

D. T. Suzuki: A Brief Account of His Life

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SUZUKI Daisetsu (Daisetz) Teitarō 鈴木大拙貞太郎 (1870–1966)—or, more commonly, D. T. Suzuki—was a monumental figure in the development of modern Buddhism. Rising from his position as a Japanese scholar and thinker, he emerged internationally as the most celebrated popularizer of Buddhism in the West during the mid-twentieth century. Suzuki was an unlikely candidate to achieve such recognition, for he did not grow up in a Buddhist temple, nor did he follow the ordinary trajectory to prominence in Japanese Buddhist scholarship. But he was an extraordinary autodidact and an exceptional communicator who appeared at a crucial juncture in history when Japan and the West engaged each other and when Buddhism itself was undergoing radical changes. He published extensively in both Japanese and English—on Zen 禪 first and foremost, but also on Mahayana Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism, classical Chinese philosophy, and religion in general. His writings stand as paradigmatic examples of Buddhist thought in the modern period, heavily influencing the image of Buddhism in the West. But the origins of Suzuki's thinking and the impact of his ideas are complex and diverse.

Trying to identify the sources of Suzuki's thought is difficult for a couple of reasons. One is that he attained such fame in the last fifteen years of his long life that it is sometimes hard to see through the fog of his celebrity to the early and middle periods of his life when his ideas became firmly set. The popular image of Suzuki by the time of his death is that of a gentle and wise philosopher imparting Buddhist wisdom to others. For many, his teachings represented the gospel truth of Buddhism. But actually his ideas were not always mainstream, but rather idiosyncratic and disputed.

The second thing complicating research on Suzuki is that he has become a controversial figure in scholarly circles during the last three decades. After his death in 1966, there was an aura of adulation that settled around him, both in Japan and the West. It is true that a few important intellectuals criticized him while he was alive—most

notably, the Chinese scholar Hu Shih 胡適 (1891–1962), who questioned the historical objectivity of his scholarship on Zen in China, and the Hungarian-British author Arthur Koestler (1905–1983), who considered the Zen propounded by Suzuki and his successors to be an abandonment of rational and moral thinking in favor of a Zen reverie of contradictory language.¹ But their criticisms never gained traction against the wave of respect and affection for Suzuki. By the time of his death he had emerged as arguably the most important interpreter of Buddhism in the West. In the 1990s, however, several critiques of Suzuki appeared in print—by Robert Sharf, Bernard Faure, and Brian Victoria. They criticized him variously as a Japanese cultural chauvinist, as a reverse Orientalist (exploiting Western stereotypes about Asia to claim Asia's spiritual superiority), and as a nationalistic supporter of Japan's military incursions in Asia prior to its war with the US.² These criticisms of Suzuki, whatever their strengths or shortcomings may be, have managed to rend the mystique that surrounded him during the second half of the twentieth century. But defenders of Suzuki have rallied, launching their own rebuttals of these critiques, so much so that scholarship on Suzuki is still somewhat driven by critics and defenders, the latter of whom seem to be in the majority.³

Instead of entering into these disputes, it may be more productive to try to historicize Suzuki better. Already there are extensive elucidations of his ideas and teachings, but there have been fewer efforts to situate them in their historical context. At this point, a detailed survey of the events, activities, and personages in his life might help explain better why, when, and how he presented his ideas as he did. Most biographical accounts of Suzuki during the first three decades after his death were constructed from the interviews he gave in old age and from recollections of people who knew him personally—all contributing to his image as a beloved sage. These have created a great reservoir of biographical information on which to build, but unfortunately some of the accounts contain inaccurate details and aggrandizing characterizations, whether because of faulty memory or literary license.

Since the 1990s, new sources of information have become available. The most prominent one is the updated forty-volume “Complete Works of Daisetsu Suzuki” (*Suzuki Daisetsu zenshū* 鈴木大拙全集), appearing between 1999 and 2003,⁴ containing a vastly expanded collection of his letters, both Japanese and English ones, which offer greater insight into the events, acquaintances, and influences in his life at specific points. In addition, “D. T. Suzuki's English Diaries,” published serially between 2005

¹ Hu Shih 1953; Koestler 1960, pp. 227–75.

² Sharf 1995b, pp. 112–31, 139–46; Faure 1993, pp. 53–74; Victoria 2006, pp. 22–29, 105–12, 147–52, 177–78, 208–9.

