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“Japanese Buddhism”: Essence, Construct, or Skillful Means?

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THE CATEGORY “JAPANESE BUDDHISM” (*nihon bukkō*, 日本仏教), commonly used in the field of Japanese religious studies, is seemingly innocuous but actually has interesting and far reaching implications. It is often used by academics to describe a specific subfield of Buddhist studies; by textbooks to identify one particular form of Buddhism, whose major characteristics, ironically, is its division into a multiplicity of schools¹ and movements; and by ideologues to enter identity politics. On first sight, our term seems to be synonymous with “Buddhism in Japan” but an examination of its history and use quickly shows that it has connotations that are not implied by this phrase. However, while it is common sense that the phrase “Japanese Buddhism” can be useful in certain contexts since it expresses common patterns, the phrase “Buddhism in Japan” cannot, and its use is not without problems. What does it mean, for example, to identify “Japanese Buddhism” as “funeral Buddhism” (*sōshiki bukkō*, 葬式佛教)²? Does this claim highlight institutional structures that a majority of Buddhist schools in Japan share at certain times in history or does it designate an inherent essence characteristic of all phenomena that fall under the rubric “Buddhism in Japan”? The key to these questions is the usage and meaning of the term “Japanese Buddhism.”

Philosophically speaking, the term “Japanese Buddhism” suggests an essence that all forms of “Japanese Buddhism” share and that differentiates them from the various forms of Buddhism in other parts of Asia, on the one side, as well as from other religious traditions in Japan, on the other.³ The rhetoric of the proponents who use the term “Japanese Buddhism” as a clearly identifiable discrete entity betrays the difficulty of this very concept. Some ideologues imply that only the schools of Buddhism that were imported to or founded in Japan

in the Heian 平安 (794–1185) and Kamakura 鎌倉 (1185–1333) periods qualify as “real” “Japanese Buddhism.” Such a rhetoric, of course, raises the question as to the identity of the six schools of Nara 奈良 Buddhism.⁴ In a similar vein the Buddhist movements and groups established in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are referred to primarily as “new religions” (*shinshūkyō*, 新宗教)⁵ and only secondarily as “schools of Buddhism.” Second, some thinkers cite as one typical feature of “Japanese Buddhism” its ability to engage in certain forms of what is usually called syncretism,⁶ such as the slogan evoking the “unity of *kami* and buddhas” (*shinbutsu shūgō*, 神仏習合);⁷ the doctrine that the three religions, Shintō, Buddhism, and Confucianism, are one (*sankyō itchi*, 三教一致); and religious practices that mix elements from Buddhism with elements from folk religion, Shintō, and Daoism. Besides the fact that syncretic or symbiotic forms of Buddhism are not unique to Japan, the rhetoric of syncretism seems to favor the term “Japanese religion”⁸ over “Japanese Buddhism” as a workable category to describe Buddhism in Japan.

The term “Japanese Buddhism” itself gained currency as a phrase during the Meiji 明治 period (1868–1912) both by Buddhists in Japan to refer to their own tradition as well as by outsiders whether they were Buddhists of a different cultural background or scholars who placed themselves outside the Buddhist tradition altogether. In the Meiji, Taishō 大正 (1912–1926), and early Shōwa 昭和 (1926–1988) periods, when Buddhists in Japan identified themselves and were identified by Buddhists in China and Korea as “Japanese Buddhists,” this phrase was not only used to suggest the uniqueness⁹ of Japanese Buddhism vis-à-vis other forms of Buddhism but also implied a hierarchy of values, albeit for differing purposes. A significant number of Buddhist thinkers and practitioners in China and Korea interpreted the perceived difference of Japanese Buddhism from other forms of Buddhism, especially the violation of the three monastic regulations of celibacy, vegetarianism, and abstinence since the Meiji period, as well as what they took to be the “disintegration” of the Buddhist sangha into a multiplicity of schools,¹⁰ as a clear case of corruption and debauchery. Japanese Buddhists, on the other hand, embraced the idea of three nations (*sangoku*, 三国),¹¹ that is, India, China, and Japan, to argue that Japanese Buddhism constituted the highest and most developed form of Buddhism.¹² Under the surface of this obvious ideological rhetoric and the concomitant identity politics lie two central questions. First,

is there an essence that unites all of Japanese Buddhism and distinguishes it from other forms of Buddhism? And second, is there such a thing as authentic Buddhism? Since the advent of postmodernism, scholars of Buddhism tend to agree that the answer to both questions is a resounding "no." Despite this, the discourses of Japanese uniqueness and the quest for authentic Buddhism seem to survive today not only in tourist guidebooks and pamphlets but also in textbooks and in the work of some scholars. Takeshi UMEHARA 梅原猛, for example, continues to use the term "Japanese Buddhism" to evoke the "Japanese spirit" (*nihon seishin*, 日本精神) as the essence of Buddhism in Japan. On the other end of the political spectrum, Noriaki HAKAMAYA 袴屋憲昭, one of the co-founders of "critical Buddhism" (*hihan bukkyō*, 批判佛教), implies that "Japanese Buddhism" is characterized by an adherence to the doctrine of original enlightenment (*hongaku shisō*, 本學思想). His inquiry into the possible complicity of Sōtō Zen Buddhist 曹洞宗 institutions in discrimination and militarism concludes with the quest for authentic Buddhism and a rejection of "Japanese Buddhism" as corrupt.¹³ All these examples suggest that the term "Japanese Buddhism" seems to have a certain appeal over the phrase "Buddhism in Japan" and has the power to seduce those who use the term to an unapologetic essentialism.

Then, the central question is: What meanings does the term "Japanese Buddhism" evoke? To be clear, this essay will not attempt a definition of "Japanese Buddhism," but rather its goal is to examine what connotation the term "Japanese Buddhism" has that the phrase "Buddhism in Japan" does not possess. To this effect, I will explore discourses suggesting the uniqueness of "Japanese Buddhism," the relationship between Japanese Buddhism and the Japanese state, and the sense of a separate reality and essence that is implied by the term "Japanese Buddhism." The goal of this essay will be not so much a historical study of these themes but rather a philosophical reflection on the term "Japanese Buddhism" itself. Such a reflection on the ambiguity evoked by the most pervasive category in the literature on Buddhism in Japan aims to better our understanding of the phenomena this category is used to denote.

JAPANESE BUDDHISM

Any exploration of the term "Japanese Buddhism" has to start in the Meiji period, a time of intellectual vibrancy in which Japan struggled

to find an identity in the global community and Japanese intellectuals strove to find the place of Japanese culture in world history. It was during this time that Buddhism in Japan was understood as “Japanese Buddhism.” When Japanese thinkers encountered European and American philosophy, they generally responded in one of three ways. First, they adopted the Orientalist sentiment that so-called “Western philosophy” (*seiyō tetsugaku*, 西洋哲学) was superior to “Eastern” and in particular “Japanese” “thought” (*shisō*, 思想).¹⁴ Second, they attempted a reconciliation between both “traditions,” which in the political area led to the slogan that became the hallmark of the Meiji period: “Japanese soul—Western know-how” (*wakon yōsai*, 和魂洋才). Or, third, they rejected any intellectual outside influences. The most famous of the apologetics characteristic of this third group were Enryō INOUE 井上円了 (1858–1919) and Keiki YABUKI 矢吹慶輝 (1879–1939), whose thought I will discuss in this essay. Nowadays, both the Orientalism of the first approach as well as the “reverse Orientalism”¹⁵ of the third one have been shown to be intellectually and academically problematic, and even the seemingly reconciliatory second approach has been rethought and refined so that it does not presuppose cultural monoliths and insurmountable “glass curtains”¹⁶ between cultures anymore. To understand the connotation of the term “Japanese Buddhism” and the mechanics of the discourses that employ it, however, it will be helpful to explore how the thinkers of the Meiji period and pre-war Japan constructed the notion of “Japanese Buddhism.”

