrealistic as this may seem to us today, the desire for a blissful afterlife was very strong and soon spread through society as a whole. Tales of rebirth in the Pure Land (*ōjōden*) appeared in great numbers from the late eleventh century, recording the life stories of people who had attained successful rebirths.

As the Pure Land teachings became established, the afterlife developed many variations. Maitreya's Tuṣita heaven was often compared with Amida's paradise, as an alternative belief spread that Maitreya (J. Miroku) would descend to this world to save living beings.

Another idea was that the Pure Land was located close by, in this world. Mount Kōya, where it was believed that Kūkai was still living, deep in meditation, is one such example, as is the temple Chūsonji at Hiraizumi, now a UNESCO World Heritage site, where the mummified remains of Fujiwara no Kiyohira (1056–1128) and his descendants are kept in the Konjikidō (Golden Hall) as a Pure Land in this world.

The world of the dead is not always so clearly represented; it is often obscure and chaotic. This does not mean, however, that such a world can simply be dismissed as irrational. We need to engage with the dead, lest the world of the living become callous and impoverished.

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Genshin (942–1017) was a Tendai Buddhist monk born in Taima, Yamato Province (now the city of Katsuragi, Nara Prefecture). He was ordained at the age of nine and studied under Ryōgen at Yokawa on Mount Hiei. Not wishing for fame, he relocated to a remote part of Yokawa when he was fifteen to devote himself to scholarship and religious practice. He wrote *The Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land*, which describes Buddhist hells in minute detail and teaches what must be observed to gain Pure Land rebirth, when he was forty-four. He developed Pure Land teachings within Tendai and received the title of *gon shōsōzu* (the lowest of the six clerical ranks) at age sixty-three. He relinquished the title the following year but was subsequently known as Eshin Sōzu. He died at age seventy-six at Yokawa after performing his deathbed *nenbutsu* rituals. He was an excellent scholar who authored many works, including *Ichijō yōketsu* (Determining the Essentials of the One Vehicle).

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Jien

Gukanshō

The Future and the Past

> This shogun, Minamoto no Yoritomo, was a man of ability rare in either ancient or recent times. His achievements after successfully conquering the country were thought beyond normal human capacity. So it was that the ancestral kami of the imperial house decided it would be suitable for warriors to rule this visible [*ken*] realm. Their decision was in line with reason [*dōri*] and inevitable. It must be also remembered, however, that many vengeful Heike spirits lurk in the invisible [*myō*] realm of the dead.

We are wont to accord absolute value to rationality and science and to think we should reject anything that cannot be understood in those terms. But such inflexible and rigorous rationalism is incapable of providing all the answers. For some time now, I have been using the term *ken* (manifest, visible, unconcealed, this-worldly) to refer to what can be rationally grasped, seen, and demonstrated. This is the realm of natural science, of course, and also politics, economics, and other areas that are the subject of public discourse. In contrast, I call that which cannot be apprehended by such rational theories *myō* (hidden, invisible, concealed, otherworldly).

Consider, for example, the human mind. The spate of brutal crimes committed by juveniles that occurred in Japan some time ago revealed a darkness deep inside the mind that cannot

be elucidated by psychology. Also, the issue of the dead, of which science has little to say, was considered something not to be discussed in the public sphere until recently. However, following the Kobe and Tōhoku earthquakes, we have had no choice but to confront the dead head-on. These are issues of the *myō* realm, beyond the scope of the *ken* world.

Shrines and temples, places of spiritual support for people, are associated with the invisible realm, and their rebuilding in areas struck by disasters is also of special import. Today we have to tackle directly the issue of how best to understand and deal with the issues of the invisible realm.

In fact, the concepts of *ken* and *myō* as binary opposites were in common usage during the medieval period. It was Jien who applied them to the domain of history in his work *The Future and the Past*. Jien, the younger brother of the chancellor Kujō Kanezane (1149–1207), served as the head (*zasu*) of the Tendai school for many years and lived through a time of great upheaval, wielding both political and ecclesiastical power. *The Future and the Past* records history from his personal perspective, and in it Jien seeks to grasp the laws of history from the perspective of *dōri* (principle or reason).

For example, he reacts to Yoritomo seizing power by affirming the historical inevitability of the rise of the warrior class within the *ken* realm of human activity. Though he was of aristocratic background, he was quick to recognize and accept new historical trends. He has been well regarded for his enlightened attitude.

His use of *dōri* does not imply that he believes there exists an objective set of principles that runs through history. Jien does not see changes in the visible world as autonomous movements in themselves. History for him is not made by

human actors alone; rather, he sees it as the result of intervention from the invisible realm.

He goes on to declare that "since the ancestral kami of the imperial house have so determined, it must be in line with reason [*dōri*]." Jien argues, in other words, for the inevitability of this turn of events. In one sense, he asserts that human activity in the visible world is manipulated by the kami who inhabit the invisible realm.

In addition, he maintains that "many vengeful Heike spirits lurk in the invisible [*myō*] realm of the dead." The activities of these spirits cannot be ignored, he says. One can only understand historical cause and effect (*inga*) by including such considerations. The dead intervene in history. The idea would invite ridicule today as a preposterous medieval superstition.

But is it, really? Can the sentiments of the dead be ignored in writing the histories of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and the Tōhoku earthquake? History is more than a compilation of the deeds of the living; it must also involve sympathy for the dead. Jien's view of history has much to teach us even today.

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Jien (1155–1225) was a Tendai Buddhist monk, the son of the chancellor Fujiwara no Tadamichi and younger brother of the future chancellor Fujiwara no Kanezane. As was common practice

among aristocratic families of the time, he entered the Tendai temple Shōren'in at age eleven. He took full ordination as a monk when he was thirteen under the Tendai *zasu* (head) Myōun. He himself became the Tendai *zasu* at the age of thirty-eight, occupying the office four times. He wrote the *Gukanshō* around the time of the Jōkyū Rebellion (1221), the failed attempt by retired emperor Go-Toba to overthrow the Kamakura shogunate. Jien died when he was seventy-one. He was also a renowned poet; a collection of his poetry, *Shūgyokushū* (Collection of Gathered Jewels), appeared after his death.

Translation

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Hirata Atsutane

Tama no mihashira

Pillar of the Soul

> The land where the dead go [*kami no ikado, meifu*] exists in this visible world [*utsushikuni*] where the living dwell, not in a separate location. Though the land is within this world, it cannot be seen, as it is a realm of darkness [*yūmeī*] separated from the present world [*utsushiyo*]. . . . The acts of the living can be clearly perceived from the land of the dead, *meifu*, but this land cannot be seen from *utsushiyo*.

It is said that the driving forces behind the Meiji Restoration were the Confucianism of the Mito school and the Restoration Shinto (Fukko Shintō) that traces its lineage to Hirata Atsutane. While the Mito school developed the concept of *kokutai* ("national polity") based on the sovereignty of the emperor, Restoration Shinto inherited the influence of nativist studies (*kokugaku*) and sought to reorganize Shinto by denouncing Buddhism, thus constructing an alternative worldview. This position was accepted by the new Meiji government in its early years. The government issued a number of edicts (*shinbutsu bunrirei*) to clarify what was Buddhist and what was Shinto and thereby remove the influence of Buddhism. They adopted a policy that turned Shinto into the state religion and established two organs of state found in the ancient *ritsuryō* legal and administrative system: the Dajōkan (Council

of State) and the Jingikan (Council of Divinities). Shrine priests of the Hirata school were initially employed by the Jingikan, but this did not last long. The Jingikan was abolished and the Hirata school was abandoned as being anachronistic. The State Shinto that later evolved inherited the Mito school concept of *kokutai*.

Thus, for a long time, Hirata Atsutane was discredited as the man responsible for corrupting the pioneering nativist studies of Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) into a bigoted and irrational Shintoism. And indeed, if modern, rationalist thinking is taken as the norm, Atsutane was an eccentric thinker whose inclinations were anything but modern and rationalist. Atsutane was a staunch critic of rationalist secularism. He took issue with the Confucian denial of the soul, and wrote *Kishin shinron* (New Thesis on Spirits) to argue for the existence of the soul. It was only after modern rationalism became the subject of growing skepticism that his ideas began to attract renewed attention.

Atsutane left a vast body of writings. Representative among them was *Tama no mihashira* (Pillar of the Soul), published in 1813. It condenses the essence of his views of the world and the spiritual realm. Shinto had always emphasized worldly affairs and hardly concerned itself with the whereabouts of spirits after death, leaving this to Buddhism. Motoori Norinaga, too, gave up when it came to the afterlife, writing, "I only think that if I die I will go to the land of Yomi, and I cannot but feel sad . . . for Yomi is a polluted and awful place. Yet when I die I have to go there. There is nothing sadder in this world than death" (*Suzunoya tōmonroku*).

The afterlife was first raised as a Shinto issue in the *Sandaikō* (Consideration of the Three Realms) by Norinaga's

follower, Hattori Nakatsune (1756–1824). Nakatsune spoke of the formation of the realms of heaven (sun), earth, and Yomi (moon), and was the first to theorize the formation of Yomi. Atsutane both utilized and criticized the *Sandaikō* in *Pillar of the Soul*, notably advancing his own theory that Yomi was not the place to which the dead go. If not Yomi, though, then where?

In the passage quoted above, Atsutane stated, "The land where the dead go exists in this visible world where the living dwell, not in a separate location. Though the land is within this world, it cannot be seen, as it is a realm of darkness [*yūmei*], separated from the visible world." He rejected the idea that souls transmigrated to the underground land of Yomi or the far distant Western Paradise of the Pure Land. He superimposed the land of the dead on the visible world and thought it was extremely close by.

But where in the visible world do the dead dwell? According to Atsutane, "The dead rest in peace in shrines large and small, and if they are not there they repose atop their own graves." The present world can be seen from the land of the dead, but the opposite is not possible, he believed.

In ancient times, the dead were fearsome and liable to harm the living, and so graveyards were situated as far away from human habitats as possible to minimize their danger. Gradually, though, the realm of the living expanded, and ways to bury and memorialize the dead evolved, so that fear of the dead abated, and the dead came to be perceived as being near at hand. Atsutane's view of the dead reflects this new worldview and represents a significant narrowing of the divide between the living and the dead.

Atsutane is also considered a pioneer in the study of folklore. One of his studies is *Senkyō ibun* (Strange Tidings from

the Realm of Immortals), a record of interviews with a boy who claimed to have once been abducted by a *tengu* (a long-nosed supernatural being). We can see here the origins of a spiritual worldview that served as an inspiration for such modern folklorists as Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962) and Orikuchi Shinobu (1887–1953).

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Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843) was a nativist (*kokugaku*) scholar of the late Edo period. He was born into a samurai family in Akita domain. He went to Edo at the age of twenty, and there studied *kokugaku* without a teacher. When he was twenty-five, he was adopted by Hirata Atsuyasu, an instructor of military strategy of the Bitchū-Matsuyama domain (now Takahashi, Okayama Prefecture). At the age of twenty-eight, Atsutane became a posthumous student of Motoori Norinaga. Seeking native approaches to conducting memorial services for ancestors—a role that Buddhism had shouldered—he reinterpreted *kokugaku*, writing *Pillar of the Soul* when he was thirty-seven. In it, he theorizes that heaven is ruled by the kami and earth by the emperor, while the spirits of the realm of the dead repose in shrines and graves. He returned to his native Akita when he was sixty-six and died there two years later.

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Yanagita Kunio

Senzo no hanashi

About Our Ancestors

> The Japanese have, for the most part, traditionally felt that the afterlife was close by and familiar, that communication with the dead was nothing out of the ordinary. . . . First, it was thought that after death, souls do not go off to a land far away but remain nearby. Second, beings in the visible [*ken*] and the invisible [*yū*] realms were thought to come and go regularly, not only during the spring and autumn festivals but whenever one invited, or was invited by, those on the other side. Third, people believed that their wishes, if held strongly while alive, would surely be realized after death. And fourth, because they assumed a continuity between this world and the next, many made plans to pick up where they left off in the next life or the one after, as if making arrangements for their children and grandchildren.

People commonly assume that strict controls over freedom of speech during World War II stifled intellectual discourse as Japan single-mindedly devoted its energies to the war effort, and that with the country's defeat, the situation suddenly turned around, and free thought was allowed to develop. A closer look at actual intellectual trends, though, makes clear that this assumption is wrong.

The foundations of important ideas that would flourish in the postwar period were being laid toward the end of the war,

between 1944 and the first half of 1945. The studies conducted during this period proved to be the starting point for the work of great men like Suzuki Daisetsu and Tanabe Hajime, as well as younger scholars like Murayama Masao. The difficult conditions during the war may have forged a tenacity of purpose.

Yanagita Kunio wrote *About Our Ancestors* just before the end of the war and published it soon after in 1946, a time when many young people were among the war dead. Japanese folklore studies, which he established, were not concerned with matters imposed by the privileged classes on commoners but rather were focused on collecting and organizing the wisdom of nameless ordinary people. Seeing the huge death toll during the war, Yanagita was naturally drawn to the question of how the Japanese had traditionally conceived of the afterlife and the soul. *About Our Ancestors* discusses the distinctive features of Japanese culture in terms of the origins of the *ie* (family) system and the memorialization of ancestors.

The theories of the afterlife and the soul that Yanagita developed in this book are exceedingly bold and encompass broad hypotheses concerning the formation of the Japanese conception of kami (deity). He suggests kami originally derived from ancestral worship. Ancestral deities are inherently collective, rather than individual, but over time only certain outstanding figures in the ancestral line were worshipped as ancestors; parents and grandparents, too, were given special individual treatment. According to Yanagita, the New Year and the Bon Festival in the summer were originally both similar ancestral rites but were later differentiated.

Yanagita saw ancestor veneration as something that continued to underlie the religious outlook of the Japanese people, even as it evolved. He believed it would remain constant

into the future. The question of who would venerate the souls of the war dead thus became particularly urgent when the family line was severed by war. This seems to have been a major motivation for Yanagita in writing this book. He saw the possibility of preserving the family line through adoption and other such means.

In reality, postwar amendments to the Japanese Constitution and Civil Code rejected the notion of the prewar patriarchal *ie* system. Family continuity was also threatened by the exodus of people to large cities and the aging population. In this respect, Yanagita's prescription is no longer applicable. His theory that the concept of the *ie* and ancestral worship are original Japanese beliefs predating the arrival of Buddhism has no objective basis. As a matter of fact, with the exception of a very small segment of the population belonging to the ruling classes, it was only in modern times that the common people developed any ideas of family succession and ancestor veneration.

The notion repeatedly raised by Yanagita that the dead remain close by is also a byproduct of the Edo period, when funerals and burials were first carried out in an organized fashion, resulting in a diminished fear of the dead.

Yanagita's ideas may no longer have much currency as they stand. All the same, his fundamental approach was not misguided. He interpreted questions of the afterlife and the soul not through abstract theory, but by analyzing the beliefs that emerged over a long period of time in the lives of ordinary people. And he pointed out that such beliefs have great implications for politics and social structure.

The issues with which Yanagita grappled have largely been forgotten now, and there has been little serious discussion about them. But the Tōhoku earthquake has renewed

interest in examining longstanding Japanese views of life and death, including the influence of Buddhism, which Yanagita circumvented.

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Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962) was born the son of Matsuoka Misao, a doctor, in present-day Fukusaki, Hyōgo Prefecture. At the age of thirteen, he went to live with his elder brother, a medical practitioner in what is now Tone, Ibaraki Prefecture. He graduated from the Faculty of Law at Tokyo Imperial University at age twenty-six and went to work at the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce. Later, he developed the study of folklore, based on his surveys and research in rural villages. At the age of twenty-seven, he was adopted into the Yanagita family. He founded the journal *Kyōdo kenkyū* (Local Studies) when he was thirty-nine. He died in Tokyo at the age of eighty-eight, having authored numerous books, including *Tōno monogatari* (The Legends of Tōno).

Translations

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Tanabe Hajime

Memento Mori

> The self may die, but existence [*jitsuzon*], bound by mutual love, will be resurrected in an existential collaboration [*jitsuzon kyōdō*] that transcends the life and death of the self, thanks to the working of the reciprocation of benefit, and will thus participate in the eternal. This fact is given faith and witness by none other than the existence that has received this benefit. What I call "death and resurrection" are not objective happenings that occur directly to the dead person. Rather, they constitute a reciprocal, mediating state that is perceived indirectly by the living person who, bound by love, finds evidence of the workings of the dead upon him or her. . . . Each individual existence is resurrected in death and absorbed in the eternal absolute nothingness—namely, love—simultaneously participating in it as a mediator.

Death is a philosophical conundrum. Everyone must experience it, but there is no one alive who has actually died. Various religions teach different views of the hereafter, but no one can prove which is correct. The debate on death is quite unproductive, and today, when scientific rationalism holds sway, the debate itself has been locked away. The present age can be called a civilization that has forgotten death—but has death forgotten it?

No one knows anything about their own death, because they have not experienced it. There is no one, though, who has

not experienced the death of someone close to them. Even those who say they will just turn to dust when they die are not likely to say the same thing about their family members, while the experience of loss following wars and major disasters often results in survivor's guilt. There is no one who does not have some kind of relationship with the dead. The dead sometimes appear to blame the living, sometimes to encourage them. This being so, before we ask what happens to us when we die, we should first consider our relationship with the dead while we are alive.

When I began to think about the dead as an issue and reread the writings of philosophers of the past, I discovered that almost the only one to meet this issue head-on was Tanabe Hajime. It was in the late 1950s, in the last years of his life, that Tanabe mustered up the last of his strength and set foot in this unexplored country, calling it his "philosophy of death." This philosophy was born, on one hand, out of the death of his wife, who he felt continued to live within him, and the realization, on the other, that the nuclear threat confronted humanity with annihilation. This was brought home to him by the exposure of the fishing boat *Daigo Fukuryū Maru* to nuclear fallout from hydrogen bomb testing conducted by the United States near the Bikini Atoll.

Tanabe's "philosophy of death," developed at length in his essay, "An Ontology of Life or a Dialectic of Death," is not easy to understand. Its essence is, however, succinctly condensed in the short essay "Memento Mori," written in the philosopher's latter years. Here he explains his theory of "existential collaboration" with the dead, which he illustrates with a story from the Zen classic *Blue Cliff Record* (*Hekiganroku*) about a monk and his master.

The monk Zengen was confounded by the question of life and death and asked his master Dōgo about it. Dōgo replied, "I won't say it is life, and I won't say it is death either," but Zengen did not understand. After his master's death, he was enlightened under the guidance of Sekisō, a senior student, and realized that his master was living and working within him. He repented and was grateful.

The self may die, but the dead, bound by love, are resurrected in the living and guide them. Here is born "existential collaboration." This is true not only for Zen practitioners, but for many others who have had a similar experience. It is not abstract theory, moreover, but something that often occurs in daily life. All the same, many philosophers have overlooked it. Tanabe was aware of it but struggled to theorize it.

When we think of "resurrection," we first think of Jesus Christ. Tanabe did look to Christianity for inspiration at first, but what he found there was a miracle that had happened to just one person. He then turned to Buddhism. Like Dōgo, the bodhisattvas of Mahayana Buddhism are resurrected after death in the hearts of the living to work for their salvation through love. Those who have been guided by a bodhisattva now guide others as bodhisattvas themselves. Here is created the chain of the bodhisattva's "existential collaboration."

This may be idealizing the dead. But even so, Tanabe was the first to put the issue of the dead on the stage of philosophical discussion, and this is a great achievement. Tanabe's theory of the dead was long forgotten, and only recently has its value come to be recognized. This shows how pressing the issue of the dead has become today.

Key Text

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Tanabe Hajime (1885–1962) was born in Tokyo. He withdrew from the graduate school of Tokyo Imperial University when he was twenty-seven and became a lecturer at Tōhoku Imperial University at age twenty-nine. He became an assistant professor (later professor) at Kyoto Imperial University when he was thirty-five, and as the successor of Nishida Kitarō, developed the philosophy of the Kyoto school. He retired from Kyoto Imperial University at age sixty-one and went to live in Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture. After World War II, he continued to write. He died at the age of seventy-eight. His "Ontology of Life or Dialectics of Death," which was published in the journal *Tetsugaku kenkyū* after his death, made clear his ideas about the "philosophy of death" of his later years.

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Thinking about Japanese Ideas (1)

The Three Traditions

Traditional Japanese thought can usefully be divided into three categories. I shall refer to them simply as the Little Tradition, the Middle Tradition, and the Great Tradition. The Little Tradition is that of the post–World War II era, the Middle Tradition is that formed in the period from the Meiji era to Japan's defeat in World War II, and the Great Tradition is that of the Edo period, before 1868. This classification is, I think, clear and easy to understand.

Questions may be raised concerning these categories, however. First, can the Little Tradition really be called a tradition, which usually means something that has been handed down over a longer period of time? Nearly eighty years have passed since the end of the war, though, and the accumulation of ideas during that time is surely worthy to be called "tradition." At any rate, we have to distinguish this period from that of the Middle Tradition, since there exists a very clear break between them.

Second, the Great Tradition may be considered too broad, compared to the other two traditions. It is true that the ancient, medieval, and early modern periods have very different ideas, so it may be unwise to lump them all together. From today's perspective, however, the period before the Meiji Restoration is often referred to in very vague terms as "premodern" or, even more dubiously, as "ancient." Therefore, it seems more convenient to start with a broad definition of the Great Tradition and then refine it in more detail as needed.

Let us look at the three traditions a little more closely. First, the

Little Tradition has evolved centered on the Constitution of Japan (see chapter VII), its keywords being "peace," "democracy," and "human rights." It condemns the Japan of the past and seeks to build a new Japan in accordance with the universal principles of humanity. An important hallmark of the Little Tradition is that it is based not on the particularity of Japan but on the universality of humankind, which distinguishes it from traditional Japanese thought, especially that of the Middle Tradition. "Peace" is its watchword, and the renunciation of war, as enshrined in Article 9 of the Constitution, its mainstay.

Disowning the Middle Tradition, which gave rise to wars of aggression, the Little Tradition became skeptical of Japanese tradition as a whole, including the entirety of the Great Tradition. The result was the flat rejection of traditional thought and a failure to give it proper treatment. We need to think very seriously about the adverse implications of this. At the same time, the pacifism of the postwar Constitution has taken root widely among the Japanese people, and Article 9 has even been seen as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize. In today's world, once again beset by war, pacifism is surely one of the greatest things Japan can boast of to the world. There may be many problems with the Little Tradition, but dismissing it lightly would be extremely dangerous, and we must not make light of it.

To represent the thought associated with the Little Tradition, I have included here the Constitution of Japan and *Nihon no shisō* (Japanese Thought) by Maruyama Masao (1914–1996), a leading commentator of the postwar era (chapter VI). In addition, Tanabe Hajime (1885–1962) and Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962) serve to bridge the Middle and Little Traditions; they were active from the prewar period, and their works *Memento Mori* and *Senzo no hanashi* (About Our Ancestors) were published after the war (chapter II).

The Middle Tradition, formed by the Meiji Restoration, belongs to Japan's modern era. Modern Japan pushed forward with its policy of

"enrich the country, strengthen the military" (*fukoku kyōhei*) to catch up with and overtake the West, and embarked on a war of aggression in an attempt to stand as an equal to the Western powers. The goal was none other than the building of an empire, Japan's efforts being distinguished by a political and cultural system that placed the rule of "a line of emperors unbroken for ages eternal" at the heart of the nation's identity. Being ruled by emperors descended directly from the gods, Japan regarded itself as a sacred and superior nation-state, different from any other country. This system, known as *kokutai*, was not just concerned with political matters but also stressed the excellence of Japanese culture. *Kokutai* was the main ideological tool used to shake off Japan's inferiority complex vis-à-vis the West and nurture national pride.

The Constitution of the Empire of Japan (Meiji Constitution) clearly stipulated this *kokutai*, but the legitimacy of an "unbroken line of emperors" required more than a mere codification in a legal framework. *Kokutai* took as its basis the statement by the imperial ancestor Amaterasu to her grandson Ninigi that "the Land of Abundant Rice is the land where my descendants will rule." This is known as *tenjō mukyū no shinchoku* (the oracle that declared the immutable imperial line to be everlasting as heaven and earth). This is straight out of the Great Tradition and goes far beyond the scope of the modern state. To be more precise, though, it was the Great Tradition interpreted to suit the needs of the Middle Tradition. Ancient mythology was reorganized and remade into what can be called a grand modern mythology with Amaterasu, the imperial ancestor, placed at the apex. It was on the basis of this new myth that the kami were ranked, and new shrines, such as Yasukuni Shrine and Meiji Shrine, were built. Shrines were also constructed in lands colonized by Japan and made centers of integration into the Japanese empire. Based on the idea that an unbroken line of emperors had ruled

Japan since antiquity, the government also rewrote history, denying, for example, the legitimacy of the Northern Court during the Northern and Southern Courts period (1336–1392).

Today, many politicians who speak of tradition are actually referring, without thought, to a Great Tradition that was reshaped during the Middle Tradition era. Thus they are not really exalting Japanese tradition at all. This is not to say, though, that the Middle Tradition should be repudiated. One should not ignore the fact that it was a product of a small island nation's desperate attempt to survive the rough seas of that era, and it enjoyed broad public support. Today, the supporters of the Little Tradition and the Middle Tradition are engaged in criticizing and denying one another, making it difficult to see the flow of history as a whole. This is a very unhappy state of affairs for a serious consideration of Japanese tradition.

Any examination of the Middle Tradition needs to take up *Kokutai no hongi* (chapter VII), which can be regarded as a textbook of its ideology. It is largely forgotten, having been banned by the Allied occupation authorities, but it is indispensable for a critical review of the Middle Tradition, in both its positive and negative aspects. It even contains most of the ingredients of the postwar so-called *Nihonjinron* discourse on the cultural uniqueness of the Japanese. By and large, all thought since the Meiji era has in one way or another been concerned with the question of Japan's national polity and the state. There were many outstanding thinkers who, while perceiving the flaws of *kokutai* and grappling with them, tried to elucidate the qualities that define Japan and how it could be made into a better country. Their efforts are by no means outdated, and even today offer many insights.

III. FROM INTROSPECTIVE LIFE TO SECULAR ENGAGEMENT

The documentary film *Into Great Silence* (directed by Philip Gröning, 2005), about life in the Grande Chartreuse monastery in France, was screened in Japan in 2014. It lasted around three hours, without narration or music. I watched it, fascinated.

The contented and serene faces of the monks, who have cut off all contact with the outside world and live their lives in silence, single-mindedly praying to God, remind us, prone as we are to losing sight of ourselves in the hustle and bustle of everyday life, that here is a world completely different from our own.