³ For a defense of Suzuki, see Satō 2008; Foster and Snyder 2010.

⁴ See SDZ.

and 2015 and covering the period from 1920 to 1962 (with a few years missing),⁵ provide terse but fine-grained snapshots of his daily activities, thereby augmenting evidence in his letters. Also, the reference work “Basic Resources for Research on Daisetsu Suzuki” (*Suzuki Daisetsu kenkyū kiso shiryō* 鈴木大拙研究基礎資料), compiled by Kirita Kiyohide 桐田清秀 and published in 2005,⁶ presents a near-exhaustive list of Suzuki’s publications and the most comprehensive chronology of his life that we have, based not only on his letters and diaries but also on other materials in the Suzuki archives at the Matsugaoka Bunko 松ヶ岡文庫 in Kamakura 鎌倉, many of which are not yet available publicly. Besides these works, a handful of new memoirs and essays on Suzuki have appeared, as well as additional primary sources either published by the Matsugaoka Bunko or discovered in other archives and collections (including ones overseas). This wave of new information, coinciding roughly with the fortieth- and fiftieth-year commemorations of Suzuki’s death in 2006 and 2016, has prompted an efflorescence of research on Suzuki resulting in more accurate presentations of his life.

The account of Suzuki that I offer here—which is interspersed with many observations and assessments of my own—relies on all these sources, using them to establish, corroborate, or correct details, and thus represents a provisional report on what we currently know. The process of constructing his biography is ongoing, however, for more and more materials seem to surface each year. My hope is that we now have enough critical distance from Suzuki—more than fifty years since his death—and a critical mass of information on him to produce an evidence-based and evenhanded account that helps us assess his role in modern Buddhism.

Suzuki’s period, straddling the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was a precarious moment for Buddhism both in Japan and on the world stage. But it was also a thrilling moment, offering great possibilities. In some ways, Suzuki was a product of the Buddhism of this time. In other ways, he was a pathbreaker within it, seeking to articulate a new Buddhism that could recover from its recently discredited reputation in Japan, and which would appeal to modern-minded individuals worldwide. Suzuki, it seems, appeared at the right time to advance these aims, though he himself could never have foreseen or engineered his own emergence as an international spokesman for Buddhism. In historicizing Suzuki here, my goal is to examine the events of his life to better locate him in Buddhism’s grand reconstruction of the twentieth century.

Suzuki’s Early Years

Suzuki was born on October 18, 1870, into a family descended from the samurai class in the prosperous regional city of Kanazawa 金沢 as the youngest of five children. His

⁵ Kirita 2005–15.

⁶ Kirita 2005.

father, Suzuki Ryōjun 鈴木良準 (or Jū 柔; d. 1876), was well educated and had served as a physician to the ruling Maeda 前田 clan that had overseen the large and powerful Kaga 加賀 domain (until the Meiji 明治 Restoration dismantled the domain system). Suzuki's household had an affiliation with a local Rinzai Zen 臨濟禪 temple, Zuikōji 瑞光寺, but his father tended to be secular in outlook, inspired by Confucian social philosophy and Western ideas more than by Buddhism. His private library contained copies of the Chinese classics as well as books of Western learning, which Suzuki was exposed to in his youth. His father died when Suzuki was only six years old, resulting in the virtual impoverishment of his family. The struggle to make ends meet in the first half of his life was a constant concern of Suzuki's. In fact, it may have been one motivation for his high scholarly productivity in adulthood, for Suzuki was ever mindful of the royalties, fees, and honoraria he could earn from publications and lectures. One year after losing his father, Suzuki's eleven-year-old brother died, striking another blow to the family. His remaining three siblings found other means of support and became financially independent. But he and his mother, Suzuki Masu 鈴木増 (d. 1890), were left to endure a meager existence.⁷