The argumentative strategy that thinkers such as Yabuki and Inoue employed was twofold. They either explicitly identified or simply implied an essence of what it means to be Japanese, the “Japanese spirit” (*nihon seishin*, 日本精神), and then proceeded to argue that Japanese Buddhism reflected this Japanese spirit perfectly. Second, they traced the entanglement of Buddhism in Japan and the Japanese state from Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子 (574–622)¹⁷ to the Edo period. While many Japanese intellectuals during the Meiji period claimed or, at least, suggested the uniqueness of the Japanese,¹⁸ Yabuki identified “Japanese Buddhism” explicitly with the “Japanese spirit.” In his book *Japanese Spirit and Japanese Buddhism* (*Nihon seishin to nihon bukkyō*, 日本精神と日本佛教) in 1934,¹⁹ he explicated four arguments in support of his belief that Japanese Buddhism embodies Japanese spirit. First, despite its foreign origin, Buddhism possesses an inherent affinity with the Japanese spirit. Second, Buddhism is a “religion designed for the

protection of the state" (*chingo kokka no shūkyō*, 鎮護国家の宗教).²⁰ Third, Buddhism allows for the "unity of religion and politics" (*seikyō itchi*, 政教一致).²¹ And fourth, Buddhism was able to harmonize with the other religions of Japan, Shintō, and Confucianism, even after the *shinbutsu bunri* ("separation of gods and the buddhas," 神仏分離) policies of the Meiji government officially and legally put an end to it.

The very idea that Buddhism in Japan possesses an inherent affinity with the Japanese spirit is as problematic as it is central to Yabuki's and Inoue's project. In order for Buddhism in Japan to become Japanese Buddhism, there has to be some specific characteristic that identifies Buddhism as inherently Japanese. However, this claim is exceedingly difficult since Buddhism originated outside of Japan and is secondary, historically speaking, to the cultural and religious landscape of Japan. It speaks in their favor that both thinkers were keenly aware of this conundrum and addressed it in their writings. Yabuki acknowledges that Buddhism is of "foreign" origin but then proceeds to call Buddhism "the largest religion of Japan"²² and to refer it as "inside teaching" (*naikyō*, 内教).²³ According to Yabuki, the reason for this is that Buddhism shares with the Japanese culture a "spirit of independence" (*jishuteki seishin*, 自主的精神) and is "appropriate for the Japanese lands."²⁴ Ultimately, however, Yabuki claims that the proof for the affinity between Buddhism and the Japanese spirit lies in the long history Buddhism has in Japan—a history he traces carefully from Shōtoku Taishi through the Buddhism of the Edo 江戸 period (1603–1867). According to Yabuki, Shōtoku Taishi not only included Buddhism in his *Seventeen-Article Constitution* but also in his heart. Japanese Buddhism, that is, a form of Buddhism that uniquely embodies the Japanese spirit, constitutes the "unity of outer and inner thought" (*naigai shisō tōitsu*, 内外思想統一).²⁵ In other words, to Yabuki, Buddhism becomes Japanese Buddhism because it united with the Japanese spirit in the *Seventeen-Article Constitution* and the faith of Shōtoku Taishi, Saichō's Mahāyāna Buddhism, and the doctrine of the unity between *kami* and the buddhas (*shinbutsu shūgō*, 神仏習合) that developed in the context of the esoteric Buddhism founded by Kūkai 空海 (774–835).

Inoue's argument, which he lays out in his *Compass of the Truth* (*Shinri kinshin*, 真理金針),²⁶ is philosophically more sophisticated than Yabuki's. To Inoue, Christianity constitutes a danger to the Japanese state while Buddhism is inherently nationalistic. This particular

statement is of course a bit simplistic and highly problematic. So how does Inoue arrive at this startling claim? Fumihiko SUEKI suggests that “Inoue’s criticism of Christianity and defense of Buddhism” rests on two pillars, his understanding of the categories of philosophy and religion and his belief that Buddhism serves “the protection of the dharma and the love of the country.”²⁷ Inoue commences his argument by distinguishing between religion and philosophy: the former, he argues, is driven by emotion (*jōkan*, 情感), the later by intellect (*chiryoku*, 知力). While Christianity functions as religion, albeit in its modern version as a “rationalized” religion, Buddhism constitutes neither a religion nor a philosophy in some sense,²⁸ while it is both in another sense,²⁹ that is, insofar as it constitutes a “religion that combines both emotion and intellect.”³⁰ As problematic as this distinction of course is, Inoue is not really interested in an in-depth exploration of the categories of “religion” and “philosophy,” nor does he examine whether they are ethnocentric and thus not applicable to traditions outside of Europe. His argument in *The Compass of Truth* is strictly political: Christianity, which he actually refers to as “the religion of Jesus” or “Jesusism” (*yasukyō*, ヤス教), constitutes a threat to Japan and has to be considered its enemy. Buddhism, on the other hand, even though it is originally a foreign tradition, has always supported the Japanese government as it “pacifies the country and protects its citizens” (*chinkoku gomin*, 鎮国護民)³¹ and is inherently Japanese. Contrary to Christianity, Buddhism “protects the welfare of the people and advances the benefit of the country. On a microcosmic level it preserves the safety of the household; on the macrocosmic level, it aids the welfare and strength of the country.”³² This is what Inoue means by “protecting the dharma and loving the country” (*gohō aikoku*, 護法愛国).³³ Fumihiko SUEKI summarizes Inoue’s position aptly as follows: To Inoue, “The claim that Buddhism is a Japanese religion is the ideological basis that Buddhism is swallowed up by the nationalist system.”³⁴ Like Yabuki, Inoue traces the history of Buddhism in Japan from its inception in the sixth century through the life and work of Shōtoku Taishi, Saichō 最澄 (767–822), and Kūkai up to the Edo period to demonstrate that Buddhism in Japan functions to support and reinforce the state, while he admits that the soteriological function of Buddhism and its role to provide “guidance in the world” (*sedō*, 世道)³⁵ cannot be completely disregarded.

The third proponent of the belief that “Japanese Buddhism” constitutes an identifiable essence whom I will discuss here is Takeshi

UMEHARA. Even though his argument and agenda differs from those of Yabuki and Inoue significantly due to their dissimilar historical contexts, I think it is important to remind ourselves that this essentialized conception of "Japanese Buddhism," while no longer as prevalent as in the pre-war period, still continues today. Whereas Yabuki and Inoue developed the notion of "Japanese Buddhism" in the Meiji and early Shōwa periods, when Japanese thinkers were exploring the place of Japanese culture in the world, Umehara is the main representative of a group of thinkers who responded to Japan's defeat in the Second World War and an increasingly globalized world culture by emphasizing the uniqueness of the Japanese tradition.