Japan, too, has demanding forms of ascetic training, such as the periods of intensive meditation (*sesshin*) held in Zen temples and the twelve-year training period on Mount Hiei known as *rōzangyō* ("confined to the mountain"). But the idea of discovering the ideal religious life in total and permanent isolation from the secular world is rare. It is far more usual that practitioners make every effort to exploit the power acquired through their training to benefit society at large. There is a connection here with today's Engaged Buddhism. While sometimes viewed disapprovingly from abroad, Japanese Buddhist priests have been allowed to marry and eat meat since the mid-nineteenth century. In fact, the grounds for these reforms were laid quite early on, as religion drew closer to secular life in Japan.

Confucianism in the Edo period gave further attention to exploring the human condition in the secular world. The trend toward pursuing principles, not through an externally applied ethical code but deep within human nature, shows a thorough, near-religious understanding of humanity. Examples can be found in Nakae Tōju's emphasis on the value of "filial piety" and Itō Jinsai's idea that all virtues emanate from "love."

Saichō

Sange gakushō shiki

Regulations for Students of the Mountain School

> What is the treasure of the nation? It is the mind that aspires to enlightenment. Those who possess that mind are the treasures of the nation. Thus it was said of old that those who protect the land and cast their light over vast distances are called treasures of the nation. A philosopher in times past once said, "A person who can speak but not act is a teacher of the nation, and one who can act but not speak is an asset to the nation. The person who can both speak and act is a treasure of the nation."

In Japan, Buddhism has, over a long period of time, been built on a foundation of funerary practices. Funerary Buddhism has, however, been in rapid decline in recent years, and there is a sense of impending crisis among all sects. By contrast, greater interest has lately been shown in Buddhist social activities other than funerals, such as suicide prevention and various forms of relief for the vulnerable. But given that the primary focus for Buddhist volunteers at the time of the Tōhoku earthquake was on memorial services for the dead, it seems that funerals now need to be reevaluated as the core of Buddhist social initiatives.

Buddhism that does not center on religious practice inside temples but is active in secular society is known as Engaged Buddhism. It was originally centered on pacifist action, as

advocated by the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh (1926–2022), who opposed the Vietnam War, but broadly speaking the term includes all forms of Buddhism actively involved in secular society.

In modern times, Engaged Buddhism has appeared in other parts of Asia, but in the case of Japan, Buddhists have been socially active since ancient times; this can be seen as a characteristic of Japanese Buddhism. The undertakings of Gyōki (668–749) around the eighth century, and of Eizon (1201–1290) and Ninshō (1217–1303) in the thirteenth, are well known.

It was Saichō, though, who laid the theoretical foundation for the social engagement of Japanese Buddhism in the late eighth century. He wanted to set up an ordination platform at Enryakuji on Mount Hiei to give ordinands the Mahayana precepts. It had been the custom until that time, even in Mahayana Buddhist regions like China and Tibet, to ordain clergy using the precepts of Indian sectarian Buddhism based on the Pali Vinaya. While the Mahayana precepts conferred the spirit of the bodhisattva, they were considered inadequate as precepts for ordained monks, as they could also be conferred on laypeople. Saichō sought to use them as precepts for the ordination of the clergy.

This was unprecedented and led to a great debate with Buddhists of the established Nara schools, and it was only after Saichō's death that a Mahayana ordination platform was permitted at Enryakuji. Saichō had set forth his arguments in a collection of documents called *Regulations for Students of the Mountain School* that he presented to the emperor. This treatise outlines the regulations that governed religious training on Mount Hiei and criticizes the full precepts (250 for men, 348

for women) that were required up until this time. It deploys the pejorative term Hinayana ("small vehicle") and speaks of the superiority of the Mahayana bodhisattva precepts.

The characteristic feature of the latter, Saichō said, was that they were applicable to both the aspirant clergy and laypeople. The full precepts as used in Japan essentially separated the two, but Saichō wanted a form of Mahayana practice that would apply with no distinction between lay and ordained. Both would work together to bring happiness to all people; the ordained would provide spiritual guidance, and the lay would be active in the secular realm.

Saichō divided the ordained clergy into two groups: first, the "treasures of the nation" who were the most outstanding and could guide affairs on a national level, and second, the "teachers of the nation" and the "assets of the nation," who, while supported by the state, would be dispatched to communities around the country. They were also required to donate a portion of their stipends to local administrations for the benefit of the people. The money was to be spent on building reservoirs, bringing land under cultivation, building bridges and boats, planting trees, and so on.

The Mahayana path was the spirit of altruism and meant putting the happiness of others first. Tendai monks had to undergo strict religious training for twelve years without leaving Mount Hiei. It was only then that they were permitted to return to the world as fully fledged priests.

Saichō's advocacy of the Mahayana precepts presented the Mahayana bodhisattva spirit as the highest ideal, insisting that Buddhism had to be open to society, not confined to a monastery. Here was the positive promotion of Buddhists' engagement with society.

While this was groundbreaking, it also ended up blurring the distinction between ordained and lay practitioners, and the resultant secularization of the clergy sometimes led to decadence. In this and other ways, Saichō represents the point of departure that made Japanese Buddhism completely different from Buddhism in other parts of Asia.

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Saichō (766–822) was the founder of Tendai Buddhism in Japan. He was born in either 766 or 767 in Furuichi, Ōmi Province (presently Ōtsu, Shiga Prefecture). He received the bodhisattva precepts at the age of fifteen and was ordained with the full precepts when he was twenty, formally becoming a monk. He went to live on Mount Hiei to practice austerities. At thirty-nine he went to study Buddhism at Mount Tiantai in Tang China, returning to Japan the following year. He began composing the *Regulations for Students of the Mountain School* when he was fifty-three and completed it a year later. He advocated strongly for a Mahayana ordination platform on Mount Hiei, despite meeting determined opposition from the established schools of Nara. He died at Mount Hiei at the age of fifty-seven.

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Hōnen

Senchaku hongan nenbutsu shū

Passages on the Selection of the *Nenbutsu* in the Original Vow

> The *nenbutsu* is the superior practice and the other practices are inferior. This is because the *myōgō* [name] contains all of [Amida's] uncountable virtues. Thus Amida's *myōgō* includes all the merits and virtues of Amida's inner enlightenment, such as the four wisdoms, the three bodies, the ten powers, and the four fearlessnesses. Also contained in it are all the merits and virtues of his outward functions, such as the bodily characteristics, the emanations of light, the preaching of the dharma, and the granting of benefits to living beings.

Since coming to live in Kyoto, I have been to see a variety of Buddhist events and have come to appreciate many things of which I had not been fully aware. One of these is that there are different kinds of *nenbutsu*.

The *yuyaku nenbutsu* performed at the Rokuharamitsuji temple in Kyoto at the end of the year is said to have originated with the tenth-century priest Kūya. The chanting is accompanied by strange body movements, and the words of the chant differ from those of the ordinary *nenbutsu*. The magical quality originally possessed by the *nenbutsu* to pacify spirits is conspicuous here. *Rokusai nenbutsu* performances also employ chanting and dance, and are held at various temples. Although

they are called *nenbutsu*, they are largely performance and have become entertainment for the general public.

The *nenbutsu* is also widespread outside the Pure Land (Jōdo) and Shin Pure Land schools, such as in Tendai and Shingon Ritsu, whose diverse forms tell of the depth of Buddhist culture. *Nenbutsu* is not limited to belief in Amida but is also associated with belief in Śākyamuni Buddha (*Shaka nenbutsu*) and Maitreya (*Miroku nenbutsu*).

Today, *nenbutsu* is generally understood to refer to the recitation of Amida's name (Namu Amida Butsu), a form known as *shōmyō nenbutsu* or alternatively *kushō* (oral) *nenbutsu*. The original meaning of the word, however, is "to contemplate the Buddha" (*kansō nenbutsu*), referring to the practice of visualization of the Buddha's image. The oral *nenbutsu* was used for convenience. Belief in the magical power of words was added, and *nenbutsu* was understood to effect the purging of sin and the exorcising of malignant spirits.

It was Hōnen who popularized the understanding of *nenbutsu* as the recitation of Amida's name. His teaching—that people could be reborn in the Western Paradise (Sukhāvatī) by taking refuge in Amida and reciting his name—was extremely straightforward. It appealed to people thrown into confusion by war, and spread very quickly. This was a splendid thing in its own way, but it had the disadvantage of reducing and flattening the rich and varied forms of the *nenbutsu*.

Hōnen's main book, *Passages on the Selection of the Nenbutsu in the Original Vow*, is in one sense an extremely radical work. It not only entrenched the oral form of the *nenbutsu* as the standard but divided all Buddhism into the "holy way" (*shōdōmon*), the path of the practitioner's own power, and the "Pure Land way" (*jōdomon*), the path of Pure Land rebirth.

Hōnen dismissed the former path to enlightenment as too difficult to attain and promoted the latter. In the end, the oral *nenbutsu* alone is selected as the path to Pure Land rebirth.

This is why the word "selection" was used in the title, but according to Hōnen, it is not we who make that selection; it is Amida Buddha. Amida chose the *nenbutsu* as a means of saving people, abandoning other practices. This is because the oral *nenbutsu* is a simple practice that anyone can perform.

Passages on the Selection of the Nenbutsu in the Original Vow quotes from various works in the Buddhist canon, and at first glance Hōnen's argument seems very clear-cut. However, on closer reading, we notice that his reasoning is frequently quite forced. The word that appears in the sutras he quotes is the inclusive *sesshu* (adoption), but Hōnen took it upon himself to seek out a different translation and changed it to *senchaku* (selection). Thus he turned it into a choice between two options: the *nenbutsu* or not.

On reflection, even if Amida had adopted the easy practice of reciting the *nenbutsu*, there was no need for him to abandon other practices. He could have "selected" more than one way of doing things. In fact, a reading of the sutras suggests it is more straightforward to interpret them in this way.

Hōnen's teachings were decisive in that they gave the oral *nenbutsu* legitimacy and took it as absolute, when previously it had been regarded as a lowly practice of convenience. This made it possible for the *nenbutsu* to spread among not only the ordained but also laypeople. At the same time, though, to insist that it was the only way to save all people gave to the *nenbutsu* an exclusivity that denied any other practice. It is ironic that it served to constrain the diversity of Buddhism.

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Hōnen (1133–1212), also known as Genkū, was the founder of the Jōdo (Pure Land) school in Japan. He was born in Mimasaka Province (now northern Okayama Prefecture). He went to Mount Hiei at the age of thirteen and was ordained two years later. When he was forty-three, he started teaching the exclusive practice of the *nenbutsu*, basing himself in Higashiyama in Kyoto. He wrote *Passages on the Selection of the Nenbutsu in the Original Vow* at age sixty-six. In this work, he held that everything, both in Buddhism and life, comes down to chanting the *nenbutsu*. This teaching was banned when he was seventy-five; two of his followers were executed, and he was exiled to Tosa in Shikoku. He returned to Kyoto at age seventy-nine, but died the following New Year at eighty.

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Eizon

Kanjin gakushōki

True Records of Learning for Body and Mind

> On the twenty-fifth day [of the third month of Ninji 3 (1242)] I held a Mañjuśrī assembly at the Kitayama *hinin* community and gave alms. On the third of the fourth month, 104 people received the bodhisattva precepts at Hasedera. . . . On the seventh of the ninth month, we provided baths for prisoners in the eastern prison. On the eighth, we distributed food to them, and I gave them the eight pure precepts. The same day, prisoners in the western prison had a bath. On the ninth, we distributed food to them, and they received the eight pure precepts.

Many prominent Buddhist figures were active in the medieval period. Among the most outstanding were Gedatsubō Jōkei (1155–1213) and Shunjōbō Chōgen (1121–1206), and in 2012, two special exhibitions held at the Nara National Museum featuring their achievements drew public attention to them. Here I would like to take a slightly different perspective and focus on Kōshō Bosatsu Eizon, a central figure in the thirteenth-century movement to revive the precepts.

A feature of Japanese Buddhism is said to be a denial of the monastic precepts (*kairitsu*). Today, Japanese Buddhist priests eat meat and marry as a matter of course, but this is unique among Buddhist countries in Asia. Clerical marriage and meat-eating were officially permitted in 1872, but in actual

fact the precepts against them were relaxed to some extent well before that. The strict Vinaya precepts were introduced to Japan by the Chinese monk Jianzhen (J. Ganjin) in the eighth century, but even at that time many monks did not formally accept them, and clerical marriage was not uncommon.

That is not to say that Japanese Buddhism constantly pursued a path of denying the precepts. Movements to restore the precepts and thereby revitalize Buddhism were launched in every period by monks who earnestly wanted Buddhism to flourish. For example, Yōsai (Eisai, 1141–1215) transmitted not only Zen from Song China to Japan but also the idea that the monastic precepts needed to be revived.

Why are the precepts so important? First of all, they are rules for community life in the monastic order and the minimum requisite for religious training. But that is not all. It was believed that they had been handed down in an unbroken line since the time of Śākyamuni. The age may be that of *mappō*—the idea about the decline of Buddhism that ran through medieval Japanese religion—but the continuity of the precepts ensured a direct link back to the Buddha. The precepts are, so to speak, the criterion for distinguishing true Buddhism.

Eizon first studied esoteric Buddhism. Concerned that the precepts had fallen into disuse in the Shingon school of his time, he aspired to revive them. In 1236, with no one able to act as his precepts master, he performed a ceremony of self-ordination, making his vows and receiving the full Vinaya precepts with three others, including Kakujō (1194–1249), who later restored the Nara temple of Tōshōdaiji. Eizon was then thirty-six years old. From then on, he based his remarkable work at the temple Saidaiji in Nara.

What set Eizon and his followers apart was that they did

not simply focus on restoring the precepts, but conducted extensive social relief activities as a practice of bodhisattva compassion. They banned the taking of life; repaired bridges; built roads and ports; organized relief for the sick, the poor, and prisoners; revived nunneries; and held funerals for the dead.

Eizon's student Ninshō (1217–1303) went to Kamakura and based himself at the temple Gokurakuji, where he was even more active than his master in bringing relief to people. It was through such multifaceted social activities that the Shingon Ritsu (Vinaya) school spread to such an extent that at one time it covered the whole country. Ritsu represents a milestone in the history of social work and welfare activities in Japan.

These activities are recorded in detail in Eizon's autobiography, *True Records of Learning for Body and Mind*. An entry from 1242, when Eizon was forty-two, describes how he made offerings to Mañjuśrī (Monju Bosatsu) at Kitayama-juku (a lodging for a marginalized group called *hinin*) and conferred the bodhisattva precepts on laypeople at Hasedera and other temples. In addition, he provided baths and food for inmates in the eastern and western prisons and gave them the precepts.

If truth be told, the strict observance of the precepts was incompatible with social action. The precepts were intended to allow unbroken concentration on religious training, away from secular society. They made a clear distinction between religious and secular activities, forbidding monks from undertaking manual labor or touching money. Members of Eizon's community, however, were not bound by such restrictions; they actively entered society and engaged in economic activities. They could do so because they considered the precepts so powerful that they could overcome all defilements.

Eizon's activities have been criticized by some for being linked to political power, which ultimately led to stronger state control of the *hinin* class of persecuted people. There may be some legitimacy to this criticism, but Eizon's activism nonetheless presents a model of social engagement that we should revisit today along with his emphasis on Buddhist precepts.

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Eizon (1201–1290) was born in Nara, the son of a scholar-monk of Kōfukuji. He was ordained at the age of seventeen at the Shingon temple Daigoji and performed a self-ordination at Tōdaiji when he was thirty-six. Based at Saidaiji, he promoted the Shingon Ritsu sect with the purpose of revitalizing the precepts. He was involved in a wide range of social activities, including precept-conferral assemblies to purge sin, setting up relief distribution centers, and offering prayer at the Ise and Iwashimizu Hachimangū shrines at the time of the Mongol invasion. He wrote *True Records of Learning for Body and Mind* between the ages of eighty-five and eighty-six. He died at Saidaiji at age ninety and received the posthumous title of Kōshō Bosatsu. Ninshō was one of his students.

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Musō Soseki

Muchū mondōshū

Dialogues in a Dream

> Comparing the bad deeds accumulated [by you] to the good roots you have planted since the time of the Genkō era [1331–1334], which would be greater? During that time, how many people were killed as [your] enemies? In what direction do the thoughts of their wives, children, and members of their households—left behind and adrift—turn? And it is not only your enemies. Your allies also died on the battlefield, and they should also be considered part of your bad deeds.

I like the shrine of Kitano Tenmangū in Kyoto and visit it often. It is a popular spot for students on school excursions, and during the entrance-exam season there is a queue in front of the main building. Everyone knows that praying to Tenjin-sama, the deity enshrined here, does not necessarily mean you will pass your exams, and that the shrine cannot be sued if a student fails an entrance exam. All the same, people continue to appeal to him. We may live in a rationalist world, but not all of our actions can be explained in rational terms.

There is an interesting episode in Musō Soseki's *Dialogues in a Dream*. An old nun visited Kiyomizudera and prayed fervently, "Please make something I hate go away." When a bystander asked her what she was praying for, she replied, "I like the taste of loquats, but I don't like the fact that they have so

many seeds. That's why I visit the temple every year and pray for loquats without any seeds. But my prayers haven't been answered yet."

You would probably laugh at such foolishness as praying about loquat seeds. But, Musō said, "Looking at the world, surely those who visit temples and shrines and recite sutras and mantras, praying for themselves, are not doing so for the sake of attaining the highest enlightenment. They are praying for worldly happiness, to preserve their life span and be spared from calamities. This being the case, can we think a nun who prays for loquat seeds to be so foolish?"

It is all very well to visit Tenjin-sama before an entrance exam, but even today, making supplicatory prayers (*gokitō*) for venal worldly benefits is as widespread as it was in Musō's time. However much a person prays for happiness and longevity, Musō says, if they are attached to the delusion of an ignorant, ordinary being, there is no reason why such prayers should be answered. His argument is highly rational and harsh.

But then his argument takes a turn. Should a person foolish enough to pray about loquat seeds give up on this wish, they are unlikely to start praying to the buddhas and kami for enlightenment. And this would rob them of their karmic connection with the Buddha. Therefore, Musō says, we should encourage such people to go to Kiyomizudera and pray about even the loquat seeds. If worldly benefits provide the opportunity to move toward the realm of enlightenment, then they are not at all a bad thing.

Recognizing both sides of an argument is characteristic of Musō. Until he was fifty, he continued his rigorous training in secluded locations, avoiding fame and wealth. In 1325, however, Emperor Go-Daigo invited him to serve as head of

Nanzenji, a renowned Zen temple in Kyoto, and subsequently he became highly involved in social work. After Go-Daigo's death in 1339, Musō became the spiritual guide of the brothers Ashikaga Takauji and Tadayoshi, and was involved in their project to construct the Tenryūji temple as a memorial to Go-Daigo, among others. In *Dialogues in a Dream*, Musō is preaching to Ashikaga Tadayoshi on the wisdom required of a statesman based on the principles of Buddhism.

Musō's activities were balanced between strict adherence to the Buddhist teachings and flexibility regarding the realities of secular society. It was an extremely delicate balance, and there was a danger that if Musō loosened the reins just a little he would fall prey to this-worldly benefits. He was in fact criticized for his secular proclivities in his lifetime by the Zen purist Daitō Kokushi Shūhō Myōchō (1283–1338), and even in modern times he has not always been regarded highly.

All the same, he was a fearless critic of war, asking the statesman Tadayoshi to his face, "During that time, how many people were killed as [your] enemies? In what direction do the thoughts of their wives, children, and members of their households—left behind and adrift—turn?" There was no sign of compromise with the secular world when he urged Tadayoshi to reflect on the depth of his bad deeds.

With the separation of the Northern and Southern Courts in 1336, issues concerning secular society came to the fore. Musō directly questioned the relationship between the secular world and Buddhism and tried to reconstruct secular society according to the principles of Buddhism. He neither denied nor drowned in the secular world, but attempted to turn it toward a great ideal. Such an attitude deserves a revival in the present age of rampant and unthinking opportunism.

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Musō Soseki (1275–1351) was born in Ise Province (now Mie Prefecture), but his family soon moved to the province of Kai (now Yamanashi Prefecture). When he was nine, he entered the Tendai monastery of Heienji in Kai. He subsequently moved among Rinzai Zen temples and masters mainly in the Kantō region, and then headed a number of temples, including Nanzenji in Kyoto, and Jōchiji and Engakuji in Kamakura. He moved to Kyoto when he was fifty-nine, following the fall of the Kamakura shogunate. His *Dialogues in a Dream* consists of ninety-three sections covering topics such as Buddhism and government, seeking the way and the common good, the merits of kami and buddhas, and true practice. He opened Rinsenji at age sixty-one, and Tenryūji at sixty-five. He died at Rinsenji when he was seventy-seven.

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Rennyo

Rennyo monjū

Rennyo's Letters

In the school founded by Shinran Shōnin, faith is first and foremost. What is the purpose of that faith? It is the initial step enabling pitiful, ordinary beings like ourselves, who lack good and do only evil, to be reborn easily in Amida's Pure Land.

If you visit Kyoto, you will almost certainly pass by one of the two Honganji temples, even if you do not actually visit them. Standing near each other in the vicinity of Kyoto Station, they remind us that Kyoto is a Buddhist city. In 1602, the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu divided the Shin Pure Land school, then under the main temple, Honganji, into East Honganji and West Honganji. He feared its power. It was Rennyo who had laid the foundations for Honganji to grow into such a huge religious organization.

It is generally held today that Rennyo spread the teachings of Shinran among the people, and that his followers, inflamed by their faith, finally rose up against the oppression of the warlords of the Sengoku period in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in the violent uprisings called *ikkō ikki*. While there can be no doubting that Rennyo based his teachings on those of Shinran, there are subtle differences between the two, which is not surprising given the different times and issues that divided them.

Rennyo certainly resurrected Honganji, then in decline, and restored it to prosperity, but Shinran's teachings were taught not just by the Honganji branch. The Bukkōji branch was a major force in Kyoto at the time, and the Takada branch was also extending its reach around the country. Thus it is not accurate to say that Shinran's teachings did not spread until Rennyo appeared.

The *ikkō ikki*, moreover, was not as simple a movement as the anti-feudal struggle it has been hypothesized to be under a once-popular progressive view of history. Behind the 1474 uprising in Kaga (now Ishikawa Prefecture) was the involvement both of Honganji adherents and their bitter rivals, the Takada branch, in a power struggle within the Togashi clan over the governorship of Kaga Province. It is now very clear that those who subsequently held power within the *ikki* were not exclusively Shin believers.

At the core of Rennyo's thought is his insistence on faith alone, and that it is this faith that determines rebirth. Thus, "We should understand that the *nenbutsu*, henceforth, is the recitation of Buddha's name to express gratitude to Amida" (letter dated the twelfth of the eighth month, Bunmei 5 [1473]). Rennyo vigorously voiced his criticism that the Buddhism of the other branches of Shinran's school had degenerated; he contrasted the Honganji position on the importance of faith with that of the other branches, which, he felt, had lost their faith and were only interested in the gifts monks were offered in exchange for their services. This same line of argument is still used today by new religious movements when setting themselves up against established powers.

Rennyo cut away the complex elements held by Shinran and greatly simplified the latter's teachings. He limited the issue

to the internal element of faith, separating faith from the *nenbutsu*, whereas Shinran held that both were equally important. A single instance of absolute faith satisfied all conditions for rebirth, and the *nenbutsu,* an expression of gratitude to Amida, was no longer necessary. With no difficult philosophy to master and no need for troublesome practice, the promise of rebirth in the Pure Land was now accessible to all.

Moreover, once faith had been established, a person was free to engage in secular activities, and the secular sphere greatly expanded. In the process, the medieval fear of an invisible (*myō*) realm beyond human knowledge diminished, and a new type of religion linked to life within the secular world was born.

This brought with it new problems, however. In a letter dated the seventeenth of the second month, Bunmei 6 (1474), Rennyo wrote, "In particular, we must live our lives based on the social mores of benevolence and righteousness, while abiding by the laws of the land outwardly and living by faith inwardly." As long as inner faith was firmly established, it was fine to act in accordance with society's ethics, obeying the secular law outwardly. Here Rennyo was attempting to distance himself from the *ikkō ikki* and avoid extremism. This meant that the power of religion did not extend to the secular world. In this view, secular problems are not solved by religious faith but depend on a completely different secular principle.

This dualization of religious faith and secular activity is also followed in modern Shin Buddhism. Because religion does not comment on secular matters, problems arise. For example, even volunteer work in disaster-affected areas is regarded as a secular activity that cannot be given any religious significance.

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Rennyo (1415–1499) was born the son of Zonnyo, the seventh *monshu* (head priest) of Honganji, in the Ōtani area of Higashiyama, Kyoto. He succeeded his father as the eighth *monshu* at age forty-three. When the Ōtani Honganji was destroyed in an attack by militia-priests from Mount Hiei in 1468, Rennyo moved to Yoshizaki in Echizen (now Awara, Fukui Prefecture) at age fifty-seven. He rebuilt Honganji in Yamashina, Kyoto, when he was sixty-nine, and retired at seventy-five. He moved to a hermitage in Ishiyama, Settsu (the later Ishiyama Honganji) at age eighty-two. He died at Yamashina when he was eighty-five. His pastoral letters, called *ofumi* or *gobunshō*, communicate important points about faith to followers living in different parts of the country.

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Suzuki Shōsan

Roankyō

Donkey Saddle Bridge

> Farm work is itself Buddhist practice. There is no need to seek out anything else. The body of each of you is the Buddha's body, your mind the Buddha's mind, and your work the Buddha's work. . . . This being so, if you invoke a great vow to extinguish all karmic hindrances through your farm work and till your fields reciting Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu at each stroke of the hoe, you will surely reach enlightenment.

The Edo period is often thought of as the age of Confucianism. It is generally understood that as well as the orthodox neo-Confucianism of the Zhu Xi school, there was the competing movement of Ogyū Sorai and others called "ancient learning" (*kogaku*), as well as nativist (*kokugaku*) scholars like Motoori Norinaga who criticized Confucianism. Buddhism, on the other hand, was thought to have degenerated in the Edo period, having lost its creativity after being placed under the shogunate's control.

Today, it has become clear that such an understanding was wrong. Certainly, the shogunate controlled Buddhism closely and severely limited its activities. The relationship between temples and their parishioners was tightened as a means to control the spread of Christianity, and temples were put in charge of supervising the local population. This

temple-parishioner (*jidan*, or *danka*) system was decried, with Buddhism being seen as a tool of secular rulers.