By Suzuki's own testimony, his mother exerted a strong influence on him, especially in his religious inclinations. She may have felt a unique responsibility for him because he was the youngest and most dependent of her children. She herself was attracted more to Buddhism than her husband was, but the Buddhism she gravitated toward was Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗, or Shin Buddhism, of the Pure Land tradition. The Kanazawa area was thickly populated with its adherents, though Suzuki's family had no prior affiliation with it. What is surprising is that his mother's connection to Shin Buddhism seems to have been with a small, covert, insular group that espoused "secret teachings" (*hiji bōmon* 秘事法門), which were not officially recognized by Shin sectarian authorities. In old age Suzuki described a special initiation into this group that he underwent when he was perhaps seven or eight years old. In a closed session at his home attended only by a few of his mother's friends, the religious leader of the group set Suzuki to chanting the *nenbutsu* 念仏, the name of the Pure Land Buddha Amida 阿弥陀, repeatedly and intensely for thirty minutes or an hour, and rocked Suzuki's body backward and forward to the rhythm of the chanting, provoking a psychological frisson, whereupon he declared Suzuki to be saved.⁸ Though he seldom referred to this childhood experience, the episode may have functioned as a subconscious antecedent

⁷ "Yafūryūan jiden" 也風流庵自傳, SDZ 29: 148–49; "Watakushi no rirekisho" 私の履歴書, SDZ 26: 503, 508, 510–11, 515–19; Abe 1986, p. 3; Kirita 2005, "Nenpu" 年譜, p. 14; Akizuki (1967) 2004, pp. 15–21. An English translation of "Yafūryūan jiden," entitled "An Autobiographical Account," can be found in Abe 1986, pp. 13–26.

⁸ "Yafūryūan jiden," SDZ 29: 148–49; "Watakushi no rirekisho," SDZ 26: 510–11; and Akizuki (1967) 2004, pp. 21–22.



Figure 1. Suzuki, back row, first from left, with classmates in Kanazawa ca. 1886. Also appearing is Fujioka Sakutarō, front row, sitting on the floor, first from right. Reproduced by permission from Matsugaoka Bunko.

to Suzuki's later experience of Zen enlightenment, or *satori* 悟り, for both involved a period of intense repetitious practice culminating in a sudden awakening or altered mental state.

Beyond Suzuki's home life (and his mother's Buddhist practice), he also became heavily involved in his studies. Suzuki was apparently a bright student and managed to enter the elite middle and upper level schools in Kanazawa. His youth was precisely the time when Japan's educational system underwent dramatic change, emphasizing new forms of knowledge that would make Japan a modern and powerful nation. Hence, traditional learning tended to be overshadowed by math, science, foreign languages, and Western approaches to history, literature, philosophy, and society. Suzuki's exposure to these subjects laid the groundwork for his later mastery of Western areas of knowledge, which became crucial to his engagement with the West and his articulation of a new Buddhism that had currency worldwide. Notwithstanding Suzuki's appropriation of Western learning, he was also something of a traditionalist. Toward the end of his elementary education, he attended an old-fashioned academy briefly where he learned the Confucian classics. And in middle school he edited a student publication—organized with other bright classmates such as Fujioka Sakutarō 藤岡作太郎 (1870–1910) and Yamamoto Ryōkichi 山本良吉 (né Kaneda 金田; 1871–1942), who became established

scholars and longtime friends—in which articles were written in classical Chinese.⁹ These skills equipped Suzuki to undertake English translations and summations of Laozi 老子, Confucius (Kongzi 孔子), and other venerable Chinese thinkers from the time he arrived in America. Thus, Suzuki drew on two worlds of thought, East and West, and by excelling in each he became well qualified to speak innovatively about both.

During his studies at the elite Fourth Higher Middle School (Daiyon Kōtō Chūgakkō 第四高等中学校) in Kanazawa, Suzuki came under the influence of a math teacher, Hōjō Tokiyuki 北条時敬 (1858–1929), who had practiced Zen meditation at Engakuji 円覚寺 monastery in Kamakura while studying at Tokyo Imperial University. Subsequently, Suzuki decided to visit a small, remote Zen monastery in the region, Kokutaiji 国泰寺, and, unannounced, to seek instruction from the master. But this first encounter with Zen ended in perplexity and confusion, and Suzuki left after a few days. This episode, nonetheless, foreshadowed his later pursuit of Zen at Engakuji.¹⁰ Around this time, when Suzuki was eighteen years old, he was forced to withdraw from school due to a lack of funds for tuition. Through his oldest brother, he managed to find a job as an English teaching assistant at an elementary school on the remote Noto 能登 Peninsula, and subsequently was hired in a similar teaching position in Mikawa 美川, much closer to Kanazawa, where he received provisional certification as an English teacher from the prefecture. During this period he also had coincidental associations with Shin Buddhist temples and was introduced to Yuishiki 唯識 (Yogācāra) Buddhist philosophy by a learned Shin priest in Noto.¹¹