Like Yabuki and Inoue before him, Umehara invokes Shōtoku Taishi as the prototype of "Japanese Buddhism." In short, Umehara maintains that Shōtoku Taishi "made Japan a Buddhist nation" (*bukkyō kokka*, 仏教国家)³⁶ and "Buddhism the state religion of Japan."³⁷ Shōtoku Taishi based the constitution of Japan on the three jewels (*sanpō*, 三宝)³⁸ and selected the Buddhist Four Heavenly Kings (*shitennō*, 四天王)³⁹ as the guardian deities of the nation. The scriptural basis of "Japanese Buddhism," to Umehara, is the *Lotus Sutra* (*Hokkekyō*, 法華經).⁴⁰ What is more, however, according to Umehara, Shōtoku Taishi gave Japanese Buddhism its basic form, the moral teaching that is expressed by the famous phrase from the *Dhammapada* "avoid evil, do good"⁴¹ and advocates the six perfections (*rokuharamitsu*, 六波羅蜜) as well as the ten wholesome precepts (*jūzenkai*, 十善戒) as moral guidelines.⁴² In order to argue his claim that "Japanese Buddhism" constitutes a moral religion,⁴³ and ultimately, the moral backbone of Japan, Umehara distinguishes between a corrupt Buddhism⁴⁴ that has abandoned the moral teaching of Buddha and the belief in the efficacy of the law of karma, on the one side, and the authentic Buddhism that upholds the moral law of Buddha, on the other.⁴⁵ Umehara suggests that, throughout history, whenever Buddhism in Japan was threatened by corruption, it was rescued by a return to its moral teaching. For example, monks like Myōe 明恵 (1173–1232) and Jōkei 貞慶 (1155–1213) managed to curb the potential leanings towards immorality exhibited by the Kamakura schools of Buddhism with an emphasis on the precepts and monastic rules (*kairitsu*, 戒律), while Hakuin 白隠 (1685–1768) and Jiun 慈雲 (1718–1804) countered the corruption of Buddhism by the *danka* system (*danka seido*, 檀家制度)⁴⁶ with a return to the six perfections and the ten wholesome precepts respectively.⁴⁷ However, this moral teaching

of Buddhism has been destroyed, says Umehara, by the anti-Buddhist policies of the Meiji period as well as the Westernization of Japan⁴⁸ and can only be recovered by a traditionalism that unearths the “traditional spirit” (*dentō seishin*, 伝統精神) of the Japanese prior to the Meiji period and a return to pre-Meiji, that is, authentic, Buddhism. Umehara believes that the model of this authentic “Japanese Buddhism” can be found in the life and work of Shōtoku Taishi.

This brief excursion into Umehara’s thought has shown that he shares with Inoue and Yabuki the belief that “Japanese Buddhism” possesses an identifiable essence, is historically linked to the Japanese state, and reflects the Japanese spirit. Before I proceed to discuss the connotations of the term “Japanese Buddhism,” it will be beneficial for the present project to briefly examine some of the historical entanglement of Buddhist institutions in Japan with the Japanese state and to revisit the figureheads of Japanese Buddhism that were evoked by Buddhist thinkers in the Meiji period and thereafter.

JAPANESE BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE STATE

Of course the Meiji period was not the first time that Buddhism in Japan was given a national or nationalistic dress. It is no secret that from the very beginning, Buddhism in Japan has been closely tied to the idea of the Japanese nation or, before the notion of nationhood took hold, the Japanese community and state. This is the historical basis for the arguments advanced by the three thinkers discussed in the previous section. Among the promoters of Buddhism and the founders of Buddhist schools in Japan, Shōtoku Taishi, Saichō, and Eisai 栄西 (1141–1215) stand out for their emphasis on how Buddhism in general or their brand of Buddhism in particular, Tendai Buddhism 天台宗 in the case of Saichō and Rinzai Zen 臨濟宗 in the case of Eisai, would benefit the Japanese government and people.

After Buddhism entered Japan in the sixth century, Shōtoku Taishi anchored Buddhism in the *Seventeen-Article Constitution* (*Kempōjūshichijō*, 憲法十七條) and, thus, the vision of what was to become the Japanese state, at the same time as he was writing a commentary on three sutras, the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* (*Yuimagyō*, 維摩經), the *Lotus Sutra*, and the *Queen Śrīmālā Sutra* (*Shōmangyō*, 勝鬘經). The second article of Shōtoku Taishi’s *Seventeen-Article Constitution* reads as follows: “Respect the three jewels which are the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha. They are the final refuge of all living beings. People in all worlds can keep

the dharma and follow the teaching."⁴⁹ While only the second article mentions Buddhism explicitly, the tenth article emphasizes the moral fallibility of all human beings.⁵⁰ This point is especially interesting, given that the constitution as a whole emphasizes the reward of goodness and the punishment of evil, and thus implicitly points towards a transcendent moral authority. Finally, Shōtoku Taishi "appropriated" "the honorific title 'Dharma King' (*hōō*, 法王)."⁵¹

This entanglement of Buddhism and the Japanese state that started with Shōtoku Taishi continued throughout the centuries until the dawn of the Meiji period in 1868. Here, I will mention only a few examples. In the eighth century, Emperor Shōmu 聖武天皇 (701–756) released an imperial rescript by the name of "Kokubunji" 国分寺 to promote the establishment of temples designed to protect the state in every part of Japan.⁵² Similarly, as Christopher Ives observes, "In the Muromachi [室町] period (1336–1573), the 'five mountain' system of Rinzaï monasteries flourished under the auspices of the Ashikaga military dictators, who used . . . regional 'temples for the peace in the realm' (*ankokuji*, 安国寺) and 'pagodas of the Buddha's favor' (*rishōtō*, 利生塔)"⁵³ to assert "control over Kyoto" and pacify "the rest of the country."⁵⁴ At the same time accomplished Zen masters of both the five mountain (*gozan*, 五山) and the *rinka* 林下 systems were honored with the title "National Teacher" (*kokushi*, 国師). The Tokugawa shogunate institutionalized the *danka* system (*danka seido*, 檀家制度), which required every family in Japan to be registered at a local temple.⁵⁵ Of course there are many more illustrations of the entanglement of Buddhism and the Japanese state, but for the purpose of the present essay these will suffice.

While it was Shōtoku Taishi who in the twelfth article of his constitution declared that "in a country there cannot be two lords"⁵⁶ and thus laid the foundation for a "unified nation" (*kokka no tōitsu*, 国家の統一),⁵⁷ the "idea of the national entity" (*kokutai kannen*, 国体観念), and, as Umehara emphasizes, a "Buddhist nation,"⁵⁸ it was the thinkers in the Kamakura period that conceptualized the unity of Buddhism and the state. Ives traces the notion that the purpose of Buddhism was to "pacify and protect the nation" (*chingo kokka*, 鎮護国家) to early Tendai Buddhism and the phrase "the oneness of the sovereign's law and the *buddhadharma*" (*ōbō buppō ichinyō*, 王法仏法一如) to early Kamakura Zen Buddhism.⁵⁹ Saichō referred to the head temple of Tendai Buddhism, Enryakuji, as the "place for [practicing] the way and [thereby] pacifying and protecting the nation"⁶⁰ (*chingo kokka dōjō*, 鎮

護国家道場) and proposed that Buddhism served the “protection of the national domain” (*shugokokkai*, 守護国界). In the treatise with the same name, Saichō argues the unity of the three realms (*sangai*, 三界), the three bodies of Buddha (*sanjin*, 三身), the three vehicles (*sanjō*, 三乘), and the three virtues (*sandoku*, 三徳),⁶¹ thus establishing that the “law of the sovereign” and the *buddhadharma* are not separate.

Not unlike Saichō, Eisai felt the need to show that Zen Buddhism, though it was seen to be a new import from China, not only supported but, in fact, was not different from the law of the Kamakura shogunate. Not only did he title his main work *Treatise on the Promotion of Zen Buddhism for the Protection of the Nation* (*Kōzen gokoku ron*, 興禪護国論), he also suggested that “the construction of Zen temples . . . protects the nation and benefits all sentient beings”⁶² and, as Ives observes, that “the sovereign’s law is the lord Buddha’s law and the Buddha’s law is the treasure of the sovereign’s law.”⁶³ In his *Vow to Restore the Buddhadharma to Japan* (*Nihon buppō chūkō ganmon*, 日本仏法中興願文), Eisai further suggests that the bodhisattva vow (*bosatsu kairitsu*, 菩薩戒律) and the law of the sovereign (*ōbō*, 王法) ultimately serve the same purpose insofar as both are based on the principle that what benefits the self benefits the other (*jiri rita*, 自利利他).⁶⁴ This rhetoric that was developed by the founders (*shisōsha*, 始祖者) of newly imported schools of Buddhism in Japan was utilized by Buddhist thinkers⁶⁵ in pre-war Japan to justify militarism and the war effort of Japan, as Ives and, to a lesser degree, Brian Victoria⁶⁶ have shown. Further, as in the Kamakura and Muromachi 室町 periods, it was thinkers of the Zen tradition that excelled in the martial rhetoric and developed a rhetoric that is referred to as Imperial-Way Buddhism (*kōdō bukkyō*, 皇道佛教) and Imperial-Way Zen (*kōdō zen*, 皇道禪).