All the same, the system allowed Buddhism to permeate every corner of society, exerting a profound influence on people's lives. If the only purpose had been to control the population, it could have been accomplished directly by the secular rulers, without borrowing the power of Buddhism. But Buddhism was a force to be reckoned with, deeply rooted among the people, whereas Confucianism remained the ethics of the warrior class. As Confucian rituals were in principle forbidden even for samurai, funerals generally relied on Buddhism.

Nevertheless, there may be some criticism that nothing new or meaningful appeared in Buddhist thought or practice during the Edo period. That view is also wrong. Many outstanding Buddhist figures emerged during this period, some of them even paving the way for new Confucian and nativist ideas.

One such figure was Suzuki Shōsan, a Mikawa samurai who fought in the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) and the siege of Osaka (1614–15). He suddenly became a Sōtō Zen monk when he was forty-two. After undertaking what was for all intents and purposes ascetic training in various places, he built the temple Sekiheizan Onshinji in his hometown and settled there before moving to Edo in his later years. Among his many writings, *Donkey Saddle Bridge* is a record of his teachings in his last seven years, as written down by his student.

Shōsan's Zen, which he called Niō Zen—referring to the two fierce guardian kings at the gate of Buddhist temples—and War Cry Zen, is characterized by a courage derived from his experience of facing death as a warrior. His style of Zen is not only unique and interesting but has led to the development of a variety of noteworthy ideas.

Among them, his work ethic is well known. Shōsan asserts that the duties of the four classes of society—warriors, farmers, artisans, and merchants—were allotted by heaven, and so carrying those duties out was intrinsically Buddhist practice. This is discussed in detail in his book *Banmin tokuyō* (The Merit of Practice for All) but also in *Donkey Saddle Bridge*, where he says, "Farm work is itself Buddhist practice. . . . [if you] till your fields reciting Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu at each stroke of the hoe, you will surely reach enlightenment."

This has been regarded as a modern work ethic similar to that of Western Protestantism. Compared with the latter, Shōsan's theory is premised on the feudal social order and has been criticized as playing a role in its entrenchment. It is true that aspects of his theory can hardly be called modern. But he nonetheless gave Buddhist meaning and value to secular life, proclaiming, "The laws of the world are no different from those of the Buddha." This was a new view of human life that came to characterize the early modern period. It had more in common with Confucianism and was clearly distinct from that of the medieval period.

Shōsan also advocated the need for the country to be governed by Buddhist law in a form close to the temple-parishioner system. He found it strange that temples should be tax-exempt if they had no contributions to make to society, and he argued therefore that they should be required to teach. The temple-parishioner system materialized not just because it was imposed by the government; there were assenting voices on the Buddhist side as well. Shōsan is a thinker who offers important insights into the Edo period.

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Suzuki Shōsan (1579–1655) was born into a samurai family in Mikawa (now Aichi Prefecture). He fought for the Tokugawa side and was elevated to *hatamoto* but became a Sōtō Zen priest at forty-two. He went to Amakusa after the Christian uprising in neighboring Shimabara in 1637–1638 to propagate Buddhism. He advocated Niō Zen, which required practicing with the ferocity of a guardian king. He wrote many books during his lifetime, including *Banmin tokuyō* (The Merit of Practice for All), in which, respecting the life of the layperson, he said that the callings of warrior, farmer, artisan, and merchant were in themselves the Buddhist way; and *Inga monogatari* (Tales of Cause and Effect), a printed work written mainly in kana script. He died in Edo (now Tokyo) at age seventy-seven.

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Itō Jinsai

Dōjimon

Dialogue with a Child

> Benevolence is a great virtue. In one word, it is none other than love. Between rulers and ministers, it is called righteousness [*gi*]; between fathers and sons, it is called affection [*shin*]; between husbands and wives, it is called differentiation [*betsu*]; between elder and younger brothers, it is called precedence [*jo*]; and between friends, it is called trust [*shin*]. They all issue from love. Love comes from a sincere heart, and so when these five things emanate from love, they are sincere.

It is difficult to say how much influence Confucianism has really had on Japan and whether it continues to have an influence today. Buddhism still has a large number of temples throughout Japan and, despite some criticism, retains considerable power. But Confucianism has no place of practice, so to speak, and no specialists like Buddhist priests. Confucianism is overtly practiced only in a few places, like Yushima Seidō in Tokyo. Unlike China, where Confucius is held up as an alternative to Marx, or in Korea, where the Confucian tradition still permeates society, in Japan Confucianism seems far less powerful. The Edo period was once considered the age of Confucianism, but today we know that this tradition was only one of the many ideas in currency.

We should not, however, underestimate the influence of Confucianism, even today. The ethic of loyalty and filial piety, more than anything, exerted a major influence on the modern era through the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890. Its source can be traced back to the idea of *kokutai* (national polity) formulated by the Mito school, which was embraced by the *sonnō jōi* ("revere the emperor and expel the barbarians") movement spearheaded by Yoshida Shōin (1830–1859) and others. However, unlike such politically oriented Confucianism, there were thinkers who tried to bring Confucianism closer to daily life. Itō Jinsai is a typical example. A merchant by birth, he distanced himself from political power throughout his life, and worked to educate his students at his private school, Kogidō. *Dialogue with a Child*, written when he was sixty-seven, was an introduction to Confucianism.

Jinsai's fundamental stance was that no lofty truth existed apart from the everyday; truth had to be active within daily life. He wrote that the original way of the sage is one that is marked by sincerity in dealing with one's close relations. "In truth, exalted theories that are hard to grasp and difficult to put into practice are heretical. Those that are easy to grasp and easy to put into practice—those that are sincere and close at hand—are the way of Yao and Shun, the original teaching of Confucius, and the principle of the *Analects*" (*Dōjimon* I, 5).

What, then, is this way that is sincere and close at hand? Jinsai explained, "The one and only way is that existing between rulers and ministers, fathers and sons, husbands and wives, elder and younger brothers, and friends" (*Dōjimon* I, 9). There is nothing difficult here. The way is nothing other than having close personal relationships in their ideal form. That is why, according to Jinsai, Buddhists and neo-Confucianists are

mistaken in describing the way of the sage as something exalted, and demanding special training for it.

Though the way expresses itself in diverse ways in various situations, fundamentally it can be defined as benevolence, which, more simply said, is love. "Benevolence is primarily love, and there is no greater virtue than love for others" (*Dōjimon* I, 40). "Benevolence" is not some lofty concept. The relations between people—righteousness between rulers and ministers, affection between fathers and sons, differentiation between husbands and wives, and precedence between elder and younger brothers—are born of a sincere heart, which is love. Love is to act for the sake of others with sincerity and in good faith. Politics is also based on the principle of benevolence (that is, love). The way of the king is "to share the joys and sorrows of the people" (*Dōjimon* II, 20).

Buddhism looks down on love as a form of attachment. But here, love is upheld as a fundamental principle of secular ethics. Secular human relationships are built on mutual sincerity, not confrontation based on competing interests. Confucianism is often dismissed as feudal morality, but at its core, it is concerned with building an ideal society by establishing good relationships with others. In this respect, it is hardly a relic of the past.

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Itō Jinsai. *Dōjimon*. Edited and annotated by Shimizu Shigeru. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970.

Itō Jinsai (1627–1705) was a Confucian scholar of the early Edo period. He was born in Kyoto, the eldest son of a merchant family, but passed the business to his brother and opened a private school, the Kogidō, in his home (Kamigyō-ku, Kyoto) at the age of thirty-six. Criticizing the neo-Confucianism of his time, he initiated the Kogigaku (Study of Ancient Meaning) school of thought, advocating the need to study the *Analects* and *Mencius* in their original Chinese. He wrote, among others, *Rongo kogi* (Commentary on the *Analects*) and *Mōshi kogi* (Commentary on *Mencius*). He began writing *Dōjimon* (Dialogue with a Child) when he was around sixty-five. It was published after he died at age seventy-nine. The manuscript was edited and revised by his son Itō Tōgai and other students.

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IV. VIEWS ON THE PHYSICAL BODY

Descartes' revelation, "I think, therefore I am," prompted the creation of the modern concept of the "self," idealized and extracted as pure reason, detached from the body. This also gave rise to the conundrum of how the mind and body relate to one another. Developments in brain science, moreover, have shown that the brain is the source of all physical activity, leading some to argue that if we can understand how the brain works, we can alleviate all ailments afflicting human beings. Such claims, obviously, are overblown.

By contrast, thinkers in Japan and the rest of Asia have, on the whole, attached greater importance to the physical body. India's yoga and China's qigong are bodily practices that may not necessarily be all that old, but they are based on ideas from ancient times, ideas which gave rise to oriental medicine, independent of the Western tradition. The Japanese theory of the body shares this genealogy. In recent years, ideas about the body have been increasingly discussed in the West, greatly influenced by the acceptance of Eastern thought.

The question of the body naturally includes questions of sex and reproduction as important elements, and this has developed into discussions of gender. In premodern times, adequate consideration was not given to the view from a female perspective, but there was an awareness—albeit one-sided—of the importance of sex, a topic that was largely obscured and excluded from public debate in the modern period. It is only in recent times that renewed attention has been drawn to such topics as esoteric Buddhist discourses on sex from the medieval period and the erotic prints (*shunga*) of the Edo period.

Yōsai

Kissa yōjōki

Nourishing Life by Drinking Tea

> Of all the things that heaven has created, human beings are the most noble. To protect one's health so as to preserve one's life is prudent. The basis of preserving one's life is to nourish it by maintaining the well-being of the five organs [heart, liver, lungs, spleen, and kidneys]. Among these five, the heart is sovereign, and the drinking of tea is the best method to make the heart healthy.

Kamakura Buddhism, typified by Shinran and Dōgen, has long been praised as the pinnacle of Japanese Buddhism. This was a popular and innovative movement that was labeled New Buddhism, as opposed to the conservative Old Buddhism that sought to suppress the new trend. Though the teachings of Yōsai (Eisai), the founder of the Rinzai school of Zen in Japan, were new, he has long been thought not radical enough for having retained many elements of older, esoteric Buddhism.

Today, this view is undergoing considerable change, as recent research has led to renewed recognition of the importance of esoteric Buddhism. Attention has also been drawn to the many new materials that have been uncovered concerning Yōsai.

The discovery of fourteen letters in Yōsai's own handwriting at the temple Shinpukuji (Ōsu Kannon) in Nagoya made headlines in the winter of 2003. Also found at this time were complete and fragmentary works by Yōsai that had previously

been unknown. I experienced firsthand the excitement of seeing the history of Buddhism being rewritten, as I assisted in the discovery and subsequent research.

Yōsai went to Song China twice, in 1168 and again in 1187–91. The writings discovered at Shinpukuji are all from the time he was active in northern Kyushu, before his second journey, and are purely esoteric in content. The common narrative is that during his second stay in China, he went to Mount Tiantai and studied the Huanglong lineage of Linji (Rinzai) Zen under its master, Xuan Huaichang, of the Wannian temple there. He then wrote *Kōzen gokokuron* (The Promotion of Zen for the Protection of the Country) upon his return to Japan and proclaimed the independence of the Zen school. This view is not, we now know, altogether accurate.

It is true that Yōsai introduced a new style of Zen from China, but he had no intention of launching an independent school; rather, what he had in mind after his return was a comprehensive reform and revival of Japanese Buddhism as a whole. He also played a central role in the reconstruction of the temple Tōdaiji in Nara, which had been destroyed during the Genpei War.

Yōsai is said to have introduced tea along with Zen from China and so is regarded as the progenitor of tea in Japan. He wrote *Nourishing Life by Drinking Tea*, which promoted the drink, in his later years, and it had a great influence on Japanese tea culture. Why was it that he devoted so much effort to the spread of tea, which is not necessarily a part of Buddhist practice?

The first part of the book discusses the five organs (liver, lungs, heart, spleen, and kidneys) from the standpoint of esoteric Buddhism and describes the medicinal properties of tea.

A deep interest in the human body is evident here. A similar interest can also be seen in *Ingoshū* (Collection of Esoteric Idioms), a work he wrote prior to his second journey to China, in which he uses the metaphor of the pleasure of sexual union between a man and a woman to discuss the unity of the Womb and Diamond Realm mandalas.

The sect known as Tachikawa-ryū introduced sexual elements into Buddhism and is today largely condemned as a disreputable heresy. Recent research has found, though, that its teachings were widely followed and not considered heretical at all in the medieval period. Behind its popularity was a growing interest in the physical body, as evidenced by the development of a theory of embryology during this period.

This emphasis on the body is the historical context in which Yōsai wrote that tea cultivates health and prolongs life. His book also discusses different types of illness and their treatment. At first glance, a primer on prolonging life may appear to be at odds with the goal of Buddhism, which is to achieve enlightenment by breaking our attachment to life. If we understand, though, that Buddhism does not negate life itself but seeks true paths to living in the real world, then it is only natural that it should take the issue of the body seriously.

Buddhism is concerned not only with the mind but also with the whole of life, including the body. Tea culture developed in tandem with Buddhism. Yōsai's embrace of both esotericism and Zen broadened the scope of Buddhism and can also be said to have helped enrich Japanese culture.

Key Text

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Myōan Yōsai (Eisai) (1141–1215) transmitted the Rinzai (Ch. Linji) school of Zen to Japan. He was born in Bitchū (now Okayama Prefecture) and was ordained on Mount Hiei at the age of fourteen. He went to China when he was twenty-eight and again when he was forty-seven. The second time he spent four years there, receiving the transmission of Linji Zen before returning to Japan. He wrote *Kōzen gokokuron* at age fifty-eight. He went to Kamakura at the age of sixty to found the temple Jufukuji. When he was sixty-two, he founded Kenninji in Kyoto. He took over the fundraising campaign to rebuild Tōdaiji at sixty-six and wrote *Kissa yōjōki* when he was seventy-four, presenting it to the shogun, Minamoto no Sanetomo. This is the oldest manual about tea in Japan; it discusses the benefits of tea and how it is made. Yōsai died at age seventy-five.

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Myōe

Yume no ki

Dream Diary

> In a dream on the night of the sixth day of the eleventh month . . . I saw a beautiful, refined woman inside a building. Her clothing was magnificent. However, I felt no worldly desire for her. I was with this noble lady, but I heartlessly left her. She was fond of me and did not want me to go. But I ignored her and departed. Still, I felt no worldly desire for her.

Togano'o Kōzanji is an ancient temple in the mountains northwest of Kyoto. It is listed as a World Heritage site and is full of tourists during the autumn foliage season. At other times, though, it is usually quiet, far from the hustle and bustle of the city.

It has been more than twenty years since I joined the team researching the vast collection of Buddhist scriptures held by this temple. I make overnight visits to the temple two or three times a year to view the medieval materials. The opportunity to delve deep into a world from hundreds of years ago fills my heart with serenity and joy.

Myōe was the de facto founder of Kōzanji. He is said to have been enraged by Hōnen's posthumously published *Senchaku hongan nenbutsu shū* (Passages on the Selection of the *Nenbutsu* in the Original Vow) and wrote *Zaijarin* (Shattering Heresy) to denounce it. For Myōe, a Kegon scholar and a dedicated practitioner, nothing was more important than *bodhicitta*,

or aspiration to enlightenment. It is unsurprising that Myōe should have reacted so angrily, for Hōnen argued that *bodhicitta* was not necessary for rebirth in paradise.

Myōe had a deep faith in the historical Buddha and an ardent desire to travel to India, the birthplace of the Buddha. But he gave the idea up after an oracle by Kasuga Myōjin, the tutelary deity of Kasuga Shrine in Nara, advised him not to go. In his later years, he practiced *bukkōkan*, a contemplation of light emanating from the Buddha's feet and of becoming one with that light. He was single-minded in his love for the Buddha, in his wish to meet him, and in his determination to attain the same state of enlightenment.

Myōe often uses romantic love as a metaphor for his feelings for the Buddha. The longing felt by a man and woman who are in love with one another and their joy when united is unbounded. How much more so is love for the Buddha. Such is *bodhicitta*. This metaphor is extremely vivid and sincere, reflecting the overwhelming passion that must have filled the heart of the man who is said to have been celibate all his life.

Myōe is also known for his *Dream Diary*, in which he recorded each dream he had. Today, dreams are interpreted as expressions of the repressed unconscious, but in the past they were thought to be the means by which kami and buddhas manifested themselves. Shinran, who was the same age as Myōe, withdrew to Rokkakudō, a temple in Kyoto, and decided on the greatest turning point in his life as the result of a visitation in a dream.

Myōe was uniquely meticulous in writing down his dreams. A great many of them were about the Buddha, indicating that he regarded his dreams as a reliable means of drawing near the Buddha.

Some of these dreams are sexually graphic. In a dream he had when he was young, a beautiful, refined woman appeared. Myōe was with her but heartlessly left her. She was fond of Myōe and did not want him to go. But he ignored her nonetheless and left. The fact that Myōe twice insisted that he felt no worldly desire for her actually serves to highlight the intensity of his feelings. In interpreting the dream, he surmised that the woman must have been Birushana (Vairocana) and then rose from his bed in the middle of the night and went to the meditation hall to do zazen. It was in this period that the physical and the sexual were daringly introduced into Buddhism, as can be seen in the works of Yōsai.

In his later years, Myōe fervently practiced both the *bukkōkan* and the method of the five mysteries. The latter was a practice performed before the five secret bodhisattvas that speak of desire and its fulfillment: Kongōsatta, Yokukongō (desire), Sokukongō (touch), Aikongō (attachment), and Mankongō (pride). There is a powerful sense here that worldly desires are employed in order to go beyond the world, to enter the invisible realm (*myō*) while in the living body. Shinran's decision to marry was also testimony to the ethos of the time.

The intense energy of these men to move between the secular and Buddhist worlds has been lost in modern times. The medieval period was a time rich with many important things that we have forgotten.

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Hirano Tae, and Maegawa Ken'ichi. Tokyo: Bensei Shuppan, 2015.

Myōe Kōben (1173–1232) was a Buddhist priest considered to be the restorer of the Kegon school. He was born the son of the warrior Taira no Shigekuni, in Kii Province (now Wakayama Prefecture). He entered Jingoji on Mount Takao at the age of nine and was ordained with the full precepts at sixteen. He studied both Shingon and Kegon doctrine and kept a dream diary for forty years from the time he was in his teens. He entered a life of seclusion when he was twenty-one and later lived in a hermitage at the Shirakami Pass in Kii. When he was thirty-four, he was granted an estate at Togano'o in Kyoto and restored the old temple of Kōzanji there. He wrote *Zaijarin* at age forty. He died at Kōzanji when he was sixty.

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Shōkai

Ippen hijiri e

Illustrated Biography of Ippen

> Ippen Shōnin taught: "Those who lack understanding are possessed by demons and do not believe in the true Buddha-dharma. So trying to teach them is completely meaningless. The only recourse is to have them recite Namu Amida Butsu." Ippen said openly that deathbed signs of purple clouds and flowers falling from heaven were of no avail as far as rebirth was concerned, and indeed they did not appear when he died.

In the past, Japan was an agricultural country, with the majority of its population engaged in farming. Peasants settled and cultivated pieces of land, giving the lords who owned them a great deal of power. The historian Amino Yoshihiko (1928–2004), in looking at the medieval period, has, however, drawn our attention to people in nonagricultural occupations. These include, on the one hand, those involved in activities older than agriculture, such as fishing and hunting and gathering, and on the other, those in new industries like commerce and manufacturing, as well as those devoting themselves to religion and the performing arts. Not necessarily tied to the land like farmers, they had a great deal of mobility and, on the periphery of settled farming communities, they played a role in preventing social ossification and in breathing new life into society.

This mobility also had an impact on religion. When the

temples of Nara were destroyed by Taira warriors setting fire to the city, fundraising monks (*kanjinsō*) traveled the provinces seeking donations to rebuild the temples, and in the process encouraged the revival of Buddhism in those places. Their efforts spread Buddhism throughout the country and became a force for the creation of a new culture. Saigyō, the famous poet-monk, was one such *kanjinsō*.

During the late Kamakura period in the second half of the thirteenth century, though, there emerged itinerant monks of a different form. Ippen's activities were typical: he "roamed in practice" (*yugyō*), never settling anywhere, and performed the *nenbutsu* around the country. His *nenbutsu* gatherings are vividly depicted in the *Illustrated Biography of Ippen*, which introduces his life in pictures and text.

One picture in this scroll depicts people gathered around a temporary structure with a roof and a raised floor, watching *nenbutsu* priests beating gongs and drums as they dance inside. It was almost a spectacle, and illustrates the transmutation of the *nenbutsu* into entertainment. This was the way Ippen gathered people together to propagate the *nenbutsu*, distributing slips of paper (*ofuda*) on which were written the six characters for Namu Amida Butsu.

Ippen's dancing *nenbutsu* is said to have originated with Kūya (903–972), an early *nenbutsu* practitioner, but the construction of a network of *nenbutsu* groups also derives from the *yūzū nenbutsu* of Ryōnin (1072–1132), which promoted group recitation. Doctrinally, it was influenced by the Seizan branch of Hōnen's Pure Land school. It drew together various *nenbutsu* streams, but according to the *Illustrated Biography*, just before his death, Ippen burned all the books and writings in his possession, saying, "All the sacred teachings of the

Nenbutsu priests dance and play music atop a raised floor. Hōgen En'i, *Illustrated Biography of Ippen*, vol. 7. (detail), 1299. Silk painting. Property of the Tokyo National Museum. Courtesy of ColBase. (https://colbase.nich.go.jp/)

Buddha have become just Namu Amida Butsu." As a result, there are few sources detailing his thought.

In fact, his activities are basically founded on a refusal to construct doctrines in words. In this respect, Ippen's *nenbutsu* is extremely close to Zen, with its formula "no dependence on words" (*furyū monji*). The story of Ippen practicing Zen under the Rinzai monk Hottō Kokushi Shinchi Kakushin (1207–1298) and receiving certification from him is doubtful as historical fact, but he certainly interacted with Zen practitioners and had much in common with them.

What, then, was this *nenbutsu* that denied doctrine? The vocal recitation, accompanied by the physical activity of dancing, leads to a state described in Ippen's "Betsugan wasan" ("Hymn of Amida's Vow") as "the oneness of the Buddha and all living beings in Namu Amida Butsu." Such union precludes any need for purple clouds or flowers falling from heaven.

It is like a state of ecstasy and, similar to the phenomenon of possession, is the manifestation in this visible world (*ken*) of the invisible realm (*myō*) through the medium of the physical body. The enlightenment of Zen is basically the same. In fact, Ippen is depicted in the *Illustrated Biography* as a misshapen black figure that embodies an otherworldly nature.

Ippen's ascetic wandering was not haphazard. It began at Kumano and then moved on to sacred places associated with various kami and buddhas. In this respect, it was similar to a pilgrimage. Sacred places are where the invisible divinities are manifested. Communion with the invisible realm is further deepened by performing the *nenbutsu* there.

These medieval performances teemed with the energy of the invisible realm, an intimacy we no longer feel today. This is the period's greatest attraction. The fact that Ippen's Jishū school was banned in the Edo period and subsequently declined is a telling indication of the changing times.

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Ippen Chishin (1239–1289) was the founder of the Jishū school. Born into a prominent family, the Kōno, in Iyo Province (now Ehime Prefecture), he entered the priesthood at the age of ten in the Tendai temple of Keikyōji. He went to study under Shōtatsu (a follower of one of Hōnen's chief disciples) at Dazaifu in Kyushu at age thirteen. He returned to lay life when he was twenty-five to take over the headship of his family, but returned to the

priesthood several years later. At thirty-six, he made a pilgrimage to Mount Kōya and Kumano by way of Shitennōji in Osaka and began his journey distributing *nenbutsu* slips. He died at Kannondō in Settsu (now Kobe, Hyōgo Prefecture) when he was fifty-one. The *Illustrated Biography* was composed by his student Shōkai ten years after his death. His poetry and sermons were collected separately as *Ippen Shōnin goroku* (*The Record of Ippen*).

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Zeami

Fūshi kaden

Transmission of the Flower of Acting Style

> In the first place, the performing arts are a means of comforting the hearts of people and giving them long life and good fortune, be they high or low. If mastered to the ultimate level, all paths will increase longevity and good fortune. *Sarugaku* noh, though, is the highest such art. Leaving behind the family name in this art means gaining recognition from heaven and earth. This is the pinnacle of long life and good fortune.

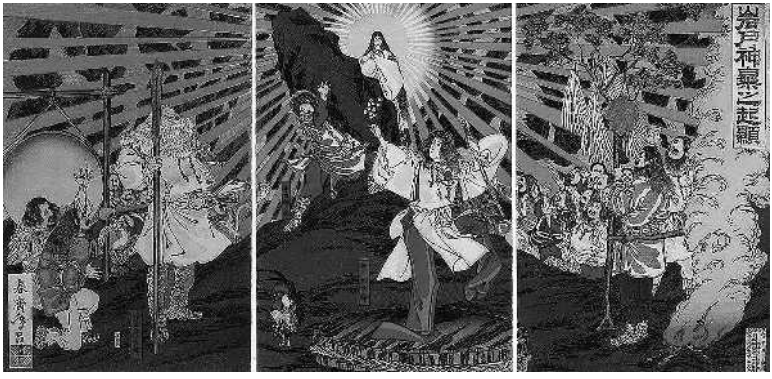
During my liberal arts education at university, I took a seminar course with the noh specialist Koyama Hiroshi and read many noh plays. At his urging I went to see noh performances from time to time, although I did not have a full grasp of what was transpiring on stage. I also like kabuki, but noh has a strange charm that lures one into another dimension without warning. There was an opaqueness I could not penetrate, though, and to tell the truth, I often found myself growing bored.

Sarugaku, originally a kind of popular entertainment that mainly consisted of comic sketches and the like, gained the patronage of the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (1358–1408) after he saw a performance by Kan'ami and his son Zeami. Shogunal patronage transformed *sarugaku* into a refined and aristocratic performing art fit for the nobility. The principal

aesthetic concept on which it evolved was called *yūgen*. Zeami's broad and enduring appeal, though, lay not so much in his elucidation of a complicated theory of art as in the fact that he was, in essence, a performing artist whose livelihood depended on being able to entertain and remain popular with his audience. His theory about the art of *sarugaku* (noh) developed out of a need to walk a tightrope. He had to meet the standards of high culture while also appealing to the more vulgar and often bawdy tastes of the masses.