The importance of English in Suzuki's life beginning in this period was immense. He discovered that he could make a living from it, and throughout his life many opportunities presented themselves precisely because his English, though accented, was very good. He seemed to have a natural feel for the grammatical structure of the language, and he quickly developed an idiomatic proficiency that very few Japanese of his generation could match. For the next three decades of Suzuki's career, English was an essential part of his educational and professional activities: as a university student in Tokyo, as an assistant to his Zen master in Kamakura, as a translator, editor, and writer in America, and as a faculty member at Gakushūin 学習院, or the Peers School, in Tokyo. Even his original appointment at Otani University in 1921, when he was fifty years old, was as a professor of "English and Indian philosophy."¹² In short, during

⁹ "Watakushi no rirekisho," SDZ 26: 503–7; Akizuki (1967) 2004, pp. 22–25.

¹⁰ "Yafūryūan jiden," SDZ 29: 151–52; "Watakushi no rirekisho," SDZ 26: 512–15; Abe 1986, pp. 4–5; Akizuki (1967) 2004, pp. 25–27.

¹¹ "Watakushi no rirekisho," SDZ 26: 519–20; Abe 1986, pp. 5–6; Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 14–15; Akizuki (1967) 2004, pp. 27–28.

¹² The original appointment letter is in the archives of Otani University; see Ōtani Daigaku Shinshū Sōgō Kenkyūjo 1997, p. 55.

the first half of his life he was known more for his excellence in English than for his knowledge of Buddhism. Other contemporaries in Japan were regarded as superior textual scholars or philosophical thinkers, but Suzuki surpassed them all in international recognition simply because of the scholarship he published in English.

Higher Education and Zen Training

Suzuki's mother died in 1890 when he was nineteen years old. On the one hand, this was a huge blow to him, but on the other hand, it allowed him to break free of his hometown to pursue higher education. With a monthly stipend of six yen from his second brother, he was able to enroll in Tokyo Vocational School (Tōkyō Senmon Gakkō 東京専門学校, the precursor of Waseda University) in 1891, and the next year he transferred to Tokyo Imperial University as a limited-access student (*senka sei* 選科生) of Western philosophy. But from this time until he departed for America in 1897, Suzuki gravitated more and more to the study and practice of Zen Buddhism. Inspired by his earlier math teacher and introduced by another Kanazawa native living in Tokyo, Hayakawa Senkichirō 早川千吉郎 (1863–1922), who later became a high-ranking official in the Mitsui 三井 Corporation, Suzuki made his way to Engakuji in Kamakura within months of his arrival in Tokyo and began to practice Rinzai Zen under the abbot, Imakita Kōsen 今北洪川 (1816–1892). He assigned Suzuki a traditional Zen *kōan* 公案 to contemplate, “the sound of one hand” (*sekishu no onjō* 隻手音声). But within six months Kōsen died, leaving Suzuki under the direction of his successor as abbot, Shaku Sōen 釈宗演 (1860–1919). This was a fateful encounter that would change Suzuki's life.¹³

Shaku Sōen was, on the one hand, a traditionally trained Zen cleric: ordained at the age of twelve, practicing in Zen monasteries in Kyoto, Okayama 岡山, and Kamakura, and receiving certification as a Zen master from Kōsen at the precocious age of twenty-three. But on the other, he was a new-style Buddhist and a maverick. After Zen certification he studied at Keio University, one of the most Western-oriented institutions of the period. Then he went to live in Sri Lanka for two years, training in Theravada Buddhism and studying its canonical language, Pali. These cosmopolitan experiences equipped Sōen to join a cadre of young Buddhists seeking to reform and revitalize the religion in Japan. Buddhism had been discredited at the beginning of the Meiji period as an old, entrenched way of thinking antithetical to modern, Western ideas. As a result it lost much of its social and political clout. In the face of this challenge a handful of progressive Buddhists sought to articulate a new vision and a renewed relevance for the religion and in the process to promote a transsectarian, pan-Buddhist outlook.

¹³ “Yafūryūan jiden,” SDZ 29: 152–53; “Watakushi no rirekisho,” SDZ 26: 522–24; Abe 1986, pp. 6–8; Kirita 2005, “Nenpu,” p. 16; Akizuki (1967) 2004, pp. 28–29, 31–33.