Victoria and Ives have discussed the historical context of Imperial-Way Buddhism and the militarism and imperialism it supported at length.⁶⁷ One could argue that this position constituted a response to the anti-Buddhist policies of the Meiji government and the perceived intellectual threat posed by modernism and Euro-American culture in general. For example, similar to the founders of the Buddhist schools in the pre-modern periods, who contended that their respective “new forms”⁶⁸ of Buddhism were essential to the protection of the country and welfare of its people or, at least, government, some of the pre-war Buddhist ideologues responded to the loss of influence Buddhism suffered in the political arena with an all-out effort to regain some

measure of political importance. The anti-modernistic sentiments quite a number of Buddhist thinkers in the pre-war period adopted is best illustrated by Inoue's use of Buddhism to support traditionalism, and the discussions on overcoming modernity (*kindai no chōkoku*, 近代の超克), which are referred to in *Essays on Overcoming Modernity (Kindai no chōkoku ron*, 近代の超克論).⁶⁹ The positions of the Buddhist responses to modernity were built on a threefold strategy. First, they presented Buddhism as a rational religion and transcended and included the scientific paradigm. This argument was supposed to evidence the superiority of Buddhism over Christianity, which was seen as anti-scientific. At the same time, these thinkers argued that Buddhism was trans-rational and, thus, superior to "Western" philosophy. As I have shown earlier, Inoue provided the paradigm for this thought when he argued that Buddhism included and, at the same time, transcended intellect.⁷⁰ Second, Japanese Buddhism was interpreted to be an indispensable element and resource of Japanese culture. Third, these thinkers suggested that Japanese Buddhist ideology was interpreted to be uniquely predisposed to overcome the various conceptual fault lines that separate the state from religion.⁷¹

While it is apparent that some of these positions can be explained as a product of the search for an identity in a world characterized by conflict and difference, it seems to me that the pervasiveness of themes like the "oneness of the law of the sovereign and the *buddhadharma*" lies in the attraction this concept has for thinkers steeped in the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. Thinkers like Inoue and D. T. SUZUKI 鈴木大拙 (1870–1966) argue that Buddhist ideology is particularly suited to overcome the binaries characteristic of the modernistic rhetoric. In the case of Inoue, it was the juxtaposition of religion and philosophy, emotion and rational thought. While Christianity was steeped in an emotive logic and thus exclusively qualified to be a religion, Buddhism, Inoue argued, included both emotional and rational thought, religion and philosophy, and thus transcended the distinction between them. According to Inoue, this is made possible only by the middle way of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which integrates the "emotional religion" of Pure Land Buddhism and the rationality of what he calls the "way of saintliness" (*seidō*, 聖道) to form a system that is equally inclusive of idealism and materialism, emotion and rationality, and religion and philosophy.⁷² This way, Inoue argues, Buddhism is not only compatible with the state; it also includes Christianity as one of its parts.⁷³ But

Inoue does not stop here. In “good Buddhist fashion,” he proclaims the “oneness” (*dōitsu*, 同一) of the absolute and the relative,⁷⁴ the truth and the phenomena,⁷⁵ the “totality and one drop of water,”⁷⁶ nirvana and samsara,⁷⁷ and “equality and discrimination.”⁷⁸ While the first four phrases sound like some esoteric metaphysical formulas, the last one, while possibly in line with Mahāyāna philosophy, is ethically as well as politically highly problematic and, as Ives has pointed out, has been used to justify war and discrimination.⁷⁹ The problem here is that, in the Japanese Buddhist context, the term “discrimination” (*sabetsu*, 差別) is used to denote the cognitive function of “discernment”⁸⁰ as well as political and social discrimination.⁸¹ The basis for this reasoning Inoue finds in the non-dualism of the *Heart Sutra* (*Shingyō*, 心經)⁸² in particular, and Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy in general. Similarly, D. T. SUZUKI, who, as Victoria has shown, used Zen Buddhist rhetoric to justify militarism in the pre-war period,⁸³ claimed that the teaching of *Diamond Sutra* (*Kongōkyō*, 金剛經), which he referred to as the “logic of *sokuhi*” (*sokuhi no ronri*, 即非の論理), can be summarized in the phrase “when we say A is A we mean that A is not A, therefore it is A.”⁸⁴ Inoue summarizes this reasoning in the formulas “neither one nor two” (*fuichi funi*, 不一不二)⁸⁵ and the two are “identically one, not separated” (*dōtai furi*, 同体不離)⁸⁶ as well. These phrases sound all too familiar to anyone who had some exposure to Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy or rhetoric. The question in this context is, however, if this formula, which the ideologues of “Japanese Buddhism” identified as the essence of “Japanese Buddhism” and utilized to justify nationalism and militarism, can provide the philosophical basis for an Imperial-Way Buddhism or if the nationalist rhetoric reduced it to a political trope.

JAPANESE BUDDHISM AND “BEING JAPANESE”

The philosopher who provides a heuristic key to how the rhetoric of “Japanese Buddhism” worked in pre-war Japan, however, is D. T. SUZUKI’s life-long friend Kitarō NISHIDA 西田幾多郎 (1870–1945). Nishida, a practitioner of both Rinzai Zen and True Pure Land Buddhism (*Jōdo Shinshū*, 浄土真宗), does not necessarily qualify as a Buddhist thinker. Rather he was a philosopher who proposed his own philosophical paradigm as a response to German idealism and early phenomenology. While he identifies his philosophical standpoint as “Japanese” or even “Buddhist” in his diaries, letters, and in his writing after 1938, the

discourse he engages in is that of Euro-American and, later in his life, as Rolf Elberfeld has argued, "intercultural philosophy."⁸⁷ His life-long goal was to stratify a philosophical paradigm that could overcome the dualism of Cartesian and Kantian philosophy, and thus he developed an increasingly complex philosophical non-dualism throughout his career. In the last seven years of his life, he began to indicate and later acknowledge that the inspiration for this non-dual paradigm came from Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy. After his retirement from Kyoto University in 1929 and his second marriage in 1932, he became increasingly interested in the social dimension of human existence and began to apply his non-dual paradigm to a philosophy of history. This application resulted in the claim that Japan constitutes the highest form of culture in the world⁸⁸ because it embodies the Mahāyāna Buddhist "logic of *sokuhī*" and constitutes a "self-identity of the absolute contradictions" (*zettai mujunteki jikodōitsu*, 絶対矛盾的自己同一).