In the first place, there is no high or low in the performing arts. As the *Transmission of the Flower* says, they "are a means of comforting the hearts of people and giving them long life and good fortune, be they high or low." Noh must be able to arouse similar emotions in all people, whatever their station in life, transcending rank and being accessible to all. "A truly masterful actor is one who is praised everywhere—by nobles, at mountain temples, in the countryside, in distant provinces, and at the festivals of various shrines." His father Kan'ami was such an actor, he claims, "always taking pains to consider the customs of the place where he was performing, no matter how far removed in the countryside or deep in the mountains." Such an attitude is the essence of noh, and an actor must never just go through the motions, whatever the setting (*Transmission of the Flower*, vol. 5).

When reading *Transmission of the Flower*, we must not forget that these were the issues he was addressing. Volume 1, "Training Year by Year," which discusses how one should develop one's art according to age group, can also be read as a selection of principles for life. His advice is not directed at those seeking a lofty and solitary artistic ideal; rather, it is more relevant for celebrities in the entertainment industry who



Shunsai Toshimasa, *Origin of the Cave Door Dance*, 1889. Triptych woodblock print. Property of the Museum of Applied Arts (Vienna). Courtesy of akg-images/Aflo.

devote all their energies to maintaining and boosting their popularity.

Keeping this in mind, the discussion on the origins of noh in volume 4 is interesting. Zeami traces its source to both India and Japan. In Japan, he says, it began with the dance performed by Ama no Uzume in front of the Rock Cave of Heaven. "She placed a *shide* [zig-zag-shaped white cloth] on a *sakaki* branch, raised her voice, burned a torch, stamped her feet, and began to sing and dance." This dance, both vulgar and comical, had simultaneously the sanctity of a kami rite.

The Indian origin is related in the story of how, when Śākyamuni's discourse was interrupted by nonbelievers, his disciples performed impersonations at the back door, drawing the attention of the nonbelievers away from the Buddha so that he could resume his discourse. There is no mention of this story in Buddhist scriptures. The "back door" (*ushirodo*) refers to the rear entrance behind the main image in a temple;

it is said that the ritual of venerating a deity there was the origin of the performing arts. Though it is attributed to an event at the time of the Buddha, it is strange to imagine his solemn disciples doing comical impersonations.

Zeami notes, moreover, that these two origin stories were combined by Hata no Kawakatsu at the time of Prince Shōtoku (574–622). They thus served to unite external and indigenous elements, as the Hata clan is said to have descended from Qin Shi Huangdi, the founder of the Qin dynasty in China. The classical arts evolved through the amalgamation of many such opposites: high and low, sacred and profane, and comical and solemn, as well as indigenous and foreign.

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Zeami Motokiyo (1363?–1443?) was a noh actor and playwright. He was the son of Kan'ami Kiyotsugu, who set up the Kanze-za, one of the five Yamato *sarugaku* troupes which performed at Kasuga Shrine and other places. At the age of twelve, he performed in Kyoto with his father and won the favor of the third Ashikaga shogun, Yoshimitsu, propelling him to stardom. He wrote *Transmission of the Flower* when he was around thirty-eight as a private guide for actors in the Kanze troupe. The treatise deals with the origins of noh and the skills associated with it. The metaphor of a flower as the essence of noh is used extensively, as in the well-known phrase, *hi sureba hana,* "When concealed [and unexpected by an audience], a flower blooms." Zeami

fell out of favor under the sixth Ashikaga shogun, Yoshinori, and was exiled to Sado Island when he was seventy-two. Little is known about his death. Some claim that he was later pardoned and died at his daughter's house in Kyoto.

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Ikkyū

Kyōunshū

Crazy Cloud Anthology

A storm-crazed madman stirring up a crazy storm
Shuttling between brothels and wineshops
I dare any Zen priest to put me in my place
North, south, east, and west; no one to shackle me.

Ikkyū-san is a well-known character in manga and anime who remains popular today. Usually portrayed as a mischievous boy-monk whose ready wit gets the better of adults, he is a folk hero for people of all generations. In one story, he sees a sign that reads, "Don't cross this bridge [*hashi*]." He crosses it anyway, walking right down the middle, insisting he had done what the notice said by avoiding the edge (*hashi*).

The *Ikkyū banashi* (Tales of Ikkyū), a collection of such anecdotes, dates from the early Edo period and, of course, has nothing to do with the historical Ikkyū, who was a rebellious monk known for his eccentricities. This is quite the opposite of how he is portrayed to children today. His *Crazy Cloud Anthology,* full of coarse words like "crazy," "devil," "lewd," and "drunk," is completely at odds with the type of poetry usually written by Zen monks. He tears off the mask of civility to expose the world of death and lust.

The highlight of the *Anthology* is a series of poems at the end about an uninhibited and erotic love affair with a blind

woman called Mori. The titles of the poems themselves are often explicit, even off-putting: "Drinking a Beauty's Love Juice," "The Fluids of Her Sex," and "My Beauty's Dark Place Has the Fragrance of Narcissus." For example, the poem "Insui" (The Fluids of Her Sex) extols Mori's beauty through the metaphor of the fragrance of plum blossoms:

> Lost in a dream, the beauty Mori in a celestial garden.
> Tidings of the plum blossoms on her pillow, when will the flowers bloom?
> My mouth full of a clean fragrance, pure shallow water.
> The color of the moon at twilight, how shall I describe all in a poem?

Ikkyū met Mori at the Sumiyoshi Yakushidō in 1470 and began a sexual relationship with her the following year. He was then seventy-eight. He was so consumed by sexual desire that he even thought of starving himself to death. The final poem in the *Anthology* reads:

> Trees wither, leaves fall, and spring returns again.
> Leaves grow back, flowers blossom, and old promises are renewed.
> Ah, Mori, if I ever forget my deep gratitude for you,
> I will be reborn for countless kalpas in the body of a beast.

Rejoicing in the renewal of life, the poem also expresses Ikkyū's depth of gratitude to Mori, declaring he will be reborn as an animal eternally if he forgets to thank her.

At first glance, these poems may seem to be the sex diary of a self-absorbed, aging vagabond, but in fact, in 1474, Ikkyū

was appointed head priest of one of Kyoto's largest temples, Daitokuji, by the emperor. Though he is said to have relinquished the post after only one day, he continued to work untiringly to restore the temple, which had been burned down during the Ōnin War.

In his later years, he lived at Shūon-an at Takigi (now Ikkyūji, Kyōtanabe, Kyoto Prefecture). This temple was the meeting place for eminent figures at the forefront of artistic life at the time, including the *renga* poet Sōchō (1448–1532), the tea master Murata Jukō (1422–1502), and the *haikai* poet Yamazaki Sōkan (1465–1553). Ikkyū was their spiritual support. His energy had not waned, though he was over eighty.

The contrast between these social activities of his later years and his obsession with Mori, the love of his old age, is so great that some consider the latter to be literary fiction. However, there is little meaning in questioning its truth or otherwise. Ikkyū's world encompasses both extremes, without the type of disconnection associated with the split personality of a Jekyll and Hyde.

Ikkyū had received the strict teachings of his master, Kasō Sōdon, and he felt great pride in being the sole inheritor of his orthodoxy in the turbulent Zen school of the time. In a poem he wrote that was attached to one of his portraits, he claimed, "For thirty years, heavy on my shoulders, the burden I carry alone, Songyuan's Zen." The responsibilities he bore were truly great. He castigated the Zen of Kasō's successor Yōsō as superficial and lacking substance, while he himself led a life that scoffed at formality.

He left a poem for Yōsō that read in part, "If tomorrow you come and ask after me, I'll be in a fish shop or a bar, or otherwise in a brothel" ("To Yōsō, on leaving Nyoi-an"), which shows

him intentionally putting himself in a bad light, as one infatuated with breaking the precepts of avoiding meat, alcohol, and sex. Negating rationality, immersing oneself in a dark, negative world, and penetrating the depths of hell are the quintessence of Zen. Such an attitude shatters not only Buddhist precepts but also more conventional notions associated with Zen.

For Ikkyū, his sexual indulgence with Mori was the ultimate form of Zen.

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Ikkyū Sōjun (1394–1481) was born in a commoner's house in Kyoto, although he is said to have been the illegitimate son of Emperor Go-Komatsu. He entered Ankokuji in Kyoto at age six and subsequently studied under various masters. When he was twenty-two he began training under Kasō Sōdon, a senior priest at Daitokuji. He became head of a Daitokuji sub-temple, Nyoi-an, at forty-seven but left, preferring an unrestricted lifestyle. He moved to Shūon-an at Takigi in Yamashiro (now Ikkyūji, Kyōtanabe, Kyoto Prefecture) when he was sixty-three and died there at age eighty-eight.

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Hakuin

Yasen kanna

Idle Talk on a Night Boat

> If you decide to practice this secret technique, you must first of all give up your koan and always make sure you get a sound sleep. Before you fall asleep—that is, before you close your eyes—stretch out both your legs to their full extent, focus all your vital energy [*ki*] on your "ocean of *ki* energy" and your *tanden*, located below the navel, and all the way down to your loins, legs, and the soles of your feet. Think only that it is the *tanden* that is your very center.

In February 2013, I went to see the Hakuin exhibition at Bunkamura in Shibuya, Tokyo. I had often seen Hakuin's Zen paintings, but had always thought they were just the dabblings of an amateur. However, I was surprised by the exhibition. The paintings, drawn on huge surfaces, had a bold but solid composition, and the use of vivid colors was very effective.

The artist's spirit reached to all the corners of the paintings. They were not simply humorous, as I had assumed: they were infused with social criticism and satire. These paintings do not fit into the usual framework of Zen or Chinese literati painting, and they go beyond the category of work by a professional painter. They break down the structure of conventional wisdom and thrust a new, unexpected world upon us. I was surprised to find that Hakuin had painted most when he was in his sixties and later. I take my hat off again to this giant of

Hakuin Ekaku, *Daruma*, 1767. Hanging scroll, 192.0 × 112.5 cm. Property of Manjuji Temple in Ōita, Ōita Prefecture. Courtesy of Kyushu National Museum.

the early modern period. As a researcher, I must reflect on the fact that he has been unfairly neglected down to the present.

Hakuin is regarded as a reviver of early modern Zen. His activities, however, were centered on the province of Suruga (now Shizuoka Prefecture), and he had little to do with his head temple in Kyoto. Nevertheless, the Zen method that he developed was adopted by the Rinzai school in Japan and continues to be followed down to this day. How did he come to exercise such immense influence?

Zen, which came from China in the medieval period, was practiced using koans. Koans were based on the words and deeds of masters of old, as recorded in such collections as the *Hekiganroku* (Blue Cliff Record), and students, by grasping their meaning, were able to reach the same level of enlightenment. Hakuin systematized them, defined how they were to be

used, and in the process, made Zen more accessible through easy-to-understand explanations.

Hakuin's *Zazen wasan* (Song of Zazen) is still widely recited today. It begins with the words, "All beings from the first are buddhas," and tells us the Buddha and the Pure Land are within us and can be attained if only we realize our true nature, instead of pursuing enlightenment as a distant goal. This is, in a sense, what Buddhism had been saying from the beginning. A feature of Hakuin is that he made this concrete through physical practice, not abstract theory.

The best known of Hakuin's works is *Idle Talk on a Night Boat*. It teaches a method called *naikan* (introspection), rather than zazen. The book says that when Hakuin was a young man, he became physically and mentally distraught through overzealous zazen practice. It was then that he learned the *naikan* method from a hermit called Hakuyū, who lived in a cave in the Shirakawa district of Kyoto. Hakuyū was a real person, but he had actually died the year before Hakuin said he visited him. Though the story clearly could not be true, Hakuin repeated it in his other books as well. He tells strange stories that may or may not be fact.

The introspection that he describes is a therapeutic regimen that draws from Daoism and Buddhism. What he says is most important is a method called the *nanso no hō* (soft butter pill), a visualization of butter placed on the head, slowly melting down the body and warming it. Though *Idle Talk on a Night Boat* holds that introspection is different from zazen, it is in fact not so far removed from it as a technique of mental focus, and in other works Hakuin unites the two. It should perhaps be considered an adaptation of a Zen technique.

Medieval works like Yōsai's *Kissa yōjōki* (Nourishing Life

by Drinking Tea) linked Buddhism with a regimen. In the early modern period, very specific methods promoting health and longevity were taught and widely practiced, such as the *Yōjōkun* (Lessons for Nourishing Life) of Kaibara Ekiken (1630–1714). They all signal a practical concern for the physical body.

Hakuin was part of this trend, which enabled him to establish a new type of Zen that differed from that of the medieval period. The overwhelming power of his Zen paintings may emanate from this focus on achieving tangible improvements in the physical world.

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Hakuin Ekaku (1685–1768) was born in Suruga and ordained at the Rinzai temple Shōinji (Numazu, Shizuoka Prefecture) at age fifteen. He threw himself into Zen practice but became ill. At the age of twenty-six he visited Hakuyū at Shirakawa in Kyoto and received from him an introspective method called *naikan*, which he describes in *Yasen kanna*. He gathered large numbers of students and followers through his novel use of Zen koans, and is considered a reviver of Rinzai practice. He died at Shōinji when he was eighty-four.

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Andō Shōeki

Tōdō shinden

A True Account of the Supreme Way

> A kernel of rice is provided with wonderful workings: the sun and moon of heaven-and-earth, and the soul and spirit of human beings. . . . A kernel of rice contains both the cereal of heaven and the cereal of earth, the cereal of heaven contains the cereal of earth, and the cereal of earth contains the cereal of heaven. This means that heaven and earth are one body. In men and women, the man contains the woman, and the woman contains the man. Thus it is that the man and the woman are one being.

After the Tōhoku earthquake, there was talk for a time of being contented with fewer things, and people called for a shift in values from growth to stability. But once out of danger, we have returned to our focus on economic development to create a "strong Japan." Robust growth, though, does not continue forever. In all areas of politics and the economy, we have become preoccupied with stopgap, short-term gains, and we have lost sight of lofty ideals and grand visions for the future.

Growth and development are based on linear time, which takes no account of the accumulation of past knowledge. We are left facing new situations and being forced to deal with them. This tendency became more pronounced as Japan modernized, shifting from an agrarian to an industrial and, more recently, a digitalized economy. In this context, the knowledge

and experience of older people have no meaning; we are constantly confronted with new challenges and must be ready to meet them.

An agrarian society, such as Japan once was, is based on cyclical time. The sun rises and sets each day, and this is repeated throughout the year. Seeds are sown and harvested according to season. The accumulation of wisdom from the past leads gradually to progress. This was the pattern followed for more than two thousand years until around the 1960s. Adapting to and harmonizing with the forces of nature beyond human understanding were considered far more important than having the power to fight and win.

Andō Shōeki was a great exponent of such an agricultural philosophy. A medical doctor from Akita domain, he worked in Hachinohe, where he realized that neither Buddhism nor Confucianism was of any use in the harsh climate of the Tōhoku region, so often hit by famine. His ideal was direct cultivation of the land where everyone worked equally and there was no exploitation. Thus he openly criticized the class-based society of his time. He is looked up to as the founder of Japanese-style socialism.

Shōeki was not a simple socialist, though, but a man who constructed a unique worldview based on agriculture. He argued that the world moves naturally without beginning or end in a threefold fashion: vertical ascending (*tsū*), horizontal traversing (*ō*), and vertical descending (*gyaku*). Ascending gives rise to heaven-and-earth, traversing generates the land where humans live, and descending results in the production of cereals.

Of all cereals, rice is the one that condenses within itself heaven-and-earth, with the tip of the kernel corresponding to

the South Pole and the other end to the North Pole. From this kernel, people are born. Thus people are contained within the kernel of rice: each small grain contains the original human form, the head at the South Pole, the arms and legs bent and folded beneath. Eating rice enables human life to continue. "The cereal of heaven and the cereal of earth are contained within a kernel of rice," he writes in the *Jinrin* (Humanity) volume of *Tōdō shinden*. "Heaven-and-earth become man and woman from a kernel of rice through the spirit of rice and the five cereals." Men and women are understood to be equal and as one.

As a physician, Shōeki examines the human body in detail and argues that it is identical in structure to heaven-and-earth. "Nature and the human body are one" through the medium of rice. The union of man and woman and the process of a child growing in the womb are one with the process of grain germinating and sprouting. And so death is not a relapse into nothingness, but a return to the five cereals. The human body is connected to the universe through a tiny grain of rice.

Today, the sanctity of rice has waned, and the once-inviolable ban on imports has been lifted. But the wisdom accumulated through agricultural activities is not merely utilitarian. Shōeki's idea that rice unites the world and human beings raises anew the question of how we should relate to nature, a question which cannot be solved by scientific progress and development.

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Andō Shōeki (1703–1762) was an eighteenth-century physician and philosopher. He was born to a wealthy farming family in what is now the city of Ōdate, Akita Prefecture. He studied medicine in Kyoto and, at forty-two, moved to the castle town of Hachinohe (in today's Aomori Prefecture), where he opened a practice. At fifty, he wrote "An Inquiry into the Shortcomings of Buddhism," a criticism of Buddhist priests, part of his *Tōdō shinden*, and the following year, "Administering Society According to Nature," which idealizes nature and calls for universal equality centered on agriculture. He returned to his hometown in Akita around the age of fifty-six and died there in his sixtieth year. Besides the works that were published, he left a voluminous number of manuscripts.

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V. REDEFINING BUDDHISM

Japanese thought is made up of many intertwined strands. Buddhism and Confucianism were introduced from the continent, nativist studies (*kokugaku*) and what we today call Shinto emerged in reaction to them, and Christianity and modern scientific and social thought were introduced from the West. It is as if a jewelry box has been turned upside down. Individually, each school of thought has its own sparkle, but collectively, the ideas constitute a motley jumble. One way of clearing the clutter is to take just one strand from this jumble—Buddhism, a major spiritual support for the Japanese people from ancient times down to the present—and see how it was accepted and transformed.

Japanese Buddhism bears little resemblance to its Indian precursor, having spread from the subcontinent to East Asia and then reaching Japan via China and Korea. And it underwent a major transformation once it reached Japan. Buddhist thinkers here wrestled with questions about Buddhism's original spirit and how it could be utilized in this country. In the process, they created a distinctively Japanese form of Buddhism. The ideas of Shinran and Dōgen were molded in this context.

In the Edo period, Buddhism was exposed to criticism from other schools of thought, such as Christianity and Confucianism. As we shall see, Christian thinkers criticized it from a doctrinal standpoint, Confucianists for its lack of secular ethics, and nativists for its foreign ideas. Tominaga Nakamoto, by contrast, analyzed the development of Buddhism in terms of textual history rather than religious faith. This marked the beginning of modern Buddhist studies.

Shinran

Kyōgyōshinshō

On Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Enlightenment

> When I humbly contemplate the true teachings of the Pure Land, I realize that Amida transfers merit in two directions. One direction is going forth toward enlightenment, and the other is returning from enlightenment to save all people. The merits transferred toward enlightenment are true teaching, practice, faith, and enlightenment. If I were to reveal the true teaching, it would be none other than the *Larger Sutra on the Buddha of Infinite Life*.

When Japanese Buddhism is mentioned, most people think first of founders like Shinran, Dōgen, and Nichiren. These men all appeared during the Kamakura period (1185–1333) and established their own forms of Buddhism; scholars call this Kamakura New Buddhism, in contrast to the Old Buddhism of Tendai, Shingon, and the Nara schools. The received understanding has it that Old Buddhism was corrupted by its collusion with political power, while the New Buddhism that emerged in response was popular, antiauthoritarian, and pure, available to everyone through just one simple practice, like the *nenbutsu* or zazen.

At the heart of this centripetal view of Kamakura New Buddhism is the man considered to be its greatest representative, Shinran, the core of whose thought, found in the *Tannishō* (Notes Lamenting Deviations), is that the evil person is the

true object of Amida's compassion (*akunin shōki*). The relevant passage is very well known in Japan: "Since even a good person can be reborn in the Pure Land, how much more so will an evil person."

Recent research has, however, completely turned this received understanding on its head. Ongoing studies into Old Buddhism have shown just how rich its content was. At the same time, serious questions have been raised about traditional interpretations of New Buddhism.

In the case of Shinran, for example, it is doubtful whether we can understand him through the *Tannishō* at all. This work was compiled by Shinran's student Yuien, who used his master's words to assert the orthodoxy of his own views. Consequently, it is not technically a primary source for Shinran's ideas. In fact, the doctrine "the evil person is the true object of Amida's compassion" cannot be found in Shinran's own writings, and "slander of the dharma"—which Shinran considered to be the fundamental evil—is not mentioned in the *Tannishō* at all.

The interpretation of Shinran's main work, *Kyōgyōshinshō*, has also fluctuated. Conventional exegesis has it that Shinran is characterized by his emphasis on faith, and the only correct practice is the *nenbutsu*, relying solely on the other-power (*tariki*) of Amida. There is consequently nothing with which to encourage responsible social action.

For example, in the aftermath of the Tōhoku earthquake, the question was raised about whether the activities of Jōdo Shin volunteers could truly be regarded as a Shin undertaking, since they were doing what they could through self-power (*jiriki*), not the other-power of the *nenbutsu*.

It seems, too, that Shinran's life has been interpreted in a

too-modern, too-rational manner. For example, as a result of the discovery in 1921 of letters written by Eshinni, it was considered that she alone was Shinran's wife. Many premodern biographies, however, say that Shinran was married to Tamahi, daughter of the regent Kujō Kanezane. Such earlier accounts cannot be ignored.

Long-held interpretations of Shinran have thus been greatly shaken. How should he be viewed from now on?

First, Shinran was not a modern man. He was a medieval man who made decisions about his life's course based on a dream during a retreat at the Rokkakudō. A too-modern and rational interpretation of Shinran, in fact, distorts his true value. We have to consider not just the empirical facts, but also the merit of the various stories that have been passed down concerning him.

Second, we need to interpret his life in broader and more flexible terms, not doctrinarian ones. For example, if the power of the Buddha can manifest itself in social activities other than *nenbutsu* practice, then such activities can also be seen to be fully in accordance with the Buddha's will.

The core of Shinran's thought is understood to lie in the idea that Amida transfers merit in two directions: one toward rebirth and nirvana through the other-power of Amida (*ōsō*), and the other toward the salvation of all beings (*gensō*). Shinran never thought that it was sufficient for him alone to attain rebirth and enlightenment. The ultimate goal was the salvation of others. To this end, power was needed to not just reach enlightenment but also to return from there.

In recent years, there has been controversy over whether or not Shinran taught that rebirth could be attained in this life in our present bodies. To attain rebirth and then return seems

to make the agency of death essential. However, there is no doubt that he regarded the power of the dead to return and save living beings to be one with the workings of Amida. For him, all our activities in this world are enabled through the grace of this power.

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Shinran (1173–1262) was born into a low-ranking noble family in Hino (now Fushimi-ku, Kyoto). He entered Mount Hiei when he was nine. At twenty-nine he became a student of Hōnen, following a dream oracle he received from Avalokiteśvara (Kannon Bosatsu). He was exiled to Echigo (now Niigata Prefecture) when he was thirty-five as a result of the persecution of Hōnen's group and moved to the Kantō region at forty-two. He is said to have written *On Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Enlightenment* at age fifty-two. He returned to Kyoto around the age of sixty-three and died there at ninety. After his death, his student Yuien recorded his words and actions in the *Tannishō* (Notes Lamenting Deviations).

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Dōgen

Shōbōgenzō

The Eye and Treasury of the True Law

> Disciples of the Tathāgata without fail study these eight great realizations. Those who neither study nor know them are not the Buddha's disciples. The realizations are the root of the Tathāgata's true teachings and the core of nirvana. . . . While the Tathāgata's true teachings are still circulating through the great thousand-fold world, and the true teachings have still not disappeared, you should make haste to study them. Do not be slack.

Japanese Buddhism is called Mahayana Buddhism. How easy is it to understand the Mahayana scriptures if you suddenly just pick them up? Most people, unless they are believers with preliminary knowledge, would find scriptures like the Lotus Sutra full of grandiose descriptions and not very interesting at all. By comparison, the scriptures of presectarian, or early, Buddhism are easy to understand, and, at the same time, quite moving and meaningful.

> All things come from the mind; mind is their ruler, they are the creation of the mind. If you speak or act with an impure mind, suffering will follow you, as the wheel of the cart follows the hoofprint of the ox that draws the cart.

This is the first verse of the *Dhammapada* (The Dharma Path),

a work in the Pali canon, and anyone who reads it would probably agree with what it says. This one verse resonates more than any of the complicated Mahayana scriptures.

In Japan, early Buddhism was held in contempt as Hinayana (the "small vehicle"). All the same, there have been a small number of people who recognized its importance and insisted that it should be our starting point. Dōgen was one such.

Dōgen prepared the final section of *The Eye and Treasury of the True Law*, "On the Eight Realizations of a Great One," after he fell ill. The "eight realizations" refer to the eight practices that form the basis of the Buddha's supreme enlightenment: (1) having few desires, (2) knowing when enough is enough, (3) enjoying silence and tranquility, (4) practicing diligently, (5) upholding right mindfulness, (6) practicing meditation to calm the mind, (7) cultivating wisdom, and (8) not indulging in superfluous argument. These were given by the Buddha as part of his final teaching before he died, and as such have been taught from the earliest times of Buddhism.

Dōgen calls these realizations the root of the true Buddhadharma and the "wondrous mind of nirvana." And so he said, "Those who neither study nor know them are not the Buddha's disciples." He then went on to pledge, "In studying [the eight realizations] now, in developing them as you are reborn time after time and attaining without fail supreme enlightenment, and in speaking of them for the sake of living beings, you will be the equal of Śākyamuni Buddha, with no difference between you." With that he ended his final discourse.

The Eye and Treasury of the True Law, consisting of eighty-seven fascicles, is known for its abstruse philosophical discussion of Zen, and is held in high esteem worldwide. Its final section, however, is very straightforward, and merely quotes

the basic teachings of early Buddhism as they are found in the Pali sutras. It is so surprisingly simple that it has been suggested that Dōgen, weakened by illness, was no longer able to engage in complex thought.

However, recent Dōgen studies have taken a slightly different view. According to Dōgen's student Ejō (1198–1280), in his later years Dōgen planned to rewrite *The Eye and Treasury of the True Law* in its entirety and expand it to one hundred fascicles. He had written twelve such new texts by the time he died, the last of which was "On the Eight Realizations of a Great One." These twelve fascicles contain the ideas of his later years and are written in a completely different style from Dōgen's earlier discussions.

The twelve newly written texts deal in a very straightforward manner with fundamental teachings and practices that reach back to early Buddhism. They include "On Taking Refuge in the Three Jewels—the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha," "On Receiving the Precepts," "On the Spiritual Merits of the *Kesa*," "On the Absolute Certainty of Cause and Effect," and "On Karmic Retribution in the Three Time Periods." Dōgen's search for the true Buddha-dharma led him back to its source, early Buddhism.