Generally speaking, Shin Buddhists of the Pure Land tradition were at the forefront of this trend, whereas Zen lagged behind, caricatured as an insular monastic tradition. Sōen and Engakuji, however, were an exception to this rule. Following Kōsen's lead, he was happy to accommodate intellectuals who were curious about Zen, including and especially those with Western learning. Unlike many monasteries whose primary task was to train Buddhist clerics, Engakuji provided a large and welcoming place for lay practitioners as well. Because of its proximity to Tokyo, which was the intellectual hub of the country, Engakuji drew some of Japan's brightest and best minds. Even Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867–1916), the foremost novelist of the Meiji period, trained there with Sōen briefly. Engakuji was thus an unconventional monastic center promoting a new style of Zen that did not require a lifetime clerical commitment, but could be pursued as an ancillary interest amid the demands of modern secular life.¹⁴

Suzuki was one of the many young intellectuals drawn to Engakuji during this period, and he ended up in the able hands of Sōen. As with other lay adherents, he practiced meditation, contemplated his koan, and met regularly with Sōen for traditional *sanzen* 参禅, formal private sessions concerning his religious state and advancement. From the time Sōen accepted him as a Zen student in 1892, Suzuki became increasingly committed to religious practice. By the end of 1894, Sōen had bestowed on him the lay Buddhist name Daisetsu (Daisetz) 大拙—meaning “Great Simplicity” (sometimes rendered by Suzuki facetiously as “Great Stupidity”)—which he used for the rest of his life. Over a five-year period, until his departure for America in 1897, he spent considerable time—more than just weekends—at Engakuji, and in 1895 he dropped out of university altogether and concentrated on his Zen activities. This was a time of tremendous intellectual and religious ferment for Suzuki. On the one hand, he threw himself into religious training and into his budding life as a Zen practitioner. Sōen assigned him a different koan, the famous *mu* 無, or “nothingness,” koan, and met with him regularly in *sanzen* sessions. Suzuki practiced meditation intensively, and also began to delve into Zen texts seeking clues that might help him grasp his koan. This strenuous period of practice is what made Suzuki a Zen adherent for life.¹⁵

On the other hand, Suzuki was still intellectually engaged with Western ideas. Many of them came no doubt from his classes as a student in Tokyo. Besides philosophy, he read Western poetry and literature in English, and one of his earliest writings was an 1896 essay on the American Transcendentalist writer Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) in which Suzuki portrayed Emerson's outlook as an expression of Zen.¹⁶

¹⁴ “Yafūryūan jiden,” SDZ 29: 152–55; “Watakushi no rirekisho,” SDZ 26: 524–26; Shaku 1941; Mohr 2010; Sawada 1998.

¹⁵ “Yafūryūan jiden,” SDZ 29: 152–53; “Watakushi no rirekisho,” SDZ 26: 524–26; Abe 1986, pp. 8–10; Kirita 2005, “Nenpu,” pp. 16–17; Akizuki (1967) 2004, pp. 33–34.

¹⁶ “Emāson no Zengaku ron” エマーソンの禅学論, SDZ 30: 42–50.

Suzuki also received exposure to Western thinking through his Zen master. One thing that Sōen valued in Suzuki was his facility in English and his capacity to express Buddhist themes in a Western intellectual framework. Sōen was committed not only to revitalizing Japanese Buddhism but also to articulating a modern version of Buddhism comprehensible to interested Westerners. He became aware of such people during his time in Sri Lanka where Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907) and the Theosophists were active.¹⁷ After Sōen's return to Japan, he was asked to participate in the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. But his English ability was limited, so he recruited Suzuki to translate his address for the Parliament (which then received stylistic improvements from the novelist Natsume Sōseki).¹⁸ Subsequently, Suzuki handled Sōen's English correspondence as well.¹⁹ Such activities foreshadowed Suzuki's lifelong role as a conduit of Buddhist and religious ideas between Japan and the West.