To understand this rather astonishing and highly indigestible phrase, one needs to read Nishida's political philosophy in the context of his overall philosophical project. As I have shown elsewhere, Nishida operated on the fundamental belief that traditionally Euro-American philosophy always provided two extreme alternatives to every specific philosophical problem, subjectivism and objectivism, neither of which, however, was sufficient to solve the philosophical problem in question.⁸⁹ So whenever Nishida approaches a specific philosophical problem, he posits two counterfactual alternatives only to reject both and to suggest a third and more inclusive position. The goal of his method is twofold: to subvert dualism and, not unlike Inoue, to propose a position that takes the famous formula of the *Heart Sutra*, "form is not different from emptiness, emptiness is not different from form"⁹⁰ as its philosophical basis. Accordingly, when he approaches the topic of history in the second part of his *The Fundamental Problem of Philosophy* (*Tetsugaku no kihon mondai*, 哲学の基本問題),⁹¹ Nishida juxtaposes the pre-modern *Gemeinschaft* as the embodiment of subjectivism with the modern *Gesellschaft* as the expression of objectivism.⁹² The society that is capable of including and expressing both the subjective and objective dimensions of human experience and is able to embrace the ambiguity of human existence without dissolving its tension Nishida calls the "culture of nothing" (*mu no bunka*, 無の文化).⁹³ The "nothing" of this dialectical culture, however, is not the "nothing" (*mu*, 無) that opposes "being" (*yū*, 有) but one that expresses "true nothing" insofar as

it embodies “affirmation-and-yet-negation” (*kōtei soku hitei*, 肯定即否定).⁹⁴ This ambiguity Nishida refers to as the “self-identity of the absolute contradictories.” Here Nishida continues a line of thought developed by Inoue, one of his teachers at Tokyo Imperial University,⁹⁵ who had already suggested that Buddhism included and transcended materialism and idealism.⁹⁶

In his essays *The Problem of Japanese Culture* (*Nihon bunka no mondai*, 日本文化の問題)⁹⁷ and *The Principles of the New World Order* (*Sekai shinchitsujo no genri*, 世界新秩序の原理),⁹⁸ Nishida applies his historical philosophy to the particular historical situation of the pre-war period. Using his dialectical model, he suggests that “Eastern culture” is subjectivistic, active, and totalistic,⁹⁹ while “Western culture” is objectivistic, intellectual,¹⁰⁰ and individualistic.¹⁰¹ However, despite their differences, Nishida believes that these two cultures inhabit “one world” (*hitotsu no sekai*, 一つの世界).¹⁰² To fulfill their potential, however, the mutually exclusivity has to be overcome by a “mutual determination” (*sōgo gentei*, 相互限定),¹⁰³ and they have to be reconciled by the “culture of nothingness,” which transcends the cultures of non-being and being respectively. The culture that is uniquely qualified to do this is Japan¹⁰⁴ as it transcends the difference and boundaries that were erected and essentialized by binary thinking.

Nishida explains that “Within the Japanese spirit, which moves towards the truth of things at the bottom of the subject by transcending the subject, the Spirit of Eastern culture is always and everywhere brought to life. At the same time, it is always something that is directly united with the spirit of Western culture, which emerges from its environment.”¹⁰⁵ Here, Nishida makes two far-reaching statements. First, Japan discloses the structure of the “self-identity of the absolute contradictories East and West.” And second, Nishida further suggests that as the “self-identity of the absolute contradictories East and West” Japan embraces the whole world. Borrowing the insight and terminology from classical Tiantai and Huayan philosophy, especially the phrase of the “one-and-yet-the-many” (*issokuta*, 一即), Nishida believes that every individual (*kotai*, 个体)¹⁰⁶ expresses the totality of the historical world (*rekishiteki sekai*, 歴史的世界) in the sense that every individual is determined (*gentei sareta*, 限定された) by his/her spatial and temporal context. In a relative sense the context of an individual is made up by the family, the culture, the epoch into which a person is born. In an “absolute” sense, the context of each individual is the

totality of the world. Consequently, the activity of each individual expresses the historical world in some sense. While there are differences between individual persons and cultures, they are not essential but only a matter of degree. To Nishida, the culture that expresses the historical world in its totality most perfectly is Japan as the "unifying pivot of Eastern and Western culture."¹⁰⁷

Nishida suggests that as the embodiment of the "self-identity of absolute contradictories" and the "true nothing," which transcends the juxtaposition of being and non-being, Japan is not only the supreme culture that has the task to overcome cultural differences, it also embodies the non-dualism characteristic of most of Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy in general and the logic (*ronri*, 論理) of the *Heart Sutra* in particular. Furthermore, and this is where we return to the topic of "Japanese Buddhism," while Buddhism originated in India and developed in China, Nishida believes that Japanese Buddhism constitutes Buddhism developed to its fullest potential.¹⁰⁸ It is of course not without some irony that Nishida cites the *Heart Sutra* and the *Diamond Sutra*, as well as the key phrases representative of Tiantai and Huayan Buddhism, such as "the unimpeded penetration of the universal"¹⁰⁹ and the individual" (*shiliwuai*, 事理無碍)¹¹⁰ and "unimpeded penetration of two individuals" (*shishiwuai*, 事事無碍),¹¹¹ as the expressions of Japanese Buddhism. Inoue had similarly suggested that Tiantai Buddhism proposed the "middle way" (*chūdō*, 中道), which included the religiosity of Pure Land Buddhism and the philosophy of Kusha 俱舍宗, Sanron 三論宗, and Kegon 華嚴宗 Buddhism.¹¹² Be that as it may, Nishida's conceptualization of Japanese culture can be summarized in three main points. First, Japanese Buddhism constitutes the highest form of Buddhism; second, Japanese culture expresses Japanese Buddhism; and third, Japanese culture overcomes the distinctions between what seem to be irreconcilable opposites of "East" and "West," buddhas and sentient beings, and, to return to Inoue's ideology, equality and difference. With this conceptual sleight of hand, Nishida suggests that Japan is inherently Buddhist and Buddhism inherently Japanese. The key to his argument is what he calls, following Suzuki, "the logic of *sokuhi*."

THE CATEGORY "JAPANESE BUDDHISM" AS SKILLFUL MEANS

The investigation of the connotations the phrase "Japanese Buddhism" evokes has uncovered a set of Buddhist phrases Suzuki subsumes under the "logic of *sokuhi*." Tying the rhetoric of "Japanese

Buddhism” to the so-called “logic of *sokuhi*,” however, raises some obvious questions. Most of all, it is this kind of rhetoric that drove Noriaki HAKAMAYA to lambast both Japanese Buddhist thinkers and the philosophers of the Kyoto school for their “neglect of words” (*kotoba keishi*, 言葉軽視) and “departure from philosophical thought” (*tetsugakuteki shisō o shirizokeru*, 哲学的思索を斥ける).¹¹³ Hakamaya’s overall project of critical Buddhism has received rather mixed responses and has been controversial at best.¹¹⁴ However, his claim that opaque formulas like the ones I have discussed in the present essay have prevented some of the Kyoto school thinkers as well as Buddhist monastics and thinkers in pre-war Japan from critically evaluating indigenous and nativist ideologies, which are based on a rhetoric of harmony (*wa*, 和) and oneness seems,¹¹⁵ to be not only right on target but is also supported by the critics of Imperial-Way Buddhism such as, among others, Brian Victoria and Hakugen ICHIKAWA 市川白弦 (1902–1986). Phrases such as “equality is not different from discrimination” and “life is not different from death”¹¹⁶ not only have been misused in the past but are also ethically and logically problematic. However, the rhetoric used by Inoue, Suzuki, and Nishida raises questions in addition to this obvious misuse of Mahāyāna Buddhist dialectics to justify militarism and discrimination: Insofar as it collapses the difference between seeming opposites, this “logic” allows Inoue to describe Buddhism as all-inclusive. In Nishida’s terminology, because Japanese Buddhism, and Japan for that matter, embraces the “unity of the opposites,” it constitutes the individual expression of the totality and thus embraces the whole world. Thus, Hakamaya’s criticism raises two fundamental questions: How are we supposed to deal with formulas such as “A is not different from not-A”? And, how does the interpretation of these slogans affect the understanding of Buddhism in Japan as Japanese Buddhism?