An increasing number of people in Japan today are studying the Theravada Buddhism of Southeast Asia, which traces its lineage directly to early Buddhism. Dōgen was a pioneer who was engaged in such an endeavor many centuries ago.

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Dōgen (1200–1253) was the founder of the Sōtō school of Zen. He was born into the Kuga family. He entered Mount Hiei at the age of thirteen and was ordained the following year. He later left and entered the temple Kenninji—the same temple where Yōsai lived until his death—at age eighteen. He spent four years in Song China between the ages of twenty-four and twenty-eight. He returned to Japan after receiving transmission from the monk Rujing of Tiantongshan. He founded the temple Kōshōji at Fukakusa (now Fushimi-ku, Kyoto) at thirty-four. When he was forty-five, he founded Eiheiji in Echizen (now Fukui Prefecture). He died at fifty-four, having returned to Kyoto to seek treatment for his illness. *Shōbōgenzō zuimonki* is a record of his sayings compiled by his student Ejō.

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Mujū

Shasekishū

Sand and Pebbles

> There are differences in the hearts and minds of people, so they will value the path they have chosen and forget all others. Likewise, when people enter the path of Buddhism, they will have different preferences. It is to accommodate the variety of propensities that the Tathāgata provided many gates to the teachings, and holy men teaching the Buddhadharma since then have established various schools.

For a long time, it was generally held that the Kamakura New Buddhism of people like Shinran, Dōgen, and Nichiren represented the very pinnacle of Japanese Buddhism. According to this narrative, the Old Buddhism of previous centuries was like a villain clinging to old values and trying to obstruct the new. Whereas the newcomers advocated a single, easy practice that was open to all, like zazen or *nenbutsu*, the older schools prescribed a combination of various practices concurrently, making them inaccessible to the masses, since only those in the aristocratic class could afford them. These many demands were regarded as a lack of commitment to a single practice, and this notion discouraged research into older schools.

But is this view justified? As far as the adherents of the *nenbutsu* were concerned, all other practices were useless and thus negated. People have different aptitudes, though, some preferring to practice the *nenbutsu* and others zazen. They

should be able to try various practices and adopt the one that suits them best. It would appear rather intolerant not to give any choice and to insist that there is only one acceptable way.

In the second half of the thirteenth century, with manuscripts becoming more widely available and developments in transport enabling greater exchange between regions, a variety of study and practice opportunities became available. Particularly thriving was the simultaneous study of the doctrines of various schools. One of the most celebrated scholars to emerge during this period was Gyōnen (1240–1321) of Tōdaiji, whose *Hasshū kōyō* (Essentials of the Eight Traditions)—an overview of the doctrines of the six Nara and two Heian schools—is still widely read as an introductory book to Buddhism. His contemporary Nichiren was also surprisingly well-informed about the various schools.

In the same period, there was a similar trend of actively seeking out various forms of practice and training and pursuing a method best suited to oneself. Mujū represents this trend. In the field of literature, he is quite well known as the author of the *setsuwa* (explanatory tales) collection *Sand and Pebbles*, but in the history of Buddhism, he has been neglected as a stubborn man aligned to the older schools who criticized new trends, such as the exclusive practice of the *nenbutsu*. It is only recently that there have been signs of a reevaluation of this portrayal.

Mujū came from a *bushi* (warrior) family but was ordained at a young age and studied a wide range of schools, including Ritsu, Zen, and esoteric Buddhism. He was also well-versed in the *nenbutsu*. In his later years he lived at Chōboji in Owari (now Higashi-ku, Nagoya). The Ritsu he studied was not that of the six Nara schools but the Shingon Ritsu lineage of Eizon

and Ninshō; he learned Zen under Enni (1202–1289) of the Rinzai temple Tōfukuji.

Shingon Ritsu and Zen represented the latest currents in Buddhist practice. They were progressive rather than conservative, and were always seeking out the new. Serious research has only recently begun on Mujū's doctrinal tract *Shōzaishū* (Collection of Sacred Assets), a levelheaded comparative study of the doctrines and practices of Zen, esoteric Buddhism, and various other schools of Buddhism.

Mujū's basic position, according to *Sand and Pebbles*, is clear: "There are differences in the hearts and minds of people" and "if you adhere to a school and practice it because it is to your liking, you will benefit from it. It is not good, though, if you have thoughts of right and wrong" ("The Silent Clerics"). Since people all have different aptitudes, whatever school they enter will be beneficial to them if they practice its teachings by choice. One should not self-righteously judge other schools of thought.

Mujū disliked bigoted attitudes and recognized diversity, but that did not mean that he embraced any and all as acceptable. He believed that the ultimate purpose of religious practice was to seek enlightenment, and he condemned any attitude that lost sight of that fundamental objective.

Mujū also positively acknowledged the combination of kami and buddhas (*shinbutsu shūgō*) in the Japanese religious landscape. Book one of *Sand and Pebbles* begins with the mythological story about the origin of the Ise Shrines, followed by a series of stories dealing with the relationship between the kami and buddhas. Mujū does not, by any means, mix them together haphazardly, but makes it clear that he is speaking from a Buddhist standpoint. We need to rethink the

view that has become prevalent today that combining kami and buddhas is somehow impure. Mujū's work displays a mature wisdom that acknowledges diverse values while remaining unwavering at heart.

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Mujū Dōgyō (1226–1312) is said to have been born into a *bushi* family in Kamakura. He was ordained at Hōonji in Hitachi Province (now Ibaraki Prefecture). He studied the various Buddhist schools widely and also underwent Shinto training at the Ise Shrines. He later studied under Enni, founder of the Rinzai temple Tōfukuji in Kyoto. When he was thirty-seven, he was invited to head Chōboji in present-day Nagoya and there set up teaching centered on Zen and esoteric Buddhism. In his later years he retired to a hermitage called Momooken within the temple precincts. His works include *Shasekishū* (Sand and Pebbles), *Zōtanshū* (Collection of Casual Digressions), and the Buddhist tract *Shōzaishū* (Collection of Sacred Assets). *Sand and Pebbles* contains 150 sections about a wide range of subjects, including medieval temples and shrines and their combinatory identity, the lives of ascetic monks, the lives of ordinary people, and strange tales from around the country.

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Fukansai Habian

Myōtei mondō

The Myōtei Dialogues

> So, as I have shown, Buddhism, be it the eight schools, the nine schools, or the twelve schools, denies the existence of an afterlife. The monks' robes, the rituals, the virtuous behavior: they are merely the usual provisional truths, the outward show. You must realize that it is only Christianity that can offer help for the afterlife and decisions about the world to come. (Baskind and Bowring 2015)

The Myōtei Dialogues is a Christian work, not a Buddhist one. It was written in 1605. The first fascicle is a criticism of Buddhism, the second a criticism of Confucianism and Shinto, and the third an outline of Christianity. It is the only premodern doctrinal work on Christianity written by a Japanese, and it is most notable for showing how a Japanese intellectual interpreted the Christianity brought to his country by foreign missionaries.

The author, Fukansai Habian, studied at a Zen temple in his youth, so he had in-depth knowledge of Buddhism. His criticism of Buddhism therefore was not wide of the mark, and this makes the book a valuable source for information about the Buddhism of his time.

This book is a literary rendition of a dialogue between two women: Myōshū, whose husband died in the Battle of Sekigahara, and the Catholic Yūtei. The criticism of Buddhism

in the first fascicle starts with the life of Śākyamuni and then covers the Hossō, Sanron, Kegon, Tendai (including Nichiren), Shingon, Zen, and Pure Land (including Ikkō) schools.

The point of the criticism is that the schools are all simply saying, with their own distinct terminology, that ultimately there are no buddhas, no living beings, no hell, and no land of ultimate bliss. No matter the school, in the end, Buddhism comes down to "nothingness" (*mu*).

This argument may sound extreme, but Buddhism does give fundamental importance to the concept of "emptiness" (*kū*; Skt. *śūnya*). Emptiness, though, means the denial of the two extremes of existence and nonexistence (nothingness). It can be mistaken for "nothingness," however, when existence and nonexistence are seen as binary opposites. For a long time, Buddhism was feared in Europe as a "religion of nothingness." And it may have left itself open to attack with its admission that the Pure Land is nonexistential and ultimately nothing more than a "skillful means" (*hōben*; Skt. *upāya*) of leading living beings to the truth.

At the end of the first fascicle, Habian concludes: "Buddhism, be it the eight schools, the nine schools, or the twelve schools, denies the existence of an afterlife. The monks' robes, the rituals, the virtuous behavior: they are merely the usual provisional truths, the outward show. You must realize that it is only Christianity that can offer help for the afterlife and decisions about the world to come."

In other words, if everything returns to nothing, then the idea of salvation in the next life becomes unimaginable, shattering the hope for "peace in this life and happiness in the next." And so, in the third fascicle, Habian says that it is only the Christian teachings that speak of Deus, "the true lord of

peace in this life and happiness in the next," and of *paraiso* (heaven) where "happiness in the next life" can be found.

The book skillfully leads the reader to the conclusion that Christianity is the only way that people's prayers for peace and happiness might be fulfilled.

People in Japan today are talking more openly about death in the light of the aging population and the terrible loss of life in the Tōhoku earthquake. In contrast to Christians' clear view about the afterlife, though, for many non-Christians in Japan, the afterlife appears vague and somewhat confused. In this respect, Habian's observations might still strike a chord with readers in present-day Japan.

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Fukansai Habian (1565–1621) was a Christian convert who received the name Habian. His actual name is unknown. He was a Zen monk, but was baptized when he was nineteen. He became a brother in the Society of Jesus at twenty-two. He fled to Kyushu the following year after Toyotomi Hideyoshi's order expelling Christian priests. He wrote *The Myōtei Dialogues* when he was forty-one. At age forty-four, he eloped with a woman and renounced his faith. He produced *Ha Deus* (Deus Destroyed), refuting Christianity, when he was fifty-six. He died a year later.

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Tetsugen

Ke'en no sho

An Opportunity for Instruction

> I have only the one begging bowl and no savings. Unless I receive help from people everywhere, I will be unable to complete the project of publishing the Buddhist canon. For this reason, I make no difference between the exalted and the lowly, and I do not regard a donation of a hundred or even a thousand *kan* of coins as too much, or one grain of rice as too little. I accept whatever people offer and go on begging.

Many books are being digitized due to the fast-paced information revolution taking place today, and the future for printed books looks bleak. The social implications of this trend remain to be seen. In retrospect, today's print culture was spawned by nineteenth-century typography in Japan, but if we look further back, we can trace its origins to the heyday of woodblock printing in the Edo period. The majority of books published then were Buddhist texts, indicating that Buddhism was a mainstay of early modern culture.

The publication of the principal Buddhist texts had flourished from the medieval period. The Kōya, Gozan, and Jōdokyō editions were produced by large temples but were limited to individual sutras, rather than the whole canon. Christian texts were also printed, using the new Western movable type.

The Tripitaka (J. Daizōkyō), the Buddhist canon, was

printed in China from the Song dynasty onward by imperial order, with the Goryeo edition on the Korean Peninsula also receiving high acclaim. They were imported to Japan but were expensive and scarce. It was in this context that Tetsugen took up the project of printing, publishing, and disseminating the complete canon.

An Opportunity for Instruction was a prospectus written by Tetsugen before the project started to solicit donations to import the canon from China. He lamented the fact that it was still not widely available in Japan, writing with desperation, "I have only the one begging bowl and no savings. Unless I receive help from people everywhere, I will be unable to complete this project of publishing the Buddhist canon."

The great project was thus born, but its realization was made possible with the help of Yinyuan Longqi (1592–1673; J. Ingen Ryūki), who introduced the Ōbaku school of Zen to Japan. At a time when contact with foreign countries was restricted, the introduction of a new school of Buddhism from China was an event of a magnitude unimaginable today.

Its effects were not limited to Buddhism. The influx of this fresh, new culture influenced calligraphy, painting, tea, and literature, and had a great impact on intellectuals hungry for foreign contacts. Tetsugen received great support from Yinyuan, who gave him the Jiaxing edition of the canon, begun in 1589, using it to undertake the formidable task of completing Japan's first Tripitaka.

The role played by the monk Ryōō Dōkaku (1630–1707) in disseminating this Ōbaku or Tetsugen edition should also not be forgotten. He set up a pharmacy in Edo (now Tokyo) and had great success with a medicine called Kintaien, whose recipe he said he had received in a dream oracle. He used the

profits to buy copies of the Tetsugen edition and donated them to various temples. The Tetsugen edition strongly reflects the ethos of the time, marked by not only the spread of print culture but also the development of a money economy.

The transition from hand-copied manuscripts to print publishing also had an intellectual dimension. The circulation of the former was limited, and so they were not widely available. Written materials were passed secretly only to those who had permission to see them, and they were the basis on which oral transmissions developed. There was also a strong possibility of the text being altered when it was passed on.

Once a text is published and made publicly available, the readership spreads rapidly, and textual monopoly is no longer possible. Any interpretation can now be examined by others, and self-serving elucidation and textual alteration will be subjected to criticism. Original enlightenment thought (*hongaku shisō*), which had been orally transmitted, was criticized and reconstructed from philological and hermeneutic perspectives. This led to modern Buddhist studies. The way texts are distributed is thus of great significance. Moves toward digitization are bound to produce an impact comparable to the transformation of contemporary print culture.

Late in life, Tetsugen gave up all his temple property to help relieve the famine in the Kinki region, and he died of illness in the midst of his efforts. His single-minded activities were at the very forefront of social engagement by Buddhists at the time.

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Tetsugen Dōkō (1630–1682) was the son of a shrine monk (*shasō*) who served the Hachimangū in Kumamoto. He became a monk of the Shin Pure Land school when he was thirteen but went to study under Yinyuan (J. Ingen), transmitter of the Ōbaku Zen school to Japan, at twenty-six. He wrote *An Opportunity for Instruction* as a means to cure the ills of the world, saying that the Japanese canon was incomplete. At age thirty-nine he began his fundraising campaign to produce a complete woodblock edition of the Chinese Buddhist sutras. He set up a printing house in Kyoto and, when he was forty-nine, presented the first edition of around seven thousand fascicles to the retired emperor, Go-Mizunoo. This is known both as the Ōbaku canon and Tetsugen's edition of the complete Buddhist scriptures. Tetsugen died at fifty-three while conducting relief work for victims of the famine of 1682.

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Tominaga Nakamoto

Shutsujō gogo

Emerging from Meditation

> There are various and innumerable teachings, but at root they come down to doing good. If we sincerely abide by a teaching and deeply commit to doing good, there is no need to select and criticize. Buddhism is fine. Confucianism is fine. All that sincerely endeavor to do good can be said to be under one roof. How, then, can those following the same Buddhist path be separate, even if they are differentiated into sects and schools?

The Edo period was a period of peace, and this enabled the spread of a money economy. The power of merchants increased, giving rise to new learning. The Kaitokudō in Osaka was a private academy established by wealthy merchants, and it nurtured many unique scholars, the most prominent being Tominaga Nakamoto and Yamagata Bantō (1748–1821). Both pursued an extreme rationalism and developed highly original ideas. Bantō took the position of scientific materialism and denied the existence of spirits and deities. Nakamoto, by contrast, stripped away the veneer of sanctity of Confucian and Buddhist texts and attempted to trace their intellectual history.

Nakamoto died when he was thirty-two, but his genius was apparent when, at fifteen or sixteen, he wrote *Setsuhei* (Overturning the Doctrines), a critique of the Confucian classics. This brought down upon him the ire of Miyake Sekian

(1665–1730), the master of the Kaitokudō, and he left the academy. Though *Setsuhei* is not extant, its contents can be gauged from a summary in a later work, *Okina no fumi* (Writings of an Old Man). Here Nakamoto shows how thought gradually develops through the process of *kajō* (superimposition). The *Analects* of Confucius was not the words of a sage, he claimed; rather, it was a statement that the kingly way of the rulers Wen and Wu was superior to the military rule of Confucius's day. Nakamoto also asserted that Mozi later emerged to offer a yet higher way. He viewed the history of thought as a dynamic process, with each new theory or doctrine being formed by adding something new to or criticizing a preceding one.

In *Shutsujō gogo* (Emerging from Meditation), he applies this method to the study of Buddhist sutras. Before the Buddha, non-Buddhist masters in India taught that rebirth in heaven was possible by doing good deeds. In response, Śākyamuni taught the importance of detachment from birth-death. While some of his successors emphasized "existence," others asserted "emptiness," which resulted in the composition of the Wisdom (*Prajñāpāramitā*) sutras and the subsequent development of Mahayana.

Until then, Buddhism in Japan had assumed that all the sutras were the words preached by Śākyamuni, but Nakamoto pointed out that the Mahayana sutras were not so. This was a direct attack on the Buddhist faith of Japan, based as it was on the Mahayana sutras. This is why his theory was subsequently used to justify anti-Buddhist discourse (*haibutsuron*). And the impact of Nakamoto's argument persisted into the modern period. Following exposure to Western Buddhist research, scholars learned that Buddhist sutras from the earliest period of Buddhism were much closer to the Buddha's direct teaching,

and they were forced to admit that the Mahayana sutras were not the Buddha's words. One such scholar was Murakami Senshō (1851–1929), lecturer and later professor at Tokyo Imperial University, who was deprived, for a time, of his status as an Ōtani-ha Shin priest for advocating a position that had essentially been expounded by Nakamoto two centuries earlier.

Nakamoto is often regarded as having pioneered the theory that denies the authenticity of Mahayana sutras, but he did not intend to stop there. He refused to take a stand regarding any particular teaching, saying, "I am not a son of Confucius, nor a son of the Dao, nor a son of the Buddha." He devised a thoroughgoing intellectual relativism. He insisted that ideas were not universal, but were all formed in response to a particular time and place. In *Writings of an Old Man,* he wrote, "Buddhism is the way of India, Confucianism is the way of China, but because they are of different countries, they are not the way of Japan. Shinto is the way of Japan, but because it is from an earlier time, it is not the way of the world today." None of the teachings were therefore suitable for the Japan of his time.

So what is the teaching we should follow in Japan? *Writings of an Old Man* defines it as "the way of truth" (*makoto no michi*); that is, "performing our evident duty in everything." By this he meant doing our best, for example, to serve our parents or superiors. This is a disconcertingly uncritical stance, but it suggests that when ideas are thoroughly relativized, all that remains is the concrete reality of everyday life, which defies theory.

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Tominaga Nakamoto (1715–1746) was a mid-eighteenth-century philosopher. He was born the third son of a wealthy Osaka merchant in Kitahama (now Chūō-ku, Osaka). He began studying Confucianism at the age of ten at the Kaitokudō, a private academy under the patronage of his father and other men, and around twenty he studied Buddhist texts at the Ōbaku temple Manpukuji in Uji. In *Okina no fumi* (Writings of an Old Man) he criticized Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shinto. In 1745, at thirty-one, he published *Shutsujō gogo* (Emerging from Meditation), an analysis of Mahayana Buddhism. He died of illness when he was thirty-two.

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Watsuji Tetsurō

Koji junrei

Pilgrimages to the Ancient Temples

> It is to art, not to the Buddha who liberates living beings, that we seek to make pilgrimage. If, standing in front of a Buddhist statue, we have a sincere urge to bow before it, or if we are struck by the light of compassion and are moved to tears, it is because we have fallen in love with the power of art that utilizes the spirit of Buddhism, not because of religious devotion to the Buddha. We have not transcended our senses to the extent that we become religious.

When I lived in Tokyo, I had the idea that Buddhist statues were works of art to be viewed at exhibitions in museums. Whenever a famous national treasure or important cultural property was exhibited at the National Museum, I would rush to see it. I would view the statue, illuminated with dazzling light, from all sides, and marvel at its high technical quality.

It was only when I moved to Kyoto and began to visit temples from time to time that I at last realized the obvious point that the Buddhist statues enshrined in the main hall are objects of veneration. The main image hides in the dimly lit inner sanctum, or sometimes out of sight inside a small, closed, wooden shrine (*zushi*). Buddhist images are not necessarily meant to be seen under bright lights.

There is yet another way of looking at Buddhist images.

Visitors to temples in China and South Korea can sometimes be seen making a series of full prostrations before brand new, huge, gilded statues. The statues are imposing but not necessarily of high artistic value. From the point of view of religious value, though, it is no doubt unwise to pit them against one another in terms of antiquity or artistry.

Viewing Buddhist statues as works of fine art is a comparatively recent phenomenon in Japan. It began with an investigation made in 1884 by a group of scholars, including Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908) and Okakura Tenshin (1863–1913), of Kuse Kannon, the secret buddha (*hibutsu*) enshrined within the Yumedono at Hōryūji in Nara. Even as temple priests fled, fearing retribution, the scholars proceeded to remove the dusty layers of cloth wrapped around the statue and were greatly moved by its beauty. This spawned a new and modern academic field of Japanese art history, and Japanese Buddhist statues were hailed as world-class art.

What consolidated the shift from viewing Buddhist images as objects of faith to objects of aesthetic appreciation was Watsuji Tetsurō's *Pilgrimages to the Ancient Temples* (1919). Considering that Watsuji was a young man of thirty-one at the time, it is an ambitious work, overflowing with youthful enthusiasm and sensitivity. Watsuji began his career conducting cutting-edge research on Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. In his *Guzō saikō* (Revival of Idols) of 1918, he moved toward a rediscovery of traditional values, having previously rejected tradition. This, though, was by no means an embrace of archaic conventions.

He proudly announced his desire to make pilgrimages "to art, not to the Buddha who liberates living beings." His intention was to rediscover the faded and antique temples and

Buddhist statues of Asuka and Nara from a completely new and modern perspective.

Watsuji's imagination often soared higher than his academic empiricism, and for him, ancient Greek and Roman art was linked with East Asian Buddhist statues via the Silk Road. Their creators were not sectarian, obscure religious figures but open-minded artists with a rich sensibility.

Many literary figures and artists followed Watsuji's lead and enthusiastically embraced the venerable, noble art of the ancient capital. Gradually, the temples and Buddhist statues of Nara came to be appreciated by the general public as well, and they have now become valuable tourist resources. Nara provides a welcome respite to those weary of the hustle and bustle of modern life. The meaning of temples and Buddhist statues evolves with the times.

Perhaps now our appreciation will come full circle so that we can see temples and Buddhist statues not just through our modern lens of aesthetics and art but for what they were in ancient and medieval times. They are a gateway to an otherworldly and invisible *myō* realm, beyond the manifest, present-day world. Indeed, recent research is shedding new light on the roles temples and Buddhist statues played in the spiritual life of the ancient and medieval worlds.

Key Texts

Watsuji Tetsurō. *Koji junrei*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1979.
———. *Shohan Koji junrei*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2012.

Watsuji Tetsurō (1889–1960) was born in what is now Himeji, Hyōgo Prefecture. While at university, he joined with the author Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and others in self-publishing the literary

magazine *Shinshichō* (New Trends in Thought). In 1918 he traveled with friends to old temples in the Nara area and wrote *Koji junrei* about his impressions of the temples, Buddhist statues, and Buddhist paintings. He studied at Tokyo Imperial University as both an undergraduate and a graduate, and at age thirty-two, he was appointed lecturer at Tōyō University. When he was thirty-seven he became a lecturer and later professor in ethics at the Kyoto Imperial University. Between the ages of thirty-nine and forty, he studied in Germany and traveled around Europe. He became a professor at Tokyo Imperial University when he was forty-six. He died aged seventy-two.

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Thinking about Japanese Ideas (2)

Understanding the Great Tradition

Of Japan's three traditions, the Great Tradition is perhaps in need of the greatest reexamination. It is also the longest—spanning Japan's ancient, medieval, and early modern periods—and comes closest to what is commonly thought of as tradition. It is precisely for this reason, however, that it is difficult to know how to understand it today. It has been remolded to such an extent by the Middle Tradition that it is now impossible to see it for what it truly is. How should we undertake its reexamination? Japan's premodern period is a treasure trove of truly diverse and seminal ideas. Simply examining diverse concepts as isolated entities is like surveying a collection of toys scattered on the floor—one can make no rhyme or reason of them. We need a method—a perspective—to make sense of the madness.

In *Intimacy or Integrity,* Thomas Kasulis, a scholar of Japanese philosophy, offers such a perspective, arguing that, in addition to the modern Western view of the self as an independent individual, we should recognize a view of human beings that sees the self in relation to others. He terms the former "integrity" and the latter "intimacy." Up to around the first half of the twentieth century, "integrity" was considered the universal norm, the very foundation of democracy. "Intimacy," on the other hand, was thought of as a childlike stage, falling short of "integrity." This is what gave rise to General Douglas MacArthur's remark that the Japanese are twelve-year-olds. Kasulis, however, does not see one as being superior or inferior to the other, and he maintains that intimacy should be recognized as a

sufficiently mature and valuable view of human beings. And he sees the Japanese way of thinking as being centered on intimacy.

While integrity is modeled on the Western, modern, male, and adult model, intimacy is quintessentially Eastern, premodern, female, and unadult (children and old people). In fact, the idea of intimacy has affinity with the "ethics of care" that grew up in the feminist movement of the 1980s. Conventionally, ethics is equated with an "ethics of justice," where right is determined by reason and should be pursued regardless of circumstances. Ethics of care, on the other hand, sees efforts to carry out interpersonal responsibilities with care and consideration as ethical, with an emphasis on physical and emotional contact in the context of human relationships. This was traditionally seen as a feminine attitude and ranked below the ethics of justice. The feminist movement elevated the ethics of care, though, criticizing the ethics of justice as not adequately taking prevailing circumstances into consideration. The ethics of care has much in common with Kasulis's model of intimacy, and in fact research, such as that being conducted by Erin McCarthy, has already begun to link the two.

When we consider traditional Japanese thought, the idea of intimacy is far more predominant than that of integrity. Confucianism considers it virtuous to act appropriately according to the type of relationship, such as parent and child, ruler and subject, husband and wife, older and younger, and among friends. The Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination holds that everything is formed in relation with everything else. Denying the existence of a permanent self, Buddhism is also very close to the intimacy idea, as is the concept of *mono no aware*, described by the nativist scholar Motoori Norinaga (chapter VI). Ideas belonging to the Great Tradition are by no means archaic; they find surprising corollaries to contemporary concepts like the ethics of care.

Relationship is thus at the heart of ideas associated with the

Great Tradition. The Japanese Buddhist emphasis on engaging with others in the secular world, rather than withdrawing from it, can also be understood from this point of view. Human beings are recognized as being a part of nature, for they are intimate not only with one another but also with nature. In addition, they have a very close relationship with the invisible otherworld of the dead, the kami, and the buddhas. In this respect, the ideas of the Great Tradition go beyond the secular framework of the contemporary ethics of care.