Through Sōen, Suzuki came to know Paul Carus (1852–1919), the German-American editor-in-chief at Open Court Publishing in LaSalle, Illinois, outside of Chicago, who himself was a noted scholar with an interest in Asian religions and religion's place in society. Carus had been a participant in the Parliament and had invited Sōen to LaSalle before his return to Japan. Their subsequent correspondence and intellectual exchanges were mediated through Suzuki as translator.²⁰ Suzuki read various works that Carus sent to Sōen and even translated his book *The Gospel of Buddha* into Japanese for publication in 1895.²¹ Suzuki was influenced by Carus's theories on religion which, according to Suzuki's own admission, were incorporated into his first book, *Shin shūkyō ron* 新宗教論 (A New Interpretation of Religion), published in 1896.²² This work, which is not well known in the West, is perhaps Suzuki's most sustained theoretical study of religion. Though it does not include many of his later, more mature ideas about religion (since Suzuki's thinking continued to evolve during and after his long residency in America), the work does reveal him to be a serious scholar even at the young age of twenty-six. It reflects not just an interest in Buddhism but also in the international debate over religion's relevance and meaning in modern life.

¹⁷ Mohr 2010, p. 197; Snodgrass 2003, pp. 155–79.

¹⁸ “Yafūryūan jiden,” SDZ 29: 154; Akizuki (1967) 2004, pp. 33–34; Barrows 1893, vol. 2, pp. 829–31; Snodgrass 2012.

¹⁹ Early letters to Paul Carus include Letter 33 (1895.3.10), SDZ 36: 55; Letter 35 (1895.6.3), SDZ 36: 57; and Letter 36 (1895.8.26), SDZ 36: 57–59.

²⁰ “Yafūryūan jiden,” SDZ 29: 155–56; “Watakushi no rirekisho,” SDZ 26: 526–27; Nishimura 1993, pp. 79–94; Akizuki (1967) 2004, pp. 34–36; and Henderson 1993, pp. 68–69, 95–102.

²¹ *Budda no fukuin* 仏陀の福音, SDZ 25: 275–509; Nishimura 1993, pp. 95–108; Snodgrass 1998.

²² *Shin shūkyō ron* 新宗教論, SDZ 23: 1–147. Suzuki's admission is found in two letters to Carus: Letter 36 (1895.6.3), SDZ 36: 57–59; and Letter 49 (1896.5.14), SDZ 36: 75–76. For an English translation of three chapters of *Shin shūkyō ron*, see Wilson and Moriya 2016, pp. 3–28.

One fortuitous outcome of Suzuki's association with Sōen and Carus was the opportunity for Suzuki to travel to America to assist Carus in his publications. This represented a continuation and intensification of his exposure to Western learning, as well as his first foray into publishing for Western readers. To the extent that the academic study of religion was just emerging as a field, it was a momentous time for Suzuki to immerse himself in Western scholarship. But before leaving Japan he was determined to make headway in his Zen training, according to his own account later in life.²³ He was frustrated that he had not undergone satori, and he postponed leaving for America several times in the hope of achieving it.²⁴ Finally, during Engakuji's December meditation retreat of 1896, more than a year after his planned departure and two months before his actual one, that long-anticipated awakening occurred. Suzuki's account of it in a letter dated 1902 to his friend and former schoolmate, the philosopher Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 (1870–1945), focused not so much on the dynamics of meditation and koan, but rather on an unexpected feeling that arose in him while walking in the moonlight from the meditation hall to his quarters in the Kigen'in 帰源院 hall that night: he suddenly lost any sense of difference between his own shadow and those of the trees all around, and he felt himself to be identical to them, and them to him.²⁵ This realization—which is faintly reminiscent of both Zen naturalism and Emerson's nature mysticism—became embedded in Suzuki's mind as a pivotal moment in his life. The episode emerged as an enduring religious reference point for him, just as he embarked on his intrepid journey to America and his quest to comprehend the meaning and significance of religion and to convey Buddhism to the West.

Sojourn in America

Suzuki's residency in America lasted a full eleven years. He probably did not expect to stay that long, but his own financial precariousness and his apparent lack of other opportunities conspired to keep him in place assisting Paul Carus at Open Court Publishing. Suzuki previously had a vague hope of traveling to America for study (including the study of Sanskrit and Pali),²⁶ which never quite came to pass. But through Sōen he did get the opportunity to assist Carus in a translation of Laozi's *Daodejing* 道德經, the Chinese Daoist classic, thereby providing a temporary means of support.²⁷ This project led to another and then another, in a long string of assignments whereby

²³ Abe 1986, pp. 11–12; Akizuki 1967 (2004), pp. 36–37.