From its inception, Mahāyāna Buddhist dialectics has given rise to two possible interpretations: one that reified emptiness (*śūnyatā*) as an ineffable essence, buddha-nature (*foxing*, 佛性) or otherwise, and one that advocates an ever self-emptying process based on the notion of the emptiness of emptiness (*śūnyatā-śūnyatā*).¹¹⁷ The former interpretation tends towards an explicit or, at least, implicit monism and is susceptible to Hakamaya’s criticism as it make it impossible to distinguish between equality and discrimination and, as David Loy observes, good and evil.¹¹⁸ As much as D. T. SUZUKI resists the monistic position and the mechanics of reification, his interpretation of what he calls

the "logic of *sokuhi*" and his general rhetoric can be read as a rejection of difference. It seems to me that the majority of Buddhist philosophers as well as scholars of Buddhism read the *Heart Sutra*, which serves Inoue as the basis for his argument that Buddhism has an inherent affinity with Japan, as well as the *Diamond Sutra*, which serves Suzuki and Nishida as the prototype of their "logic of *sokuhi*," as a rejection of essentialism and linguistic positivism. Rein Raud¹¹⁹ and I¹²⁰ have argued independently that the main goal of the *Diamond Sutra* is to critique the reification of conceptual language even if—or especially if—it is the doctrinal language of Buddhism. In some sense, one can find this resistance to reification throughout the history of Buddhist philosophy from Gautama's famous refusal to answer metaphysical questions to the iconoclastic rhetoric of Zen Buddhist thinkers. In addition, recently, there has been an increasing number of Nishida scholars who have argued that Nishida's later philosophy and especially his usage of the term *soku*, such as "affirmation-and-yet-negation" (*kotei soku hitei*, 肯定即否定), has to be understood as a subversion, if not deconstruction, and not as mysticism or monism.¹²¹ If one recognizes the subversive potential of these phraseologies, it is hard to accuse them of the "departure from philosophical thought." To the contrary, they exhibit the potential to be critical in Hakamaya's sense insofar as they question "prevailing modes of thought and uncritically adopted presuppositions" and thus undercut nativism and nationalism. Then it is no longer possible to interpret the philosophy of the *Heart Sutra* as a monism à la Inoue's "the two are identically one, not separated" that collapses the distinction between equality and difference.

And this is where our discussion of the category "Japanese Buddhism" comes full circle. The Meiji ideologues and their successors justified the nationalization of Buddhism as "Japanese Buddhism" not only with the long history of Buddhism's entanglement with the Japanese state but also with the belief that the Japanese spirit and especially "Japanese Buddhism" expresses the "logic" of the *Prajñāparamitā* sutras (*Hannya haramitsu kyō*, 般若波羅蜜經) and thus the totality of the historical world, the "worldly world" (*sekaiteki sekai*, 世界的世界),¹²² fully and completely. While the non-dualistic philosophy of Mahāyāna Buddhism may not been foremost on the minds of the Buddhists in pre-war Japan, it did provide an ideological basis for phrases such as "for the protection of the dharma and the love of the country" and helped alleviate the cognitive dissonance a Buddhist who

vowed to uphold the first precept of non-injury may have felt in the face of militarism and war. The irony of this rhetoric is, however, that the very rhetoric that was designed to discourage essentialism and the reification of conceptual language ended up being instrumental in essentializing and reifying Japanese Buddhism, the Japanese spirit, and the national entity. And this is where the crux lies. When Risaku MUTAI 務合理作 (1890–1974), a disciple of Nishida and of the second head of the Kyoto school Hajime TANABE 田辺元 (1885–1962), reflected on the nationalistic tendencies of his teachers after the war, he came to the conclusion that the explicit or implicit nationalism of some of the pre-war philosophers of the Kyoto school lay in the absolutization of a relative and changing entity, the Japanese state.¹²³ To use Nishida's language: Japan is not the expression of the totality but one among many. The same reasoning can be applied to Japanese Buddhism: it is not the expression of the *dharmakāya* (*hōshin*, 法身) but one of many. If one reads Nishida's philosophy as de-essentialism, it gives rise to a pluralism rather than chauvinism and nationalism and functions as a critical philosophy¹²⁴ or, as Tanabe concedes after the war, "absolute criticism" (*zettai hihan*, 絶対批判).¹²⁵

In this sense, the category "Japanese Buddhism" can function as "skillful means" (*hōben*, 方便) that identifies common patterns rather than an essence. In some sense, this is common sense. However, as the use of the category "Japanese Buddhism" and in fact all categories illustrate, the term creates the illusion of essential differences and thus gives rise to axiologies such as "Japanese Buddhism is corrupt" or "Japanese Buddhism is the most developed form of Buddhism." In some sense, the category of Japanese Buddhism creates a reality as much as it reflects it. It reflects the identity discourses in the context of which it was created at the same time as it reinforces it. On the other hand, it helps us identify structures characteristic of Buddhism in Japan, such as "funeral Buddhism" and a married priesthood, as long as we are aware of the multiple contexts, temporal, linguistic, cultural, and otherwise, that give rise to these patterns. To say "Japanese Buddhism is funeral Buddhism" is helpful insofar as this claim highlights common patterns most Buddhist schools in Japan share since the Edo period. At the same time, however, it is not applicable to pre-Edo and contemporary Buddhism nor to Buddhism in other cultures. This characterization also obscures the fact that Buddhism has had other functions and deals with changing political and social realities today. So

the lesson Buddhist studies can learn from Buddhist philosophy is that as a category, the term "Japanese Buddhism" is only as helpful as the scholar who applies it is aware of its limitations. It highlights the similarities between one set of phenomena, Buddhist schools and practices in Japan, and their difference from other sets of phenomena.¹²⁶ At the same time, a meaningful application needs to be clear about its context and limitations. Only then can the category "Japanese Buddhism" serve as useful tool that aids our understanding of Buddhism in Japan.

NOTES

1. The other side of this rhetoric is, of course, the claim that, for example, Chinese Buddhism is unified. This assumption is problematic as well. Any rhetoric that essentializes cultures and traditions often overlooks not the only the obvious political and historical factors that led up to the various institutional landscapes in, for example, the PRC and Japan, but also the fact that the genealogical and institutional structures characteristics of "Chinese Buddhism" are not altogether alien to especially Japanese Rinzai Zen Buddhism. In short, this rhetoric simplifies and thus obscures the complexity of Buddhist lineages, institutions, and schools.
2. As Duncan Williams has pointed out, Taijō TAMAMURO coined this term "in the title of his classic work on the subject." Duncan Williams, *The Other Side of Zen: A Social History of Sōtō Zen Buddhism in Tokugawa Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 39. Taijō TAMAMURO, *Sōshiki bukkyō* (Tokyo: Daihōrinkaku, 1963).
3. The same issue applies, of course, to "American Buddhism," even though the majority of American Buddhist centers and institutions identify with, for example, Japanese, Korean, or Tibetan lineages of Buddhism.
4. The Sanron 三論宗, Hossō 法相宗, Kegon 華嚴宗, Kusha 俱舍宗, Jōjitsu 成実宗, and Ritsu 律宗 schools were the main schools of Buddhism in Japan during the Nara period (710–784). Besides ignoring these six schools, this rhetoric also overlooks the fact that at least five of the six schools of Heian and Kamakura Buddhism were imported from China.
5. Interestingly enough, it is especially the Buddhist groups among the new religions in Japan that deliberately break with the structures of "funeral Buddhism."
6. I am hesitant to use this term since the phenomena described in the text do not seem to coincide with all the connotations of the term "syncretism." Personally, I would prefer terms such as "symbiosis," but this is not the opportune place for such a discussion.
7. This phrase is sometimes translated as "the unity of Shintō and Buddhism."