This invisible other realm was in times past called *myō* (or *yū*, *yūmei*). It was thought to lie behind the visible world (*ken*) yet was intimately related to it. The realm of *myō* was common knowledge in the premodern Great Tradition, but modern rational thinking has displaced it. Shinto, which deals with the realm of *myō*, played an extremely important role in the Middle Tradition, although *myō* was removed from surface discourse. There is no room in the Little Tradition to embrace this idea, with the result that *myō* has been lost.

The above offers clues, however murky, to the direction we should take in reexamining the Great Tradition. The first involves seeing human beings in terms of their relationships, which were deemphasized in the modern era. The second is the resuscitation of the idea of *myō*, also criticized and rejected as irrational by the modern world.

This is just one approach to reclaiming the vast reservoir of ideas contained in the Great Tradition, and there are surely many other ways. Remaining mindful of this, I have tried in this book to shed light on the diverse range of Japanese ideas. I believe we need to reread traditional Japanese thought from a multiplicity of perspectives.

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VI. WHAT IS “JAPAN”?

A small island country at the eastern end of Eurasia, Japan in premodern times came under the overwhelming influence of Chinese culture, and in the modern era it did its utmost to cope with the influx of the powerful Western culture. It is unsurprising, therefore, that a central concern for the Japanese has been to seek out what makes Japan different and distinct from these cultures. The popularity of *Nihonjinron*, the discourse on Japaneseness, comes from our need to locate our own identity and to reassure ourselves of who we really are.

Unlike Korea, which is connected to China by land, Japan has been able to develop its own distinctive culture more easily owing to its separation by sea. At the same time, though, this separation has given Japan a tendency to become inward-looking and complacent. Building a firm national tradition of thought and culture by taking a hard look at ourselves and not falling into complacency is not at all easy. Unless we can do so, though, we will not be able to develop a truly resilient culture. Throwing our weight around and brandishing our power are not proper ways to honor our country.

Japan's views on traditional ideas and culture changed significantly in the period following the Meiji Restoration in 1868 (a shift giving rise to what I call the Middle Tradition) and became *idées fixes* that have inhibited freer interpretations of the world. In this context, the thinkers discussed in this chapter have wrestled with tradition and tried to capture it through their own eyes, just as we today need to look at it more critically and seek new ways of understanding it.

Kojiki

Records of Ancient Matters

> Then Izanagi no mikoto said, "My body, formed as it is formed, has one place which is formed to excess. Therefore I would like to take that place in my body which is formed to excess and insert it into that place in your body which is formed insufficiently, and [thus] give birth to the land. How would this be?" Izanami no mikoto replied, saying: "That will be good." (Philippi 1968)

Following a period of silence after he retired from the University of Tokyo, Maruyama Masao (1914–1996), penned the essay, "Ancient Substratum of Japanese Historical Consciousness" (1972). He moved to a topic that he had not previously discussed: the myths of the ancient chronicles *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. This caused a stir, as some believed he was embracing a prewar, nationalistic line of thought. He identified three patterns in creation myths around the world, namely "making" (*tsukuru*), "giving birth" (*umu*), and "becoming" (*naru*). Maruyama noted that Japanese myths were characterized by the predominance of "becoming" in situations where "giving birth" would have been more natural. He argued that words like *naru*, *tsugu*, and *ikioi* are associated with the "ancient substratum" of Japanese historical consciousness, and like a sustained *basso ostinato* continue to shape the way people think to this day. This can be read as an expression of Maruyama's despair that a commitment to "making" never fully developed in Japan.

Maruyama came upon the idea of "becoming" in seeing how the deities in book 1 of the *Kojiki* were generated, a notion that seems to dovetail with the Japanese cultural propensity to allow things to take their natural course without human intervention. However, on a closer reading of the *Kojiki* itself, the generation of the deities at the very beginning of the book is rather atypical. The first deities to appear are only mentioned by name; they accomplish nothing and are unlikely therefore to have an ancient origin. A narrative develops only when the deities Izanagi and Izanami appear; it is through their act of love after their "circumambulation of the heavenly pillar" that the land and various deities are born. In that sense, "giving birth" is very much the basis of this narrative.

Izanami dies when her genitals are burned giving birth to Kagutsuchi, the fire deity, and the story then shifts to Izanagi's visit to Yomi, the land of the dead. Seeing Izanami's putrefying corpse, he becomes frightened and flees, pursued by the hags (*shikome*) of Yomi. He manages to escape by placing an enormous boulder across the pass leading to Yomi. As he does so, Izanami tells him, "I will strangle one thousand of the people of your land every day," but Izanagi replies, "Then I will build one thousand five hundred parturition huts." This is the origin of birth and death in the human world. The story has a celebratory sense in that society flourishes when life triumphs over death. It is the victory of *umu*, "giving birth."

That said, many deities do come into being (*naru*) later when Izanagi purifies himself upon his return. In the context of an agrarian society, sex and reproduction are of fundamental importance, since a growing population and rich harvests bring prosperity. We are reminded of the clay figurines (*dogū*) of fertility goddesses that date from the first millennium BCE.

Kobayashi Eitaku, *Izanami and Izanagi Creating the Japanese Islands*, Mid–1880s. Hanging scroll, 126 x 54.6 cm. William Sturgis Bigelow Collection 11.7972. Photograph © 2024 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. All rights reserved. c/o DNPartcom.

Naru does not simply denote natural change, but also implies coming into life, as when used to describe the growth of grain. In such cases, *naru* includes the notion of *tsukuru*, "making."

In the subsequent history of thought in Japan, Buddhism fundamentally rejected natural expressions of sexuality and reproduction and taught transcendence from them. Buddhism initially injected what the historian Ienaga Saburō (1913–2002) called a "logic of negation" into the Japanese people. But it gradually integrated the outlook of the indigenous agricultural society and, by the medieval period, had absorbed ideas that celebrated sexuality and birth. Notions related to a theory of the body (*shintairon*) developed, taking the form of the "five stages of gestation" (*tainai goi*), which identified sexual union, conception, fetal development, and birth with religious training and the attainment of buddhahood. This, though, was later declared to be heretical, branded as Tachikawa-ryū, and banned.

Where did this celebration of sex and reproduction go? It was embraced by Shinto, formed of indigenous beliefs. With its foundation in agrarian communities, Shinto developed symbols and rituals related to sex and reproduction. It also became imbued with a worldview that had much in common with the mythological space of pan-Asian agrarian culture, including Hinduism and Daoism. In this way, surprisingly enough, it could not be contained within the frame of Japanese nationalism.

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Kojiki is Japan's oldest extant historical work. It begins with narratives from the age of the kami and covers the reigns of early emperors from Jinmu to Suiko. Its preface says that Emperor Tenmu commanded an attendant named Hieda no Are to memorize oral traditions that had been handed down as the *Teiki* (Imperial Chronicles) and the *Kyūji* (Ancient Pronouncements). This narrative was written down by the official Ō no Yasumaro and presented to the empress regnant, Genmei, in 712. The following year, each province was ordered to compile a gazetteer (*fudoki*) recording oral traditions and local products. In 720, the *Nihon shoki*, the first of the national histories, was completed. Appearing at the beginning of the Nara period, when the Yamato state of the Asuka period had adopted the *ritsuryō* system of government, these histories assembled the origins of the country centering on the imperial line.

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Ogyū Sorai

Gakusoku

Instructions for Students

I try to understand the words of the Chinese classics—on poetry, politics, rituals, and music—by reading them as Chinese texts, rather than using the *kundoku* system to make them intelligible in Japanese. In other words, I make a clear distinction between the Chinese language of a foreign culture and the Japanese language of my own culture. If we understand that the Chinese classics are of Chinese, not Japanese, origin and apply their teachings in the correct way, we will be able to spread their wisdom to people throughout the world.

English-language education has a prominent place in Japan, and recently English is being taught even in primary schools. Compared to the growing emphasis on English, Japanese-language education finds itself somewhat neglected, with some urging the introduction of a new curriculum that does not require the study of literary works but only the ability to read contracts. At the root of such thinking is the belief that language is a mere tool and that it is enough if the meaning can be understood. But is there any language that is merely utilitarian? Every language has been forged over a long history and carries the weight of culture. Understanding language and understanding culture go hand in hand. Just because you understand the surface meaning of something in English

does not mean that you really understand the people of another culture.

Japan has developed a distinctive culture over the course of many years under the influence of Chinese culture. In the process, it devised its own way of reading Chinese texts called *kundoku* (Korea has a similar method). Chinese characters (*kanji*) are read according to their Japanese pronunciation and the original Chinese word order is altered. This enables a foreign language, Chinese, to be understood as if it were Japanese.[1] This method was already practiced in the Nara period (710–794) and has been adapted in various ways over the years down to the present. It allowed the Japanese to understand the Chinese classics without the need for translation and to appreciate Chinese and Buddhist texts directly without much inconvenience.

But is this really the best way to understand a foreign culture? Embracing a foreign culture without any awareness that it is foreign, as if it were one's own, can lead to serious misunderstanding. Though the same characters are used in China and Japan, they do not necessarily have the same meaning. Identical characters, for instance, are used for "letter" in Japanese and "toilet paper" in Chinese. Being unaware of this raises the risk of creating misunderstanding.

One of the earliest to sound a warning about the danger of the *kundoku* system, which most accepted without question, was Ogyū Sorai. He wanted his students to gain a proper understanding of the Chinese classics. However, if they relied on

1. For example, 学而時習之 (*xué ér shí xí zhī*, "learning by practicing") is read as 学びて時に之を習う (*manabite toki ni kore o narau*) and 如是我聞 (*rúshìwǒwén*, "thus I have heard") is read 是の如くに我聞けり (*kaku no gotoku ni ware kikeri*).

kundoku to read them, it would be impossible to gain a proper grasp of the nuances of the text. Therefore, Sorai declared that the first step in studying Chinese texts was to read them without relying on *kundoku*. *Instructions for Students*, published in his final years, set out in seven articles his principles for study. The first of these was his criticism of the use of *kundoku*. While Sorai himself had studied the pronunciation of contemporary Chinese, he did not require students to go that far. But he did insist that Chinese texts should be understood as having been written in a foreign language and that they required translation. At the very least, students should read the words of the text in the Chinese order, not in the Japanese way using *kundoku*.

For Sorai, reading the Chinese classics correctly was more than just a matter of personal preference. The classics had been written by sages whose teachings were considered universal truths. Therefore, it was necessary to read and understand them correctly and to put them into practice. They should be seen, in other words, as the products of a foreign culture and philosophy without allowing *kundoku* to skew their meaning.

Of course, the question remains as to whether Chinese sages really established universal truths. After all, Japan's way may differ from that of China. This is where the nativism (*kokugaku*) of Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) arose. Norinaga, too, promoted correct linguistic understanding—in his case, of ancient Japanese texts—to throw light on Japan's ancient way. In seeking a correct understanding of the relationship between language, thought, and culture, Norinaga can be said to have been indebted to Sorai.

Key Text

Yoshikawa Kōjirō, ed. *Nihon shisō taikei: Ogyū Sorai*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973.

Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728) was a Confucian scholar. He was commonly known as Sōemon and also by the sobriquet Butsumokei. His father was banished from Edo in 1679, having incurred the anger of future shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi. As a result, Sorai spent his youth in Kazusa Province (now Chiba Prefecture). He entered the service of shogunal official Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu at the age of thirty-one, and his counsel was later sought by the shogun, Tokugawa Yoshimune. He opened a private academy, Ken'enjuku, in Nihonbashi, where he trained a large number of students who formed what is known as the Ken'en school. Besides such Confucian works as *Benmei* (Distinguishing Names) and *Bendō* (Distinguishing the Way), he authored *Seidan* (Discourse on Government), which he presented to Yoshimune.

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Motoori Norinaga

Shibun yōryō

Essence of Murasaki Shikibu's Writings

> All in all, the human heart, in truth, is foolish and full of lingering affections, like that of a young girl. The manly, firm, and wise state of mind is not the true heart—it is just for show. However sagacious a person may be, at bottom, his heart is no different to a girl's. The only difference is whether or not people are ashamed of it and hide it.

One byproduct of the feminist movement of the 1980s was the development of the theory of the "ethics of care." This emerged in response to the idea of the "ethics of justice," built on intellectual reasoning, which sees right as being always right, whatever the circumstances, and worth going to war for. The ethics of justice was promoted in male-dominated societies that attached importance to the autonomous individual. By contrast, a way of living that places value on the emotions that arise in contact with others and responds to situations with consideration for them was disparaged as feminine. It was from this viewpoint that the ethics of care confronted the ethics of justice. The idea of care is essential in many contexts today, such as nursing and childcare. It also serves to buttress an antiwar ethic of peace.

As I suggested in "Thinking about Japanese Ideas (2)" on page 172 of this volume, the traditional Japanese way of thinking may be more compatible with the ethics of care, driven by

emotions in relationships with others, than with the ethics of justice, based on the intellect and autonomy of the individual. Among the various forms in which the former appears in traditional Japanese thought, one archetype is Motoori Norinaga's theory of *mono no aware*.

The first work of Norinaga's that usually comes to mind is the *Kojikiden*, his 1790 commentary on the *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters), but *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji) was what obsessed him from his youth. The first thing he did on returning to his home in Matsusaka (now in Mie Prefecture) from his studies in Kyoto was to give lectures on *The Tale of Genji*. *Shibun yōryō* (Essence of Murasaki Shikibu's Writings) is an outline of *Genji* written on the basis of those lectures. The term *mono no aware*, the core idea of his later voluminous *Genji monogatari tama no ogushi* (The Jeweled Comb of the Tale of Genji) already appears here. He defines it as follows:

> *Aware* is when the heart is moved by something seen or heard, whether it is unusual or ominous, interesting or frightening, or sad. The things seen or heard are not kept only within one's heart but are spoken about and told to others. It is the same whether spoken or written. Thinking that the things seen and heard are full of pathos [*aware*] and sadness moves the heart. It is when the heart is moved that one knows *mono no aware*.

This is not exactly a tidy definition, but it encapsulates three elements: (1) being moved emotionally by contact with external things; (2) being conscious of that emotion (that is, to "know" *mono no aware*); and (3) sharing it with others by speaking about it, not keeping it locked away in the heart.

Empathy with others becomes inevitable because *mono no aware* is different from intellectual perception, as noted in (1), and because self-reliance and self-sufficiency are rejected, as stated in (3). On point (2), he writes, "When we experience the *aware* of others, we feel *aware* ourselves, and when we hear someone rejoicing, we share their joy. This is in accordance with human nature and is how we know *mono no aware*." In its emphasis on emotion and empathy with others, Norinaga's *mono no aware* has great affinity with the ideas behind the ethics of care.

Norinaga also touches on questions of gender. On the issue of whether the men in the story, such as the Shining Prince, Hikaru Genji, were "weak in resolve, regretful, never manly and firm, but only fragile, helpless and foolish" with hearts "like that of a young girl," he asserts that the "manly and wise" state of mind is a mere façade and not the "true heart." Human nature is thus essentially female in disposition. Here, too, Norinaga's ideas are in accord with the ethics of care that emerged out of feminism and show astonishing foresight, far ahead of his time.

Key Text

Motoori Norinaga. *Shibun yōryō*. Edited and annotated by Koyasu Nobukuni. Iwanami Shoten, 2010.

Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) was a nativist scholar born the son of a cotton wholesaler in Matsusaka, Ise Province (now Mie Prefecture). He went to Kyoto when he was twenty-three, where he studied medicine, Confucianism, and nativist studies (*kokugaku*). He returned to Matsusaka at twenty-eight and set up his own medical practice. He also began lecturing on the *Genji monogatari* at his home. He completed *Shibun yōryō* (Essence of

Murasaki Shikibu's Writings) when he was thirty-four. Over the next thirty-five years he produced the *Kojikiden*, based on his study of the *Kojiki*, as well as the *Tamakushige* (The Jeweled Comb-Box), containing his political philosophy, and many other works. He died at age seventy-two.

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Uchimura Kanzō

Kirisuto shinto no nagusame

Consolations of a Christian

> Ah! I, too, am now a citizen of the world. The narrow-mindedness that made me think there was no country other than this on whose soil I was born has completely disappeared. One fortuitous result of this is, having been rejected by my own countrymen, I have become a citizen of the world, albeit a modest one, and a being at home in the universe.
>
> Have I forgotten my own country, having found a universal home? O God, if ever I should forget Japan, let my right hand forget all it has learned. If a child could ever forget its mother, only then could I forget Japan. Like a wife served a letter of divorce by her husband against her will yearns for him more and more, being abandoned, I yearn more and more ardently for Japan.

Some municipalities in Japan have enacted ordinances to issue severe punishments to teachers who do not comply with singing the national anthem at school events. The public seems to have accepted this without much resistance, but I think it is very problematic.

Something similar happened during the Meiji era. The Imperial Rescript on Education was promulgated in 1890 and distributed to the seven national higher middle schools, with the emperor's signature on it. When it was read out in special ceremonies, all had to listen with heads bowed. In January the

following year, a reading ceremony was held at the First Higher Middle School in Tokyo, after which the teachers and students were required in turn to walk onto the stage where the Imperial Rescript was placed and bow deeply before it.

Uchimura Kanzō, a part-time instructor there, refused and was denounced for lèse-majesté. Though he was not charged with a crime, the media and the public reacted so violently that he was forced to resign.

A further attack came from Inoue Tetsujirō (1856–1944), professor of philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University. In a series of articles entitled "The Clash between Education and Religion," he launched a campaign of criticism against Christianity from a nationalist standpoint. He argued that because Christianity placed God above all else, it did not respect the state. Christians found themselves having to defend their position.

Around the same time, Uchimura suffered great misfortune in his personal life. Soon after his second marriage (his first had ended in divorce), his wife Kazuko became ill and died shortly thereafter. Before taking up his position at the First Higher Middle School, he had been principal of Hokuetsu Gakkan in Niigata. There he clashed with the foreign missionaries, which led to friction between him and the church. His ideals regarding education failed to garner support, he lost his job, and his health continued to deteriorate.

Consolations of a Christian was written at this time. The table of contents reveals a series of gloomy stories: "Losing My Beloved," "Abandoned by My Countrymen," "Abandoned by the Christian Church," "Failure of My Undertaking," "Pressed by Poverty," "Suffering from an Incurable Disease," and so on. These tales of woe were not fiction; all were events Uchimura actually went through at the time.

Like Job in the Old Testament, whose faith was strengthened by his sufferings, Uchimura faced God alone, abandoned by others in the midst of his misfortunes. And he reached a point where he was able to say, "I have lost what I love, my country, my universe, sometimes almost my God, but recovering them again, my country becomes more loving, the universe more beautiful and majestic, and I feel closer to God."

The issue of "country" was for him the most vexing. In the face of adversity, he says, "Ah, I, too, am now a citizen of the world. The narrow-mindedness that made me think there was no country other than this on whose soil I was born has completely disappeared. One fortuitous result of this is, having been rejected by my own countrymen, I have become a citizen of the world, albeit a modest one, and a being at home in the universe." He is aware of having transcended national borders to become a "citizen of the world." However, he then turns around and declares his love for Japan. "O God, if it is your will, let the divorced wife return to her husband's house [Japan]." Laying bare his fondness for his native land, he wrote, "If I am admitted into this country again, and this country acknowledges its mistake, it will be then that my love for my country increases a hundredfold over what it used to be." Uchimura loved the two Js, Jesus and Japan, with all his being, and could never part from them.

There is more than one way of loving one's country. Patriotism is not only about striving to be a world power, militarily and economically. Loving peace, nurturing a culture rich in spirit, and getting along with neighboring countries are also praiseworthy expressions of patriotism. To impose a particular form on it, to assume that those who do not conform are unpatriotic, and to suppress any deviations from the norm

seem to me to be the very things that invite a country's demise. We have serious soul-searching to do.

Key Text

Uchimura Kanzō. *Kirisuto shinto no nagusame*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1939.

Uchimura Kanzō (1861–1930) was born the son of a retainer in the Takasaki domain. He went to the United States when he was twenty-four, returning to Japan four years later. He resigned from the First Higher Middle School in Tokyo when he was thirty-one over a lèse-majesté incident, and later wrote such works as *Consolations of a Christian*. At thirty-seven, he began writing a column in English in the daily *Yorozu Chōhō*. When he was forty-one he started the magazine *Mukyōkai* (Non-Church). He engaged in social criticism targeted at such issues as pollution caused by the Ashio copper mine and the Russo-Japanese War. He died in Tokyo at age seventy.

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Suzuki Daisetsu

Nihonteki reisei

Japanese Spirituality

> The words from the Diamond Sutra amount to this: "The perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) taught by the Buddha is not in itself the perfection of wisdom; therefore it is called the perfection of wisdom." This logic forms the basis of Wisdom (*Prajñāpāramitā*) thought and also the logic of Zen and of Japanese spirituality [*reisei*]. This logic can be written as a formula: "A is A because A is not A, therefore A is A." Thus, affirmation is negation and negation is affirmation.

As far as the Japanese are concerned, Shinran is probably the best-known Buddhist figure, and the *nenbutsu* the most familiar Buddhist practice. Overseas, though, particularly in the West, Zen is so well known that it *is* Japanese Buddhism.

Pure Land Buddhism, centered on faith in Amida and close to Christian monotheism, offers little that is fresh and exciting. Zen, on the other hand, is a type of religious practice not found in the West and has attracted people dissatisfied with Christianity.

Suzuki Daisetsu, better known overseas as D. T. Suzuki, was a key figure in the spread of Zen in the West. Having lived in the United States as a young man, he made use of the language skills he had acquired there to spark a Zen boom in the West through his many English-language writings and lectures.

Suzuki's appeal was that he was both a religious teacher

and a scholar, one of the first to make an in-depth study of the Chan (Zen) literature of the Tang dynasty newly discovered at Dunhuang in western China. He was also a thinker who was well-versed in Western mysticism and psychology; he engaged in friendly rivalry with his close friend, the philosopher Nishida Kitarō. Few have fully explored the entire breadth of his voluminous writings, both in English and Japanese.

Among the books written in his native tongue, *Japanese Spirituality* is regarded as his main work. It uses the technical term *reisei* to explain Japan's religious and spiritual structure, which is used quite widely today to translate "spirituality." It refers to the religious nature of human beings grasped through personal experience, rather than the doctrines of any particular religion. In the book, Suzuki uses Hōnen and the *myōkōnin* (Pure Land devotees) as exemplars of a Japanese-style spirituality.

The word *reisei* was seldom used until it appeared in Suzuki's book. The reason he chose this word is related to its date of publication, toward the end of the war in 1944. He deliberately avoided using *Nihon seishin* (Japanese spirit), which was then widely touted in the war effort. He opted to use "Japanese spirituality" to convey a more accurate image of Japan's religious inclinations.

By doing so, he demonstrated both a strong determination to penetrate the depths of Japanese religious culture and a defiance toward the militaristic ethos of the time. The term *reisei*, though, can be misunderstood to mean an acknowledgement of the existence of a soul, so care must be taken, and some in Buddhist circles oppose its use.

For many years, the only copy of the book I read was the popular Iwanami Bunko edition, and I had the impression

that it was somehow incomplete and unconvincing. When I looked into the matter, I found that this version was based on a new postwar edition and had deleted the fifth chapter—more than one hundred pages long—from the original. This chapter, entitled "The Zen of the Diamond Sutra," is the most detailed of Suzuki's many writings about the language of Zen. The reason why the chapter was omitted is not clear, but maybe it was because the discussion focused on the Indian sutras and Chinese Chan and so was considered outside the scope of the book's title, *Japanese Spirituality*. However, it is only by reading the fifth chapter that one gains a full picture of Suzuki's views on spirituality. So, when I had the opportunity to work on the Kadokawa Sofia Bunko edition, I proposed publishing a "complete edition" and had the fifth chapter included.

What Suzuki says in this chapter is that the language of Zen is different from ordinary everyday language because it contains the contradiction, "A is not A, therefore A is A." In previous chapters, he discusses "spirituality" mainly from the experience of *nenbutsu* practitioners, but here he focuses on Zen and presents a problem of the logic of language. Suzuki's discourse on "spirituality" is not limited to descriptions of religious experience; it also exhibits a strong determination to use the tools of logic to shed light on the topic.

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Suzuki Daisetsu (1870–1966) was born the son of a physician in the service of the Kanazawa domain. He immersed himself in Zen studies during his time as a *senka* (limited status) student at Tokyo Imperial University and received the Buddhist name Daisetsu (his birth name was Teitarō). He went to the United States when he was twenty-eight, and engaged in translating and writing books in English. He returned to Japan at forty. The following year he was appointed professor at Gakushūin University. He married the American Beatrice Erskine Lane when he was forty-two. Between the ages of fifty-two and ninety, he was a professor at the present Ōtani University. He died in Tokyo at ninety-seven.

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Nishida Kitarō

Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki sekaikan

The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview

> The self is a thoroughly self-contradictory existence [*jiko mujunteki sonzai*]. It can think about itself; that is, it can be both a subject and predicate. And it can perceive how it functions; that is, it has both a temporal and a spatial dimension. The self, in other words, exists in its own self-contradiction. And the more self-contradictory the self is, the more it becomes aware of itself. It is truly a paradox. Therein lies a deep-seated problem. We can say that the self exists through its own self-denial. It does not exist either in the direction of a subject or predicate but claims an existence only in absolute nothingness [*zettai no mu*].

In 2013, I went to an exhibition of the philosopher Nishida Kitarō's calligraphy at the Kyoto University Museum entitled "From Silence into Silence." Nishida wrote many *tanka* poems, but in his later years he was also passionate about calligraphy. I had assumed he would write in a hard, nervous style, using the regular *kaisho* script, but I was surprised to find that in his later years, he wrote freely in a running, cursive *sōsho* style. His philosophy, too, betrays our expectations. At first glance, it seems to be built on a solid logic, but in fact its speculative locus can rather be said to be resolutely distorted and flexible.

Nishida is regarded as one of Japan's foremost philosophers,

but it is not always clear where the core of his thought lies. He created his own lexicon, with expressions like "pure experience" (*junsui keiken*), "absolute nothingness" (*zettai mu*), "place of nothingness" (*mu no basho*), and "self-identity of absolute contradiction" (*zettai mujunteki jiko dōitsu*) taking on a life of their own. These, combined with complicated text, make his works abstruse, giving him a reputation of being profound but difficult to understand.