²⁴ Concerning Suzuki's postponed departure for America, see: Letter 41 (1895.11.12), SDZ 36: 57; Letter 47 (1896.3.26), SDZ 36: 73–74; Letter 49 (1896.5.14), SDZ 36: 75–76; and Letter 54 (1897.1.25), SDZ 36: 80–81.

²⁵ Letter 141 (1902.9.23), SDZ 36: 221–22.

²⁶ Letter 42 (1895.12.5), SDZ 36: 64–65; Nishimura 1993, pp. 112–13.

²⁷ "Yafūryūan jiden," SDZ 29: 156; "Watakushi no irekisho," SDZ 26: 527.



Figure 2. Suzuki working at Open Court Publishing in LaSalle, Illinois, in 1902. Reproduced by permission from Matsugaoka Bunko.

Suzuki evolved into Carus's assistant in all manner of activities—translations, research, copyediting, correspondence, proofreading, and miscellaneous tasks. What made Suzuki's stay financially possible was the beneficence of Carus's father-in-law, Edward Hegeler (1835–1910), an industrialist with a deep interest in monistic philosophy and religion, who put up the money for Open Court's entire operation. That included two journals—*The Monist*, which tended to focus on philosophy, and *The Open Court*, which was less specialized but nonetheless scholarly—as well as a long list of books, translations, and other publications. Hegeler was the first of several wealthy benefactors on whom Suzuki would depend to support his scholarship over the decades.²⁸ In some sense, it is possible to describe Suzuki's eleven-year residence in LaSalle as a long interruption to his life, compared to that of his closest friends, Nishida Kitarō and Yamamoto Ryōkichi, who were beginning careers and starting families. But in another sense, it could be viewed as an extended period of intellectual incubation whereby Suzuki acquired a sophisticated understanding of Western thinking and a modern vocabulary for framing Buddhism.²⁹

Suzuki's scholarly activities during his stay in America show, first and foremost, that he was heavily engaged in advancing knowledge of Buddhism and other Asian traditions to the West. What Suzuki is best remembered for during this period is a series of publications on Mahayana Buddhism and classical Chinese philosophy: the translation of Laozi's *Daodejing* (1898; published in Carus's name), an article on Confucius

²⁸ Henderson 1993, pp. 21–44, 100–107; and Bandō 1967, pp. 137–38, 140–42.

²⁹ Snodgrass 2012, pp. 96–99.

(1899), an article on Aśvaghōṣa (ca. 2nd c.), the ancient Buddhist scholiast (1900), a translation of the *Daijō kishinron* 大乘起信論 (*Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*; 1900) attributed to Aśvaghōṣa, an article on the first Buddhist council (1904), an article on Mādhyamika and Yogācāra Buddhist thought (1904), the book *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot* (1906; a compilation of Shaku Sōen's talks and lectures in America), an article on the Zen sect (1907), the book *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism* (1907), a series of articles giving a brief history of early Chinese philosophy (1907–08), and an article on the development of Mahayana Buddhism (1909).³⁰ At the same time, Suzuki maintained ties with the Japanese Buddhist world by publishing short essays in Japanese publications, particularly in the progressive journal *Shin bukkyō* 新仏教 (New Buddhism), in which he offered his own views from the vantage point of living in America, drawing on the West's ideas about religion and pondering their relevance to Buddhism. His essays emphasized both progressive social values and the importance of individual religious experience.³¹ Some of Suzuki's English works, especially those on Chinese philosophy, were prompted by the demands of the Western intellectual marketplace. But others arose from Suzuki's own desire to present a cogent and persuasive version of East Asian Buddhism to the West. In that respect, he was an heir to, and a potent agent of, Sōen's pan-Buddhist vision.³² Their tie and collaboration were markedly strengthened when Suzuki took leave of Open Court Publishing for ten months in 1905 and 1906 to serve as Sōen's personal interpreter and guide when he toured America giving talks and lectures on both the West Coast and the East (including an opportunity to meet President Theodore Roosevelt in Washington in April 1906).³³ Suzuki's various publications slowly fostered his reputation as an expert on Buddhism, and in later decades some of these works became influential in the West's interpretation of it.