8. A similar reasoning motivates the decision to present Buddhism in Japan in the context of textbooks and courses on “Japanese religion” rather than on “Buddhism.” See, for example H. Byron Earhart, *Japanese Religion: Unity and Diversity* (Belmont, MA: Dickenson Publisher, 1969).
9. The discourse that emphasizes the uniqueness of Japanese culture is usually referred as *nihonjinron* 日本人論 and has been severely critiqued by scholarship in the past thirty years. For example, see Yasuharu ISHIZAWA, *Nihonjinron, nihonron no keifu* (Tokyo: Maruzen, 1997). The related myth of the homogeneity of Japan is critiqued by works such as Eiji OGUMA, *Tanitsu Minzoku Shinwa no Kigen* (Tokyo: Shin’yōsha, 1995).
10. The focus on schools, and their plurality in Japan, is problematic since throughout the Buddhist world there has not been a variety of schools but of institutions and lineages as well.
11. For a discussion of how this trope was used in Kamakura Buddhism, see Mark Blum, “The Sangoku-Mappō Construct: Buddhism, Nationalism, and History in Medieval Japan,” in *Discourse and Ideology in Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, ed. Richard Payne and Taigen Dan Leighton (London: Routledge, 2006), 31–51. More interestingly, however, this rhetoric of the “three nations” was picked up not only by Japanese Buddhist ideologues in the Meiji period but also by scholars of Japanese Buddhism in Japan and the USA until about the middle of the twentieth century, who created a narrative of a progressive development of Buddhism from India via China to Japan.
12. The trope of the “three nations” is highly problematic for three reasons: (1) Buddhism developed in more than just these three countries. (2) Buddhism continued to develop in India after it had migrated to China about eighteen hundred years ago and in China after it taken roots in Japan some fourteen hundred years ago. (3) The relationship between the Buddhist institutions in China and Japan is more complex than the rhetoric of a unidirectional “migration” would indicate.
13. Noriaki HAKAMAYA, *Hihan bukkō* (Tokyo: Daizō shuppan, 1990).
14. In 1963, Gino Piovesana called Amane NISHI 西周 and Mamichi TSUDA 津田真道 “pioneers of Western knowledge.” Gino K. Piovesana, *Recent Japanese Philosophical Thought 1862–1996*, 3rd rev. ed. (Richmond: Japan Library, 1997), 5.
15. Bernard Faure, “The Kyoto School and Reverse Orientalism,” in *Japan in Tradition and Postmodern Perspectives*, ed. Charles Wei-hsun Fu and Steven Heine (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 248–251, 255.
16. J. J. Clarke, *Jung and the East: A Dialogue with the Orient* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 17.
17. While Buddhism entered Japan prior to Shōtoku Taishi in the first half of the sixth century, Meiji thinkers identified the *Seventeen-Article Constitution* of

Shōtoku Taishi as the beginning of “Japanese Buddhism.”

18. See note 9.

19. Keiki YABUKI, *Nihon seishin to nihon bukkō* (Tokyo: Bukkyō rengō kai, 1934).

20. *Ibid.*, 215.

21. *Ibid.*, 217.

22. *Ibid.*, 185.

23. *Ibid.*, 187.

24. *Ibid.*, 185.

25. *Ibid.*, 205.

26. Enryō INOUE, *Inoue Enryō senshū daisankan* (Tokyo: Tōyō daigaku, 1987).

27. Fumihiko SUEKI, *Meiji shisōka ron* (Tokyo: Toransubyū, 2004), 54.

28. Inoue, *Inoue Enryō senshū daisankan*, 250–251.

29. *Ibid.*, 253.

30. *Ibid.*, 250.

31. *Ibid.*, 195.

32. Sueki, *Meiji shisōka ron*, 57.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*, 59.

35. *Ibid.*, 195.

36. Takeshi UMEHARA, *Nihon bukkō o yuku* (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 2004), 12.

37. Takeshi UMEHARA, *Kamigoroshi no Nihon: hanjidaiteki mitsugo* (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 2006), 46.

38. Umehara, *Kamigoroshi no Nihon*, 14.

39. *Ibid.*, 13.

40. Umehara, *Nihon bukkō o yuku*, 16. This claim is rather interesting since, like Yabuki, Umehara does recognize Shōtoku Taishi’s fondness of the above-mentioned three sutras. The underlying assumption here is that “Japanese Buddhism” is, in one sense or another, shaped by the Tendai Buddhism of Mt. Hiei.

41. Umehara, *Kamigoroshi no Nihon*, 46. *Dhammapada* 14, 5. *Taishō Taizōkyō* 大正大藏經, ed. Junjirō TAKAKUSU and Kaigyoku WATANABE (Tokyo: Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō Kankōkai, 1961) [hereafter abbreviated as “T.”], 4.210.567.

42. Umehara, *Kamigoroshi no Nihon*, 42.

43. Richard Gombrich similarly argues that the basic teaching of Siddhārtha

Gautama is a morality based on the belief in the law of karma. Richard Gombrich, *What the Buddha Thought* (London: Equinox, 2009).

44. To Umehara, nothing illustrates this corruption more than the permission of Japanese clerics since the Meiji period to “eat meat and marry” (*nikushoku saitai*, 肉書妻帯). Umehara, *Kamigoroshi no Nihon*, 48.

45. *Ibid.*, 47.

46. This system of registering the population at local temples through genealogical records was first used in 1613 as a tool to expel Christians from Kyoto and was institutionalized by Iemitsu TOKUGAWA 徳川家光 (1604–1651) in 1637. Tamamuro, *Sōshiki bukkyō*, 262.

47. Umehara, *Kamigoroshi no Nihon*, 47.

48. In *Japan after the Murder of God: A Mysterious Message against the Trend of Our Times* (*Kamigoroshi no Nihon: hanjidaiteki mitsugo*, 神殺しの日本 — 反時代的密語), Umehara suggests that in Japan “god” died twice: the movement to abolish Buddhism, also known as the *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈 movement, which led to the “separation of buddhas and kami” (*shinbutsu bunri*, 神仏分離) in 1968 and the Imperial Rescript of Education (*kyōiku chikugo*, 教育筑後) of 1890, killed “god” in the Japanese sense of “kami and buddhas” (*shinbutsu*, 神仏) the first time. God died the second time in 1945 when the emperor, who to Umehara is the “god manifested in human form” (*arahitogami*, 現人神), renounced his divinity in 1945. In Umehara’s words, “Because of the West, Japan destroyed its buddhas and gods completely.” What remained was a moral void and the loss of the Japanese spirit. “A return the beauty of spirit the Japanese people possessed requires that we recapture the morality of the Japanese people prior to the first death of god.” Umehara, *Kamigoroshi no Nihon*, 16–19. Already in 1983, Daisaburō ARIKI had called Umehara’s ideology “hidden imperial fascism.” Daisaburō ARIKI, *Umehara Nihongaku o warau: kakusareta tennōsei fashizumu*. Shohan (Tokyo: Kōyō Shuppan, 1983).

49. Shōtoku Taishi, “Kempōjūshichijō,” *Shotoku taishi shū*, *Nihon shisōdaikei* 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1975), 11–23, 13.

50. *Ibid.*, 19.

51. Christopher Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen: Ichikawa Hakugen’s Critique and Lingering Questions for Buddhist Ethics* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009), 109.

52. In this prescript, Emperor Shōmu dictated “that for every country a seven layer pagoda be built which reflects in part each the *Suvarṇa prabhāsōttama sūtra* 金光明最勝王經 and the *Lotus Sutra*.” Emperor Shōmu as quoted by Susumu Narita, *Kokubunji nitsuite* (Hachiōji: Musashino shobō, 2008), 38. Kantō Kogawara KENKYŪKAI, ed., *Shōmu Tennō to kokubunji: zaichi kara mita kantō kokubunji no zōei* (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1998).

53. Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen*, 110.