Nishida is probably best known for *Zen no kenkyū* (An Inquiry into the Good, 1911), an important work from his early period, but his truly original thought emerged later, in his middle period, with his concept of the "place of nothingness." Whereas Western philosophy is premised on the existence of an autonomous "individual" who does not depend on others, Nishida starts with a "place" that contains the individual, thereby making use of traditional Eastern thought. In simpler terms, this is another way of saying that our lives are defined by society and the environment. The self cannot be conceived of as an individual without considering its "place." The emphasis on "place" deepens the philosophy of human existence, which Thomas Kasulis refers to as "intimacy orientation," and can be said to be a study of how relationships with others are formed.

By further investigating the concept of "place," Nishida arrived at "nothingness" (*mu*). The very source of the many specific defining social and environmental factors has no name, so the only recourse is to call it "nothing." This draws on the Eastern philosophies of Daoism and Buddhism, which consider "nothingness" to be the source of all that exists in the world.

Nishida's formulation of the "place of nothingness" is crucial when thinking about the "other." We live in relation to

others, and there is no denying that this relationship comes about in a place called society. But there is more to this relationship.

The other is not just outside of us, in a place called society, but lives within us as well. Yet, at the same time, we cannot fully penetrate to the depth of the other. The border separating the self and other is permeable, enabling us to experience the other directly, without a buffering medium, but a boundary continues to exist, and we can never fully assimilate the other. The "place of nothingness" is a perfect description of this unmediated, yet unassimilable, relationship with the other.

The essay that Nishida mustered his last bit of strength to write at the very end of his life was entitled "The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview." This was in 1945, just before Japan's defeat in World War II. Here, Nishida takes the question of the other one step further. At the core of the self is a sense of self-negation, and it is only through this sense of losing oneself that we can relate to others. The term he coined for this phenomenon was "inverse correspondence" (*gyaku taiō*).

The other envisioned here is not limited to people but encompasses transcendent beings like God and the Buddha. This was Nishida's attempt to elucidate the basic structure of all religions, including Christianity and Buddhism.

Nishida's life was marked by many tragic events, including losing his wife and children. The experience of being powerless to prevent the loss of those closest and dearest to him crystallized into a poignant theory of the other, so his ideas were by no means dry, intellectual abstractions. How to relate to others in meaningful ways and how to face the loss of those close to us have become pressing questions for us today. Nishida's philosophy may afford us new hints on this issue.

Key Text

Nishida Kitarō. *Nishida Kitarō tetsugaku ronshū III: Jikaku ni tsuite, hoka shihen*. Edited by Ueda Shizuteru. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1989.

Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945) was born in what is now the city of Kahoku in Ishikawa Prefecture, the son of a village leader (*shōya*). He dropped out of the Fourth Higher Middle School in Kanazawa at age twenty-two and entered the philosophy department of Tokyo Imperial University the following year as a *senka* (limited status) student. He became a teacher at the Fourth High School at age twenty-seven and went on to hold teaching positions at other high schools and a professorship at Gakushūin University. He was appointed associate professor (and later professor) at Kyoto Imperial University when he was forty-one. He published *Zen no kenkyū* (An Inquiry into the Good) the following year. He retired from Kyoto Imperial University at fifty-nine. He died at age seventy-six in Kamakura just before the end of World War II.

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Maruyama Masao

Nihon no shisō

Japanese Thought

Many literary figures and historians have already pointed out how deeply the consciousness and ideas of the modern Japanese are prescribed beneath their Westernized surface by a sense of impermanence, by *mono no aware*, by native beliefs about the otherworld, and by Confucian ethics. In fact, it is precisely because the past is not consciously objectified and "sublimated" in the present that it slips into the present from behind, as it were. The fact that ideas do not accumulate as traditions and that "traditional" ideas steadily and irrelevantly flow into the present are simply two sides of the same coin.

I tend to dislike "generation theory" (*sedairon*), which posits that age cohorts are marked by specific behavior patterns, but attitudes toward Maruyama Masao certainly vary greatly from generation to generation. I am at the tail end of Japan's baby-boom generation, and when I was younger, if I criticized Maruyama in a lecture, I would get a scolding from older members of the audience, who said I did not understand him. But even I am taken aback by the cool, analytical attitude toward Maruyama shown by those of the younger generation, for whom the philosopher is a historical figure.

For my generation, caught in the middle, Maruyama was

someone to take on, a force to be reckoned with. He was famously denounced by students during the university protests of 1968 and 1969. Although I was not engaged in such protests, I was under his overwhelming influence and struggled to find my own voice.

His views on early modern thought in his seminal 1952 work, *Nihon seiji shisōshi kenkyū* (A Study in the History of Japanese Political Thought), and his analysis of Japanese fascism in the two-volume *Gendai seiji no shisō to kōdō* (Thought and Behavior in Modern Politics, 1956–1957), for example, were so brilliant that it was almost impossible to take any other position. The spellbinding power of Maruyama's work is still so great that I have only just begun to see the early modern period in a slightly different light. I have come to regard this period as one of intellectual dynamism in many schools of thought, including Buddhism, and have broadened my scope to extend beyond the big names like Ogyū Sorai and Motoori Norinaga that Maruyama took up.

Japanese Thought is a small book first published in 1961, but it has remained a key source for its clear exposition of the essence of Maruyama's ideas. His points and criticisms, in fact, may be even more valid today, some sixty years later, than they were at the time of publication, as parochialism in many fields of academia, which he called "octopus-pot" isolationism, persists unchanged.

His point regarding the contradiction between "being" and "doing" is also astute. The breakdown of "being"—static and based on status—ushered in the period of modernization, but a single-minded focus on "doing"—which values utility and efficiency—has now decimated the foundations of "being," depriving modernization of the principles and ideas on

which it needs to be built. Such was Maruyama's argument. This loss is becoming ever more acute today.

This commentary is related to his point that the ideas of the past are not properly and consciously acknowledged. And because ideas do not "accumulate as traditions," older ideas steadily and irrelevantly flow into the present. Nationalism may, on the surface, appear compelling, but inasmuch as it completely disregards the cultural traditions of the country, it is in fact hollow. Thus the mistakes of the past infiltrate the present unchanged, and the same blunders are made over and over again.

Although *Japanese Thought* does not discuss religion directly, it does suggest that the ideas behind Buddhism and other religions must be reconstructed if they are to avoid falling into the same traps as other schools of thought. The time has passed when one could qualify as a contemporary thinker simply by adding a few smart touches to fashionable Western ideas. The tragedy of the Tōhoku earthquake has made clear that imitations are powerless and that only what is real can become a force for good. As Maruyama points out, we must begin more consciously building an unshakeable tradition if we are to move forward.

For this reason, those involved in Japanese thought and religion have a great responsibility. We must take an unflinching look at the past and recognize any perceived faults in building the thought and religion of the future. This, I dare say, is an issue that is related to the very survival of Japan.

Key Text

Maruyama Masao. *Nihon no shisō*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1961.

Maruyama Masao (1914–1996) was born in what is now the city of Osaka, the second son of a journalist. He graduated from the Faculty of Law of Tokyo Imperial University and became an associate professor there at age twenty-seven. In 1944 he was drafted into the army, but was discharged with beriberi. He was drafted again in 1945 when he was thirty-two and stationed in Hiroshima, where he experienced the atomic bombing. He became a professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Tokyo when he was thirty-seven. He became a leader in the postwar democratic movement through his research into the history of political thought. He died at the age of eighty-three.

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VII. SOCIETY AND THE STATE

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Japan is a small island country on the fringe of a powerful culture. It was forced constantly to seek an identity for itself to prevent being subsumed. As a result, Japanese ideas about society and the state focused on the characteristics that made Japan different from other countries. The *kokutai* (national polity) theory was an extreme form of this, characterizing the Japanese state system as being under the rule of an unbroken line of emperors, descendants of the kami.

This theory was an outcome of the development of early modern theories of the emperor, in which Confucian scholars of the Mito school played a particularly important role. The most prominent among them was Aizawa Yasushi (Seishisai; 1782–1863), whose ideas were used by Yoshida Shōin and others as the core ideology of the *sonnō jōi* ("revere the emperor, expel the barbarians") movement that gave rise to the Meiji Restoration. The Restoration Shinto school of Hirata Atsutane also played an important role at the time of the Meiji Restoration, prompting a series of edicts on the separation of Buddhist and Shinto elements in temples and shrines. The school was soon eliminated from the political center, however, as the Mito school's *kokutai* concept assumed ascendancy, leading to the formation of the modern emperor system and State Shinto. While the postwar reforms pushed *kokutai* ideology out of sight, the concept was never fully examined or refuted, and it continues to resurface in strange ways to this day.

This chapter takes a renewed look, with fresh eyes, at the development of diverse views about society and the state, including some novel ideas that remained in the shadow of *kokutai*.

Nichiren

Risshō ankokuron

Establishment of the Correct Teachings for the Peace of the Land

> You must hurry to reform the small beliefs that you hold in your heart and return immediately to the good, true vehicle. If you do so, then the three realms will become a Buddha land. A Buddha land cannot decline. The worlds of the ten directions will all become a treasure land. A treasure land cannot collapse. If the country never declines, if the land never collapses, you will find peace, and your mind will be untroubled. Believe the Buddha's words and hold them in high esteem.

At the time of the Tōhoku earthquake, the then governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintarō, sparked outrage when he called the disaster a "divine punishment." Certainly, his statement lacked sympathy for the victims, and he was rightly criticized. However, if we considered his remark dispassionately, we would realize that there was more to what he was trying to say: that human conceit and arrogance have their limits and that there are forces beyond human control. When I wrote this in a column in the religious newspaper *Chūgai Nippō* (April 26, 2011), I was severely reproached on the internet, and a huge controversy ensued. I described this in my book *Gendai Bukkyōron*.

While the idea of "divine punishment" does not appear in

Buddhist thought, there is a discussion of major catastrophes from a Buddhist perspective in Nichiren's *Establishment of the Correct Teachings for the Peace of the Land*, where he considers the possible reasons for a series of tragic natural disasters.

> Recent years have seen a chain of cataclysmic events throughout the land, including natural disasters, famines and epidemics. Cattle and horses lie dead in the city, and skeletons fill the streets. Over half of the population has died, and there is no one who does not grieve.

It then proceeds in a question-and-answer format between host and guest, the host answering the guest's questions about the origin of the catastrophes.

> To give my humble opinion, I have come to the realization, after consulting the sutras, that people have turned their backs on the truth and retreated to evil ways. For this reason, the good deities have abandoned the country and the sages have departed, not to return. In their stead come demons and malevolent spirits, triggering disasters and calamities.

This argument—that calamities occur because injustice in the world has driven good deities away and invited evil ones in—runs throughout the book.

Nichiren warns that although this world and the human beings who inhabit it are protected by invisible, benevolent forces, they are displaced and dominated by evil powers when people become arrogant, lose awe and respect for their protectors, and think they can do everything on their own.

Such an argument today would probably be ridiculed as outdated nonsense. But perhaps the arrogance of the modern person lies in this very show of disdain. We need to reclaim the wisdom of the medieval period and give greater thought to the invisible forces lurking behind nature.

Nichiren held up the Lotus Sutra as the supreme teaching and lambasted Hōnen's Pure Land Buddhism as the source of the wrong thinking that caused the calamities of his time. This argument was not embraced by his contemporaries, though, and certainly not by Pure Land adherents. His assertion about the necessity for the state to be guided by right principles remains valid today, however, for in many cases what appears to be a natural calamity is quite often a man-made disaster caused by misguided thinking.

We should note here that Nichiren never called for Hōnen's teachings to be suppressed by force. He was merely decrying the financial support the Pure Land enjoyed from the state. Nichiren was not the militant fundamentalist for which he is so often mistaken. He acted in the hope of creating a peaceful and tranquil world; it was due to his unaffected nature and unwillingness to compromise that he suffered so much persecution.

He was exiled to Sado Island (off the coast of what is now Niigata Prefecture), where the harsh natural environment further deepened his thought and faith. The way of the bodhisattva meant accepting the entirety of the Buddha's teachings. When read with this in mind, *Establishment of the Correct Teachings for the Peace of the Land* is bound to evoke deeper empathy.

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Nichiren (1222–1282) was the founder of the Nichiren school of Buddhism. He was born in Kominato, Awa Province (now Kamogawa, Chiba Prefecture), and was ordained at sixteen at a temple in the same province, Seichōji (also known as Kiyosumidera). From the age of seventeen he went to study in various places, including Kamakura and Mount Hiei. He announced the establishment of his own sect at Seichōji when he was thirty-two, and he wrote *Establishment of the Correct Teachings for the Peace of the Land* at age thirty-nine. His ideas prompted a severe backlash, and he was exiled to Sado Island when he was fifty. After his pardon, he retired to Mount Minobu, Kai Province (now Yamanashi Prefecture). He died at Ikegami (now Ota-ku, Tokyo) at age sixty-one.

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Yoshida Shōin

Kōmō yowa

Additional Notes in Explication of *Mencius*

> Benevolence and the way are like the five grains that we eat every day. Planning the strategy for battle by building a rich country and strong army is like powerful medicinal herbs, aconite root and *Rheum officinale* [Chinese rhubarb]. One who is a true king is a good doctor. He nourishes people with the five grains and treats illness with medicine. A mediocre leader is a reckless doctor. He does not feed people with the five grains, and gives them aconite root and *Rheum officinale* to their detriment.

I cannot bring myself to like the Meiji Restoration. To put it rather bluntly, this was a violent coup d'état staged by a group of retainers from certain domains who brandished their authority in the name of the emperor and, aping the West, pushed the country into becoming an aggressor. And I was equally disinclined to read the works of Yoshida Shōin, the terrorist mastermind who built the case for this coup—or so I thought.

When I was obliged to read *Additional Notes in Explication of* Mencius one day, I found it so exciting that I could not put it down and raced to finish it. It consists of lectures on the Confucian classic *Mencius,* and many parts are difficult to understand if one is not familiar with that work. For now, let us skip over the details.

Additional Notes begins with a forewarning: "The first rule

when reading the classics is not to be over-respectful of the sages. If you submit to them even a little, you will miss the point, and whatever you gain from your reading will be harmful, not beneficial." This floored me from the outset, as it went to the heart of what it means to study the classics. Of course, there is nothing wrong, as a researcher, with scrutinizing a text, and I have been doing just that over the course of my career. However, it is important not to be fixated on the words but to go beyond them, to get inside the minds of the sages who wrote them, to wrestle with the ideas as they had, and to reconstruct and breathe new life into those ideas so as to make them our own. Shōin managed to do this brilliantly.

Shōin's lectures on *Mencius* began when he was imprisoned at the Noyama jail in Hagi after an unsuccessful attempt to stow away on one of Commodore Perry's ships in Shimoda in 1854. He organized a reading group with fellow prisoners and read *Mencius,* and in the process roundly abused the domanial and shogunal authorities of the day. The first half of the book, based on the lectures he gave while in prison, is more interesting for recounting his frustrations and introspective insights than the second half, which comprises lectures given to relatives after his release. A passage in chapter 22, dated the fourteenth day of the eleventh month, reads: "Now I sit in prison, I cannot seek out a good master and learn about the way."

The crux of his ideas can be found in the statement in chapter 36, dated the night of the tenth of the sixth month, "The way is the common path of the world and is *dō* [shared]. *Kokutai* [national polity] is the body of the nation and is *doku* [singular]." He distinguishes between what is universal and

what is particular to one nation. The latter is *kokutai*. Japan has had an unchanging *kokutai* since the age of the kami, he asserts, and so must hold to its own identity. This theory of *kokutai* was inherited from the Mito school and passed on to the architects of the Meiji state.

Kokutai thought is a big issue that needs to be considered at length, but here Shōin is not discussing it in abstract or theoretical terms. The book's appeal lies in its thoroughgoing search, through trial and error, for the right course of political action during a period of historical upheaval and for the ethical standards by which the individual should live. Shōin compared the politics of adhering to the ideals of benevolence and the way to the five grains, and used the analogy of aconite root and *Rheum officinale* (medicinal herbs that are poisonous if taken in excess) to analyze the slogan "enrich the country, strengthen the military" (*fukoku kyōhei*). The five grains are nourishing, but when people are ill, they need medicine, so the king must be a good doctor and use them properly. "Enrich the country, strengthen the military" can be dangerous when used without restraint (chapter 9, the fifteenth day of the fourth month). Shōin is being very realistic here, giving life to a political ethic that is firmly based on benevolence and the way.

In contrast to the future prime minister Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909) and others who were active after the Meiji Restoration, Shōin belongs to the last generation of those who derived their political philosophy and way of life by engaging directly with the Chinese classics. Shōin's efforts to wrestle with and breathe new life into the ideas of the classics have much to teach the Japanese people of today, who have lost sight of tradition.

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Yoshida Shōin (1830–1859) was a retainer of the Chōshū domain (now Yamaguchi Prefecture) and an intellectual. He was born in the castle town of Hagi, and studied Confucianism and military science. Realizing the superiority of Western military science, he went to Edo to study it under Sakuma Shōzan. When he was twenty-five, he failed in his attempt to stow away on one of Commodore Perry's ships. He was imprisoned in Hagi's Noyama jail. At twenty-six, he was released but placed under house arrest. He founded the private academy Shōka Sonjuku at the home of his birth when he was twenty-seven. He was imprisoned again at Noyama when he was twenty-nine for advocating the overthrow of the shogunate. At thirty he was sent to Edo, where he was beheaded in the Denmachō prison.

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Nakayama Miki

Mikagura-uta

The Songs for the Service

This time I, God, revealing Myself to the fore,
Teach you all the truth in detail.
You are calling this place the Jiba, the home of God, in Yamato;
But you do not know its origin.
If you are told of this origin in full,
Great yearning will come over you, whoever you may be.
If you wish to hear and will come to Me,
I will tell you the truth that this place is the origin of any and everything.
When I, God, reveal Myself and teach you everything in detail,
All people in the world will become cheerful.
As I hasten to save all of you equally,
I will set out to cheer up all the minds of the world.
(Tenryikyo Church Headquarters 1999)

One of the things I find unsatisfactory when researching the history of Japanese thought and the history of Buddhism is the almost complete absence of women. Of course, there were charismatic women who became objects of veneration as bodhisattvas, like Kōmyō (701–760), consort of Emperor Shōmu, and famous nuns like Mugai Nyodai (1223–1298), the dharma heir of the Zen priest Mugaku Sogen (1226–1286; Ch. Wuxue Zuyuan). However, there are almost no women who can be

regarded as thinkers, and none in a position to be leaders of their time. Buddhism has maintained a strong male-dominated tradition. This is true not only in Japan but also in other Buddhist countries. It has been only very recently that women have started to play an active role.

All the same, women can be said to be more likely to exhibit religious qualities, as epitomized by the shamanist-queen Himiko of Yamatai (c. third century). But it was not until the Edo period that such qualities truly found expression. One example in the seventeenth century was Otake, a maid-servant in the house of a merchant family in Edo who was venerated as an incarnation of Dainichi Nyorai. By the middle of the nineteenth century, a number of women became intermediaries for teachings conveyed through divine possession (*kamigakari*).

The earliest of these was a peasant woman from Owari Province (now Aichi Prefecture) named Kino (1756–1826), who took the name Konpira and had the title Isson Nyorai. Her teachings later developed into Nyoraikyō. Though women had few opportunities for social participation under the feudal system of the Edo period, their educational level gradually rose, and they came to play a prominent role outside the framework of established religion and ethics.

Typical of female religious founders is Nakayama Miki, who established Tenrikyō. Miki was the wife of a Yamato (now Nara) landowner. When she acted as a medium for the *yamabushi* (Shugendō practitioner) conducting a prayer ritual to cure her son's leg ailment, she herself became possessed by Ten no Shōgun, the Heavenly General, who announced he wanted to take her body as a shrine to dwell in. As far as Miki was concerned, this was inconceivable, and she tried several

times to commit suicide. Her family fell into the depths of poverty.

Gradually, though, she gained more and more followers as she demonstrated the efficacy of her prayers for the healing of illness and safe childbirth. A woman who had until then been patient and obedient was enabled by the power of a kami to break down the existing order, bringing men to their knees and making them bow down to her teachings.

Miki's teachings went beyond simple *genze riyaku* (this-worldly benefits). She spoke of the manifestation of God the Parent in this world and developed a philosophical doctrine that included social criticism. *The Songs for the Service*, which she composed just before the Meiji Restoration, reads: "When I, God, reveal Myself and teach you everything in detail / All people in the world will become cheerful." Under God the Parent, the world will be made equal. "As I hasten to save all of you equally / I will set out to cheer up all the minds of the world." This expresses an eschatological view of salvation: everyone must join forces to renew the world (*yonaoshi*).

After the Meiji Restoration, Miki, in her seventies, continued to write and spread her teachings through her *Ofudesaki* (The Tip of the Writing Brush) and to work to create the salvific state of "Joyous Life" (*yōki gurashi*), making her home in Tenri a holy place (*jiba*). Egalitarianism ("all people in the world") lies at the center of her thought. She warned against the tyranny of those in power, whom she called "high mountains," and preached the salvation of ordinary people ("low valleys"), and so she was subjected to persecution and imprisoned at various times. She nonetheless never changed her teachings.

There were other women also active in these new religions. Deguchi Nao (1837–1918), founder of Ōmotokyō, was the wife

of a carpenter in Ayabe, Kyoto. During a period of extreme poverty, she was possessed by a spirit called Ushitora no Konjin and began receiving divine revelations from him. She and her son-in-law Deguchi Onisaburō developed her teachings into a large religious organization. After her death, Ōmotokyō was persecuted by the state on the grounds that its teachings could lead to a denial of the imperial system, and for a time it was driven to the brink of extinction.

While established religions were bound by rigid doctrines and organizations, the many new religions that tapped into women's potential freely embraced unorthodox ideas and activities. They have a distinctive appeal and deserve a fresh appraisal.

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Nakayama Miki (1798–1887) was the founder of the new religion Tenrikyō. She was born into the Maegawa family of village leaders in Sanmaiden, Yamato Province (now Tenri, Nara Prefecture). At the age of thirteen, she married into the Nakayama family in a neighboring village. When she was forty-one she was possessed by the "Heavenly General," Tenri-ō no mikoto. She constructed the "Place for the Service" (*tsutome basho*) at sixty-seven and composed *The Songs for the Service*, made up of twelve songs, beginning with the first, "Sweep away evil and save us." When she was seventy-two she started writing *Ofudesaki* (The Tip of the Writing Brush) and died at ninety years of age.

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Fukuzawa Yukichi

Bunmeiron no gairyaku

An Outline of a Theory of Civilization

> Religion works within the hearts of people. It is absolutely free and independent, not in any way controlled by others or dependent on their powers. While this is how religion is supposed to be, it has not been so here in Japan. Some say that, originally, religion in Japan was Shinto and Buddhism, but Shinto has not yet become a full religion. Although it has its origins in ancient times, it was enmeshed by Buddhism, and for hundreds of years it was not able to display its true colors. . . . At all events, the religion that acted as a cornerstone of Japanese civilization since ancient times is Buddhism, and only Buddhism. However, Buddhism, too, from the time it was introduced [to Japan], has been linked with political rulers and has depended, without exception, on their power.

At the beginning of *Gakumon no susume* (An Encouragement of Learning) Fukuzawa Yukichi wrote, "Heaven does not create one person above or below another." His message went on to inspire ambitious young people all over Japan, heralding an age when the yoke of status-bound feudalism would be thrown off and replaced by the promise of "civilization and enlightenment" (*bunmei kaika*). What, exactly, though, does a civilized society look like? *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* sets it out.

Fukuzawa Yukichi writes in the preface: "A theory of civilization concerns the development of the human spirit. Its purpose is not to discuss the spiritual development of the individual but the spiritual development of the people of the nation as a whole." He asserts that just as an individual matures, so society as a whole must also cast off its barbaric qualities and grow up. The growing-up knows no limits. This, indeed, was a time of boundless optimism.

And in order for Japan to join the ranks of civilized societies, it needed to look to the West as a role model. Certainly, the West had its faults, but it alone could be said to be at the height of civilization. Japan had therefore to aim to reach the same heights. Fukuzawa was very clear on this point; he did not hesitate.

If this were all that Fukuzawa had to say, he would simply be advocating that Japan become nothing more than an imitation of the West. What makes *An Outline of the Theory of Civilization* interesting to read today is that it looks back at the history of Japanese civilization in a spirit of inquiry and offers a sharp rebuke. For example, Fukuzawa censures Japan for giving too much importance to power and for its failure to nurture an independent citizenry. This seems to apply to Japan even today.

He was reproving of Buddhism. "Religion works within the hearts of people. It is absolutely free and independent, not in any way controlled by others or dependent on their power," he wrote, noting that this could not be said about either Shinto or Buddhism in Japan. The great temples fawned on the emperor and shogun and happily accepted the ranks they were given by the government. Buddhism was only "an expedient for softening the hearts of the foolish." It had therefore

to be said, "There is no real religion in Japan." Fukuzawa's criticism did not sit well with the Buddhist community.

With the Meiji Restoration, the Buddhist world found itself in a dire situation. It had previously benefited from shogunal protection through the *danka* (parishioner) system, but under the new government, it was deprived of its privileges. The impact of the edicts separating kami and buddha worship (*shinbutsu bunri*) and the anti-Buddhist campaign (*haibutsu kishaku*) was incalculable. In such an environment, the Buddhist order had no choice but to reform itself, and Shin Buddhism moved to the forefront of this initiative.

Under the leadership of Shimaji Mokurai (1838–1911), a Honganji priest who was one of the first to observe from close up the religious situation in the West, the various Shin branches joined together to oppose the government's religious policy and succeeded in winning freedom of belief and the separation of church and state. In doing so, Shimaji, like Fukuzawa, argued that religion concerned the inner workings of people's hearts and therefore belonged to a sphere outside the intrusion of politics, which dealt with the outer workings of human beings. It was around this time, too, that *shūkyō*, the translation for "religion," was popularized.

But is the domain of religion really limited to what lies inside the hearts of people? Though the *danka* system was supposed to have been abolished in the Meiji era, many Japanese continued to engage with Buddhism as parishioners, not so much as a vehicle for personal faith but because temples managed their family graves. This was the essence of funerary Buddhism, an important social function that was not just a vestige of the premodern system. It is my hypothesis that the Buddhist management of ancestral graves and memorial tablets

is what gave rise to the modern patriarchal *ie* system of Japan.

If this is indeed the case, then it must be said that Buddhism now faces a truly major test, given the collapse of the *ie* system today. It also points to why Fukuzawa's criticism of Buddhism has a newfound relevance.