54. Martin Collcutt, *The Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institutions in Medieval Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 106–107.
55. See note 46.
56. Shōtoku Taishi, "Kempōjūshichijō," 19.
57. Yabuki, *Nihon seishin to nihon bukkyō*, 195.
58. Umehara, *Nihon bukkyō o yuku*, 12. It has to be emphasized, though, that Yabuki and most scholars today agree that while Shōtoku Taishi embraced Buddhism, his vision of government was mostly influenced by Confucian principles.
59. Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen*, 109.
60. Ibid.
61. In *Treatises for the Protection of National Domain* (*Shugo kokkai shō*, 守護国界章), Saichō presents the lists of threes only to suggest that "in one there are three, and in three there is one" (*ichi ni isokushite san, san ni sokushite ichi*). Saichō, "Shugo kokkai shō," Saichō, *Genten nihon bukkyō no shisō* 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1991), 208–250, 214.
62. Eisai, "Kōzen gokoku ron," *Nihon no zengoroku daiikkan: Eisai*, ed. Shōkin Furuta (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1977), 34–84, 350.
63. Eisai, "Nihon buppō chūkō gammon," *Dainihon bukkyō zensho dai 125 satsu* (Tokyo: Bussho kankō kai, 1914), 371–373, 372. Translation of Toshio KURODA as quoted by Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen*, 110.
64. Ibid.
65. Inoue borrows Eisai's formula "what benefits the self benefits the other," Inoue, *Inoue Enryō senshū daisankan*, 314.
66. Brian Victoria, *Zen at War* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).
67. See Victoria, *Zen at War*, and Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen*.
68. I write this phrase in quotation marks since the Buddhist schools imported to or founded in Japan during the Heian and Kamakura periods did not so much invent new forms of Buddhism but reinterpreted already existing elements from the Buddhist tradition. However, reinterpretation and reform of traditional themes can be found in "old schools" as well. The novelty of the "new schools" thus lay in the creation of new institutional structures rather than in Buddhological innovation.
69. Toru KAWAKAMI, Teruko TAKEUCHI, et al., *Kindai no chōkoku* (Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1979).
70. He also argued that Buddhism transcended and included Christianity. Inoue, *Inoue Enryō senshū daisankan*, 296–297.

71. After the end of the Second World War, most Japanese Buddhist thinkers accepted the separation between religion and state, at least on a practical and political level. Only a minority like Umehara attempted to return to the pre-war rhetoric of the unity of the country and the dharma.
72. Here Inoue is paraphrasing the Pure Land rhetoric of “other-power” (*jiriki*, 自力) and “self-power” (*tariki*, 他力).
73. Inoue, *Inoue Enryō senshū daisankan*, 296–297.
74. *Ibid.*, 304.
75. *Ibid.*, 306.
76. *Ibid.*, 308.
77. *Ibid.*, 307.
78. *Ibid.*, 306, 314–315.
79. Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen*, 86.
80. Hajime NAKAMURA, *Bukkyōgodaijiten* (Tokyo: Tōkyō shoseki, 1912), 604.
81. Shunpaku NAKAO, *Bukkyō to sabetsu* (Kyoto: Nagata bunshōdō, 1985).
82. To strengthen his argument, Inoue quotes the famous “form is emptiness, emptiness is form” (*shiki sokuze kū, kū sokuze shiki*, 色即是空空即是色). Inoue, *Inoue Enryō senshū daisankan*, 305.
83. Victoria, *Zen at War*, 105–112.
84. Daisetsu SUZUKI, *Suzuki daisetsu zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1968), 5:381.
85. Inoue, *Inoue Enryō senshū daisankan*, 304. The phrase can be traced back to the *Sutra of Great Wisdom* (*Dai hannya kyō*, 大般若經), T. 7.220.865b11.
86. Inoue, *Inoue Enryō senshū daisankan*, 315. Here Inoue claims that “equality and differentiation are identical” and constitute an inseparable oneness.
87. Rolf Elberfeld, *Kitarō Nishida (1870–1945): moderne japanische Philosophie und die Frage nach der Interkulturalität* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999).
88. While this is of course a highly problematic claim, to say the least, I would like to add that, as Lawrence Kohlberg readily admits in his theory of moral development, most thinkers who propose a developmental theory imply if not admit that they inhabit the highest place on the developmental ladder.
89. Gereon Kopf, “The Self-Identity of the Absolute Contradictory What: Reflections on How to Teach the Philosophy of Nishida Kitarō,” *Teaching Texts and Contexts: The Art of Infusing Asian Philosophies and Religions*, ed. David Jones and Ellen Klein (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), 129–148.
90. *Hannya haramitta shingyō*, T. 8.255.850c4.
91. Kitarō NISHIDA, *Nishida kitarō zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988), vol. 7.

92. Ibid., 7:387–389.
93. Ibid., 7:441.
94. Ibid., 7:207, 7:377.
95. In her section on Nishida's time at the Imperial University of Tokyo, Michiko Y_{USA} suggests that during his time in Tokyo, Nishida "must have seen and heard the leading thinkers of the Meiji intellectual world such as . . . Inoue Enryō." Michiko Y_{USA}, *Zen & Philosophy: An Intellectual Biography of Nishida Kitarō* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 32.
96. Inoue, *Inoue Enryō senshū daisankan*, 300–302.
97. Nishida wrote two versions of this essay: a shorter one in 1938 (Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, 14:387–418) and a more extensive one in 1940 (Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, 12:274–384).
98. Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, 12:426–434.
99. Ibid., 12:339.
100. Ibid., 12:339.
101. Ibid., 12:334.
102. Ibid., 12:337.
103. Ibid., 12:275.
104. Ibid., 12:286–290.
105. Ibid., 12:360.
106. Ibid., 12:297.
107. Ibid., 12:280 and 12:360.
108. Ibid., 12:356–359.
109. I chose to translate *li* as "universal" rather than as "principle" or "noumenon" since this rendition comes closest to Nishida's use of this term.
110. Nishida's notation *jirimuge* inverts the traditional Huayan phrase *rijimuge*.
111. Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, 10:381; Ibid., 12:367.
112. Inoue, *Inoue Enryō senshū daisankan*, 301–302.
113. Hakamaya, *Hihan bukkyō*, 51.
114. For the controversy about critical Buddhism, see Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson, eds., *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997).
115. In his *Hihan bukkyō*, Hakamaya argues repeatedly that Chinese and Japanese Buddhism failed to critique nativistic ideologies the way Gautama, Confucius, and Descartes have done. Hakamaya, *Hihan bukkyō*, 11–17, 24–31,

and 70–81.

116. Ives discusses the moral danger and trappings of non-dualist rhetoric at length. Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen*, 67–82.

117. *Large Sutra of Perfected Wisdom*, T. 5.220.13b23. See Charles Muller, “空空,” *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, accessed 08/31/2011, <http://buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=空空>.

118. David Loy, “Evil as Good? A Reply to Brook Ziporyn,” *Philosophy East and West* 55, no. 2 (2005): 348–352.

119. Rein Raud, “Genesis of the Logic of Immediacy,” *Asian Philosophy* 13, nos. 2–3 (2003): 131–143.

120. Gereon Kopf, “Critical Comments on Nishida’s Use of Chinese Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 32, no. 2 (2005): 313–329.

121. Masakatsu FUJITA, *Gendai tetsugaku toshite no Nishida Kitarō* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1998), 73 and 76. John C. Maraldo, “Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945),” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 13r. Gereon Kopf, “Language Games, Selflessness, and the Death of God: A/Theology in Contemporary Zen Philosophy and Deconstruction,” *Japanese and Continental Philosophy: Conversations with the Kyoto School*, ed. Bret W. Davis, Brian Schroeder, and Jason M. Wirth (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 160–178, 162–163.

122. Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, 12:428.

123. Risaku MUTAI, *Mutai risaku chosakushu daiyonkan* (Tokyo: Kobushi shobō, 2001), 95–96.

124. Nishida refers to his philosophy as “pervasive criticism” (*tetteiteki hiyōshugi*, 徹底的批評主義). *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, 5:185.

125. Hajime TANABE, *Tanabe hajime zenshū* 9 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1963), 46–63.

126. The Chinese philosopher Xunzi 荀子 (ca. 300–230 BCE) suggested in the work named after him that the function of language is to include what is similar and to exclude what is dissimilar.