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Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901) was the son of a low-ranking retainer of Nakatsu domain in Buzen Province (now the city of Nakatsu, Ōita Prefecture). At the age of twenty-one he went to Nagasaki to pursue Dutch learning. He opened a private school for Dutch learning in Edo (the forerunner of Keiō University) when he was twenty-five. He went to the United States at age twenty-seven on the shogunal ship *Kanrin Maru*. He later traveled to Europe and again to the United States as a member of shogunal delegations. At forty-seven, he founded the private club, Kōjunsha. He published the newspaper *Jiji Shinpō* (Current Events) when he was forty-nine. He died at age sixty-eight in Mita, Tokyo.

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Kiyozawa Manshi

Rinri ijō no konkyo

The Authority beyond Ethics

> Since what we call ethics [*rinri*] is based on the relationship between people, it is impossible to escape the bounds of the relative and finite by ethics alone. Even if we compare various moral principles, considering their relative importance, and going so far as to ask what is the greatest and most important of them all, they still remain relative and finite. We can say that loyalty and filial piety are the most important principles but not that they are absolute and infinite. After all, the absolute infinite [*zettai mugen*] is not based on ethics; rather, the implementation of ethics must be based on the absolute infinite, on an authority higher than ethics.

As we have seen in the entry for Uchimura Kanzō, Inoue Tetsujirō launched a campaign against Christianity, criticizing it for prioritizing allegiance to God while belittling the state and the ethics of loyalty and filial piety. Inoue approved of Buddhism, saying it stressed the importance of the state and of loyalty and filial piety, and many Buddhists of the time followed Inoue's lead in attacking Christianity. But Buddhism does not view the moral authority of the state as paramount, for it places its own teachings first. Allowing itself to become subordinate to state authority would undermine its very existence.

It was around 1900 that Buddhist thinkers began taking this issue seriously and discussing the role of religion vis-à-vis

morality and ethics. The period between the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars saw the consolidation of the state system and Japan's emergence as a major power. At the same time, there was growing repression of political activity, compelling students and intellectuals to turn their gaze inward, away from political and state issues. Buddhist thought, which had remained undeveloped compared to that of Christianity, began producing original ideas through men like Kiyozawa Manshi (1863–1903), Tanaka Chigaku (1861–1939), Takayama Chogyū (1871–1902), and Suzuki Daisetsu (1870–1966).

Among them, Kiyozawa confronted the issue of ethics and religion head-on. From a lay background, he became a priest in the Ōtani branch of Shin Buddhism. He studied philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University and in 1892 wrote *Shūkyō tetsugaku gaikotsu* (Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion), an attempt to theoreticize Pure Land Buddhism from a philosophical perspective. He became disillusioned in his efforts to reform the Ōtani branch of Shin Buddhism and was forced to interrupt his activities to undergo medical treatment for tuberculosis. This hiatus gave him an opportunity to focus on introspection. In 1900, he set up a religious fraternity called Kōkōdō at a dormitory in Hongō, Tokyo, where members, including his committed follower Akegarasu Haya (1877–1954), lived together. The following year the group published the journal *Seishinkai* (Spiritual World), launching a new religious movement.

The first issue of *Seishinkai* contained Kiyozawa's proclamation of *seishinshugi* (spiritual activism): "Spiritual activism is the search for a sense of inner fulfillment" whose ultimate goal is to come into contact with "the absolute and infinite being" (*zettai mugensha*). In another essay, he called this search "the way of introspection" (*naikan shugi*).

In the second issue, Kiyozawa stated in "The Unity of All Phenomena" that since everything in the world is interconnected and is ultimately one, the self is morally responsible for all things. The inability to bear full responsibility leads to a sense of guilt, and just when people realize that morality alone is inadequate, they turn to religion.

In the essay "The Authority beyond Ethics," Kiyozawa discussed the relationship between ethics/morality and religion in more detail. "Since what we call ethics [*rinri*] is based on the relationship between people, it is impossible to escape the bounds of the relative and finite by ethics alone." The implementation of ethics must therefore be "based on the absolute infinite, on an authority higher than ethics." The basis for ethics must transcend it and thus needs to be backed by religion. This is a direct rebuttal of the views of Inoue and others who placed state-prescribed morality (*kokka dōtoku*) above religion.

Because Akegarasu Haya and other followers later cooperated with the war effort, Kiyozawa's own theories have come in for frequent criticism. Notably, Kiyozawa's essay "The Necessary Conditions of Religious Faith" (*Shūkyōteki Shinnen no hissu jōken*) divided the realms of religion and ethics, stating that secular ethics needs to be denied when entering religion, but that once religious belief is firmly established, secular ethics may be followed. He even sanctions going to war on behalf of the state. He has been roundly criticized for this, but recent research by Yamamoto Nobuhiro has revealed that the essay was considerably revised by Akegarasu and is not a reliable account of Kiyozawa's thought.

As far as "The Authority beyond Ethics" is concerned, Kiyozawa did not refer to a simple dichotomy between the realms of religion and ethics. Rather, he saw secular ethics as

requiring a religious grounding. Kiyozawa's views deserve closer attention today, when many issues are emerging that cannot be resolved through politics and secular ethics alone.

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Kiyozawa Manshi (1863–1903) was born into the Tokunaga family of Owari domain (now Aichi Prefecture) retainers. He became a priest in the Ōtani branch of Shin Buddhism when he was sixteen. He married into the priestly family of Saihōji (Hekinan, Aichi Prefecture) when he was twenty-six and pursued a life of austerity. At age thirty-four, he moved to Shirakawa in Kyoto and joined the sectarian reform movement. He opened the private academy Kōkōdō in Tokyo when he was thirty-seven and published the journal *Seishinkai* at thirty-nine. His tuberculosis worsened, and he died at Saihōji when he was forty-one.

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Kokutai no hongi

Fundamentals of Our National Polity

> Harmony in our nation is not a cooperative arrangement, emanating from reason, among independent, equal individuals, but a great harmony of the whole, wherein the parts existing separately recognize their respective roles and act in accordance with them. Hence, here is practiced mutual respectful love and obedience, comforting and nurturing. This is not a mere compromise or cooperation among mechanical or homogeneous entities. Though each has its own characteristics and is different from the others—expressing its essence through its own characteristics and fulfilling its separate roles—all harmonize in a realm of oneness. Harmony in our nation is thus a great harmony wherein individuals, giving play to their differences and through toil and assiduous cultivation, converge as one. The differences and difficulties make this harmony all the greater and more robust.

A delicate balancing act was required in building the modern Japanese nation-state in the face of the threat posed by the Western powers and in the rush to become a power in its own right. The concept of *kokutai* (national polity), stating that Japan is a country ruled by a line of emperors unbroken for ages eternal, was the core of the national identity that would make this possible. It asserted that however much the Western countries threw their weight around, Japan would remain the only country where the descendants of the gods continued to

rule consistently and without break. All subjects must therefore work together to preserve and uphold that *kokutai*.

In the Meiji era, the supreme imperative was to catch up with the West, but this changed somewhat in the 1920s and 1930s. Skepticism about modernity swept through Western Europe after World War I, giving rise to talk about the fall of the West. Japanese intellectuals responded with discussions about Japan's historical mission to lead the world henceforth in place of the fallen West. Two symposia, chronicled as "Overcoming Modernity" in the journal *Bungakukai* and "The World-Historical Standpoint and Japan" in *Chūō Kōron*, both in 1942, contributed greatly to shaping ideology in favor of the war effort.

Fundamentals of Our National Polity, which reorganized and integrated the theory of *kokutai* that had developed since the end of the Meiji era in the context of the 1930s, was a precursor to the abovementioned symposia. It was compiled by the Ministry of Education and widely disseminated through the school system but was later banned by the Allied occupation authorities. Since the work was not credited to any individual authors, it was largely ignored in the postwar period. We know, though, that many prominent scholars from Tokyo Imperial University, including Kuroita Katsumi (1874–1946), Watsuji Tetsurō (1889–1960), Ui Hakuju (1882–1963), and Hisamatsu Sen'ichi (1894–1976), were involved in its drafting, so it is by no means an inconsequential work.

A distinctive feature of *Fundamentals* is that it looks at *kokutai* not only as a political concept. It also refers to thought and culture as an expression of the Japanese essence. Particularly noteworthy is its view that *kokutai* is rooted in the "spirit of harmony" from which "the fusion of all things"

springs. This is offered as a counterpoint to Western individualism, which ultimately results in "the war of all against all." Harmony, on the other hand, emerges when individuals exist within the whole, recognizing their respective roles and acting in accordance with them.

The "spirit of harmony" is what enabled Japan to incorporate such foreign teachings as Confucianism and Buddhism, and it also facilitated the learning of Western scholarship. What was required was fusion, not confrontation, and peace was the ultimate goal, even if achieving it required the use of force. This idea is aptly expressed in the following passage: "It is when this spirit of harmony of our country is spread throughout the world, and each race and nation, preserving its own respective roles, gives full play to its own characteristics, that true world peace and its progress and prosperity are realized." Such sentiments would not be out of place if they were to find their way into postwar discourses on Japaneseness (*Nihonjinron*) and Japanese culture (*Nihon bunkaron*). They may even serve as the precursors to postwar pacifism.

These arguments on the virtues of Japanese culture are laid out as part of a theoretical discourse on the *kokutai* view that everything is unified under the emperor. While *kokutai* originates with the myth of Amaterasu sending her grandson, Ninigi, down to earth to rule over Japan, it also finds expression throughout the country's history. *Kokutai no hongi* can thus be called a comprehensive discourse on Japan that amalgamates all the mythological, historical, cultural, and other theories about Japan postulated since the Meiji era. Many may wish to cover up and dismiss *kokutai* as a trivial theory, but a closer look reveals it to have been a sophisticated system of thought created by the best minds from the Meiji to the

prewar era. Both its positive and negative legacies merit a closer reexamination today.

Key Text

Kokutai no hongi. National Diet Library Digital Collection. http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1156186.

Kokutai no hongi. In 1935, the government suppressed the theory of the emperor being an organ of government, propounded by constitutional scholar Minobe Tatsukichi (1873–1948), as a denial of the emperor's absoluteness. It forbade the sale or distribution of Minobe's books. To refute this theory, the prime minister issued the "Declaration of Clear Evidence of the National Polity," which stated that the sovereignty of Japan rested on a line of emperors unbroken for ages eternal. A council was set up, chaired by the minister of education, and *Kokutai no hongi* was published by the Ministry of Education in 1937. After the war, the declaration was banned by the Allied occupation authorities.

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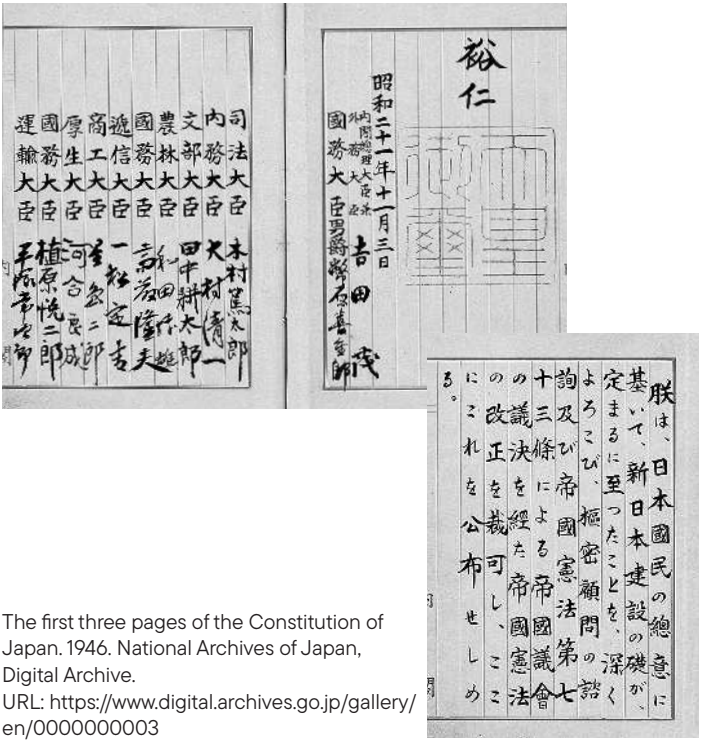
Nihonkoku kenpō

The Constitution of Japan

> We, the Japanese people, desire peace for all time and are deeply conscious of the high ideals controlling human relationship, and we have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world. We desire to occupy an honored place in an international society striving for the preservation of peace, and the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance for all time from the earth. We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want.

It is nearly eighty years since the Constitution of Japan was promulgated in 1946. This is considerably longer than the fifty-eight years that the Constitution of the Empire of Japan (Meiji Constitution), enacted in 1889, was in force. Whereas the Meiji Constitution was firmly established with legal force in the name of the emperor, the Constitution of Japan has always been on somewhat shaky footing. Ever since the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was founded and came to power in 1955, it has stated its commitment to constitutional reform; efforts continue to this day, yet it has thus far been unable to achieve this goal.

This does not mean, however, that the Constitution of Japan has been ineffectual. Although not as intense as the Anpo protests of 1959–1960 against the revision of the US–Japan Security Treaty, there was quite vehement opposition



The first three pages of the Constitution of Japan. 1946. National Archives of Japan, Digital Archive.
URL: https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/gallery/en/0000000003

to the 2015 enactment of security legislation that reinterpreted the Constitution's Article 9. There was a fairly strong feeling among ordinary people, not just activists, that the pacifist Constitution must be protected. The fact that a housewife's idea to nominate the Constitution for the Nobel Peace Prize resulted in a broadly supported movement is proof that Article 9 can be a source of pride for the Japanese people.

The Constitution of Japan is indeed quite strange. Its first eight articles concern the emperor, and it is odd that so much

space is given at the beginning to what is only a "symbol of the state." These are followed by the war-renouncing Article 9, which is followed from Article 10 by a series of articles concerning the rights and duties of the Japanese as a sovereign people. The Meiji Constitution first set out provisions relating to the emperor as ruler and then moved on to the rights and duties of the subjects in a logical order. In the present Constitution, the US intention to preserve the emperor system while dismantling the armed forces took precedence, resulting in a structure that has no clear order.

The focus of the Meiji Constitution was on "a line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal," with its basis in mythology. Where then does the Constitution of Japan look for its ideological justification? Its preamble loftily states: "We, the Japanese people, desire peace for all time and are deeply conscious of the high ideals controlling human relationship, and we have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world." Thus it seeks its basis in universality, going on to say that "laws of political morality are universal." But do "universal laws" really exist? And can the "justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples" really be trusted? Such sentiments seem overly optimistic today.

Where can we turn, then, when universality collapses? Whereas the Meiji Constitution sought the basis for its national system in the traditions of Japan, the Constitution of Japan relies to all intents and purposes on the universality of humanity and completely abandons past Japanese traditions. In its total rejection of the prewar system, it has discarded all Japanese traditions, not only from the prewar period but also from earlier times. Therefore, when the foundation of universal

law collapses, there is nothing that can serve as an ideological basis. The only grounds for renouncing war, then, would be the people's emotional aversion to armed conflict.

Will the Constitution of Japan lose all meaning if the concept of universal law breaks down? Not necessarily. If we skip over the Meiji era and look back to the Edo period, we find a time of peace lasting for two and a half centuries, during which no troops were deployed abroad. Also, there was a form of government in which the emperor was little more than a symbol of the state with ritual authority, while political power was in the hands of the shogunate. In a strange way, the Constitution of Japan has points in common with the political system of the Edo period.

In the Great Tradition that I discussed earlier, authority was split between the imperial court and the shogunate, and this dual power structure prevented extreme political swings. The Middle Tradition embraced extremism by unifying government under the emperor. Could it be that the more recent Small Tradition has learned from the past? Where the past is discarded, nothing is born. Only by taking the past into account and reassessing it can we open up the future.

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Gakujutsu Bunko Henshūbu, ed. *Shinsōban Nihonkoku kenpō*. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2013.

Kadokawa Gakugei Shuppan, ed. *Bigināzu Nihonkoku kenpō*. Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2013.

Nihonkoku kenpō. Commentary by Hasebe Yasuo. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2019.

The Constitution of Japan. Following Japan's defeat in 1945 and its occupation by the Allied powers, there was a complete reconstruction of the prewar system. The present Constitution came into being in accordance with the amendment provisions of Article 73 of the Meiji Constitution under the supervision of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP). With the resolution of the Imperial Diet and the emperor's assent, it was promulgated on November 3, 1946, and came into effect on May 3, 1947.

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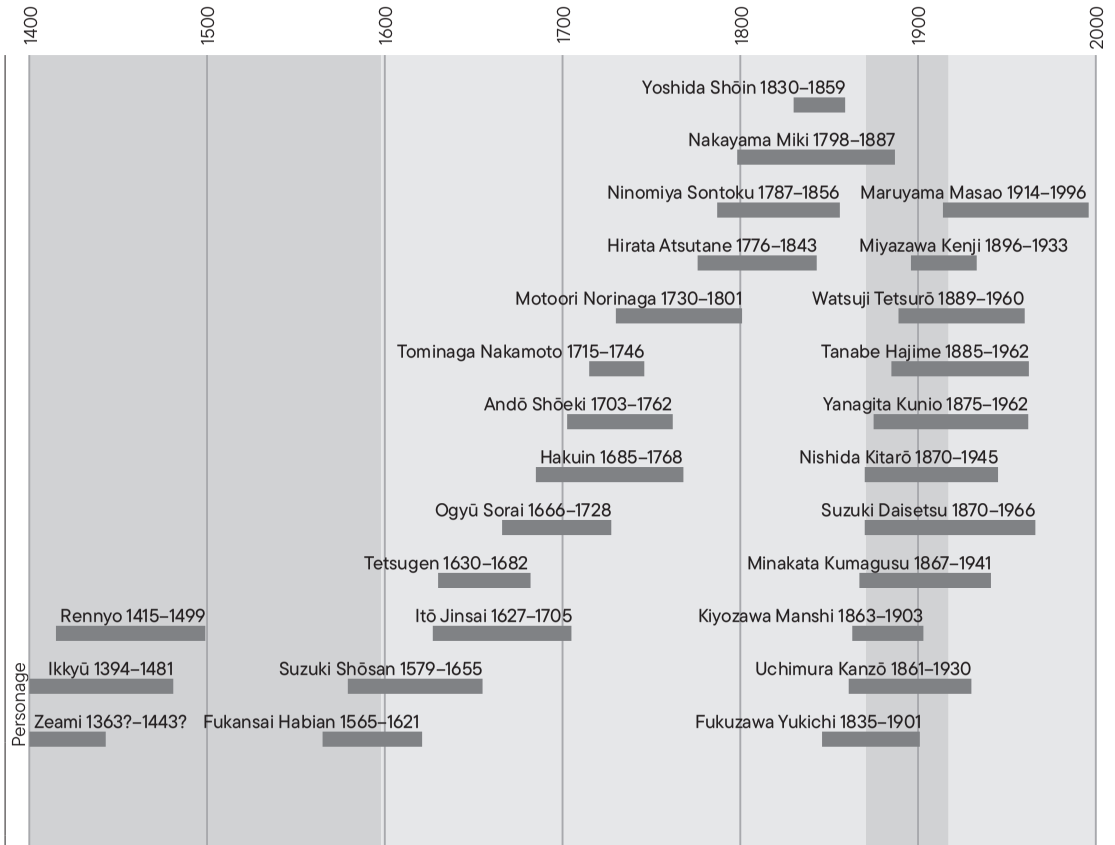
Timeline

Era	Year	Event
Asuka/Nara	710	Capital moves to Heijō-kyō (Nara).
	712	✣ *Kojiki* compiled.
	752	Great Buddha of Tōdaiji consecrated.
	794	Capital moves to Heian-kyō (Kyoto).
Heian	804	Kūkai and Saichō travel to Tang China.
	866	Fujiwara no Yoshifusa becomes *sesshō* (regent). The Fujiwara clan hereafter consolidates its position as head of the chancellor/regent system (*sekkan seiji*).
	939	Rebellion of Taira no Masakado and rebellion of Fujiwara no Sumitomo.
	ca. 1000	*The Pillow Book* and *The Tale of Genji* written.
	1020	Fujiwara no Michinaga builds Muryōjuin (Hōjōji).
	1053	Fujiwara no Yorimichi builds the Phoenix Hall of Byōdōin.
	1086	Cloistered government instigated by retired emperor Shirakawa.
	1156, 1159	Hōgen Rebellion; Heiji Rebellion.
	1180	Tōdaiji burned down by Taira troops.
	1185	Fall of the Taira clan. Formation of a warrior government (*bakufu*; shogunate) in Kamakura.
Kamakura	1221	The Jōkyū Rebellion. Establishment of the Kamakura *bakufu*.
	1232	Promulgation of Formulary of Adjudications.
	1246, 1279	Zen priests Rankei Dōryū and Mugaku Sogen arrive from Song China.
	1274, 1281	Mongol invasions.
	1333	Fall of the Kamakura *bakufu*.
	1336	Go-Daigo Tennō sets up an alternative (Southern) court in Yoshino.
Muromachi/ Azuchi-Momoyama	1336	Ashikaga Takauji establishes the Muromachi *bakufu*.
	1342	Ashikaga Takauji formulates the Five Mountain system of Zen temples in Kyoto and Kamakura.
	1397	Ashikaga Yoshimitsu builds the Golden Pavilion (Kitayama culture develops).

✣ denotes a work cited in this book.

Era	Year	Event
Muromachi/ Azuchi-Momoyama	1401	Ashikaga Yoshimitsu begins tally trade with Ming China.
	1467–1477	The Ōnin War, heralding the Sengoku (Warring States) period. From this time, *ikkō ikki* breaks out, particularly in the Kinai and Hokuriku regions.
	1489	Ashikaga Yoshimasa constructs the Silver Pavilion (Higashiyama culture develops).
	1549	Francis Xavier arrives in Japan (introduction of Christianity).
	1573	Oda Nobunaga brings down the Muromachi *bakufu*.
	1590	Toyotomi Hideyoshi unifies the country.
	1600	The Tokugawa clan and its allies victorious at the Battle of Sekigahara.
Edo	1603	Tokugawa Ieyasu becomes shogun.
	1615	Laws for military houses, imperial family, and court officials promulgated.
	1630	School of neo-Confucianism, Shōheizaka Gakumonjo, founded.
	1688–1704	Genroku culture flourishes.
	ca. 1715	Arai Hakuseki writes *Seiyō kibun* (Record of Things Heard from the West). Dutch learning (*rangaku*) develops around this time. Nativist studies develop around this time; reappraisal of *Man'yōshū* and other ancient works.
	1800	Inō Tadataka maps Ezo (Hokkaido).
	1853	Commodore Perry arrives in Japan.
	1867	Transfer of power to the emperor, restoration of imperial rule.
Meiji	1868	Capital moves to Edo (Tokyo).
	1889	Promulgation of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan.
	1894–1895	First Sino-Japanese War.
Post-Meiji	1904–1905	Russo-Japanese War.
	1931	Mukden incident.
	1937 ✣	Publication of *Kokutai no hongi* (Fundamentals of Our National Polity).
	1937–1945	Second Sino-Japanese War.
	1941–1945	Pacific theater of World War II.
	1946 ✣	Promulgation of the *Constitution of Japan*.


1400
1500
1600
1700
1800
1900
2000
Personage
Yoshida Shōin 1830–1859
Nakayama Miki 1798–1887
Ninomiya Sontoku 1787–1856
Maruyama Masao 1914–1996
Hirata Atsutane 1776–1843
Miyazawa Kenji 1896–1933
Motoori Norinaga 1730–1801
Watsuji Tetsurō 1889–1960
Tominaga Nakamoto 1715–1746
Tanabe Hajime 1885–1962
Andō Shōeki 1703–1762
Yanagita Kunio 1875–1962
Hakuin 1685–1768
Nishida Kitarō 1870–1945
Ogyū Sorai 1666–1728
Suzuki Daisetsu 1870–1966
Tetsugen 1630–1682
Minakata Kumagusu 1867–1941
Rennyo 1415–1499
Itō Jinsai 1627–1705
Kiyozawa Manshi 1863–1903
Ikkyū 1394–1481
Suzuki Shōsan 1579–1655
Uchimura Kanzō 1861–1930
Zeami 1363?–1443?
Fukansai Habian 1565–1621
Fukuzawa Yukichi 1835–1901

Book Guide

Readers who wish to pursue any of these topics further will find specialist sources listed under each heading.

Sources and Anthologies

Sourcebooks and anthologies for Japanese philosophy and religion provide a broader context for the works and authors covered in this book. Of the works listed below, *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* is the most wide-ranging. It addresses not only representative works of the main philosophical and religious traditions, but also a number of additional themes, such as culture and identity, as well as aesthetics. It includes useful glossaries, together with bibliographies and chronologies.

Buddhism and Modernity: Sources from Nineteenth-Century Japan. Edited by Orion Klautau and Hans Martin Krämer. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2021.

Contemporary Japanese Philosophy: A Reader. Edited by John W. M. Krummel. London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019.

Dao Companion to Japanese Confucian Philosophy. Edited by Chun-chieh Huang and John Allen Tucker. Dordrecht: Springer Nature, 2014.

Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook. Edited by James W. Heisig, Thomas P. Kasulis, and John C. Maraldo. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011.

Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions. Edited by Paul Swanson and Clark Chilson. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005.

Sources of Japanese Tradition, Volume One: From Earliest Times to 1600. Edited by Wm. Theodore de Bary, Donald Keene, George Tanabe, and Paul Varley. 2nd edition. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
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The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Contemporary Japanese Philosophy. Edited by Michiko Yusa. London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.
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The Oxford Book of Japanese Philosophy. Edited by Bret W. Davis. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Religious and Philosophical History

The following are recommended as general introductions to Japanese religious and philosophical history:

Blocker, H. Gene, and Christopher L. Starling. *Japanese Philosophy*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2001.
Bowring, Richard. *In Search of the Way: Thought and Religion in Early-Modern Japan 1582–1860*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
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Buddhism and Shinto

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Hardacre, Helen. *Shinto: A History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
Ruch, Barbara, ed. *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2003.

Academic Journals

The leading peer-reviewed journals dealing with the topics and themes discussed in this book are:

Japanese Journal of Religious Studies (Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, Nagoya).
Japanese Religions (NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions, Kyoto).
Journal of Religion in Japan (Brill, Leiden).
Japan Review (International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto).
Monumenta Nipponica (Sophia University, Tokyo).

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Gaynor Sekimori has been working as an academic translator and editor for more than thirty years in the fields of cultural, economic, and religious history. She obtained her doctorate at the University of Cambridge and worked at the University of Tokyo for six years as a researcher in Japanese religious history and Shugendō and as a managing editor of the *International Journal of Asian Studies*.

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