Alongside Suzuki's scholarly writings, he also became an avid consumer of all manner of Western learning during his eleven years in America. By virtue of working under Paul Carus and on his two journals, Suzuki was exposed to a wide array of Western religious and philosophical ideas. And because Carus allowed Suzuki to borrow books from his personal library,³⁴ which must have been substantial, he had access to the latest and most important writings in the field. Before coming to America, Suzuki was attracted to Carus's "religion of science"—the idea that true religion is simply the recognition of truth whatever form it may take—and also to Carus's openness to other

³⁰ Kirita 2005, "Chosaku nenpyō" 著作年表, pp. 7–16.

³¹ Kirita 2005, "Chosaku nenpyō," pp. 10–15; Moriya 2007, pp. 58–68.

³² Snodgrass 2012, pp. 82, 96–99.

³³ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 20–25; Nishimura 1993, pp. 151–55; and Shaku 1907.

³⁴ Letter 100 (1899.1.7), SDZ 36: 166–67.

religions as bearers of truth.³⁵ Carus thus considered religion to be fully compatible with reason and science, and he construed Buddhism to be a prime example.³⁶ But once in America Suzuki found other ways of interpreting Buddhism to which he felt a greater affinity, and he discreetly moved away from Carus's rationalist approach.³⁷

During these years, Suzuki kept up a lively correspondence with his two closest friends in Japan, Nishida and Yamamoto, as well as with his Zen mentor, Shaku Sōen. In fact, from this period Suzuki became a prodigious letter-writer and intellectual networker, and continued to be one throughout his life. His letters from America contain references to a kaleidoscope of philosophers, religious thinkers, psychologists, and literary figures whom Suzuki was reading: Immanuel Kant (1724–1808), Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), Victor Hugo (1802–1885), Ralph Waldo Emerson, and many others.³⁸ One thinker that resonated strongly with him was William James (1842–1910), the pioneering psychologist of religion. Suzuki was attracted to his idea of religious experience, which he presented as an expression of feelings rather than intellect, in contrast to Carus's emphasis on a religion of reason. Suzuki clearly interpreted his own Zen experiences in this non-rational motif, and in later decades the writings of William James became a standard resource in his teaching.³⁹ There is perhaps no thinker that made a stronger impression on Suzuki during this formative period of his thought than James.

In addition to Suzuki's scholarly activities, he was also exposed to a wide variety of religious groups and movements. Among them was a Pure Land Buddhist group of Japanese immigrants on the West Coast headed by Sonoda Shūe 蘭田宗惠 (1863–1922), a Shin Buddhist missionary priest from the Nishi Honganji 西本願寺 denominational headquarters in Kyoto. Suzuki spent two months with them in San Francisco in 1903, giving talks and contributing to their journal, *Light of Dharma*.⁴⁰ In order to make the trip, he borrowed money from Paul Carus,⁴¹ as he did frequently, for he was often short of funds while in America. At this point, Suzuki was not particularly

³⁵ *Shin shūkyō ron*, SDZ 23: 105–11; Wilson and Moriya 2016, pp. 23–28.

³⁶ Snodgrass 1998, pp. 320–32.

³⁷ Letter 108 (1899.12.24), SDZ 36: 176–79.

³⁸ Letter 74 (1897.11.26), SDZ 36: 110–12; Letter 75 (1897.12.10), SDZ 36: 112–16; Letter 77 (1897.12.29), SDZ 36: 119–22; Letter 78 (1898.1.20), SDZ 36: 123–26; Letter 80 (1898.2.13), SDZ 36: 128; Letter 82 (1898.3.7), SDZ 36: 133–34; and Letter 108 (1899.12.24), SDZ 36: 176–79.

³⁹ Letter 111 (1900.5.3), SDZ 36: 184–85; Letter 141 (1902.9.23), SDZ 36: 221–23; Kirita 2005, “Nenpu,” pp. 75, 79, 125.

⁴⁰ Kirita 2005, “Nenpu,” p. 19; Letter 153 (1903.8.30), SDZ 36: 231–32; Letter 154 (1903.9.17), SDZ 36: 232–33; Letter 154 (1903.10.2), SDZ 36: 233–34; Nishimura 1993, pp. 150–51; Tweed 2000, pp. 31–32, 36–39, 53, 181 n. 27, 185 n. 10.

⁴¹ Letter 152 (1903.8.4), SDZ 36: 230–31.

interested in Pure Land Buddhism despite his exposure to it as a child. His brief translations and essays appearing in *Light of Dharma* were on general Buddhist topics or pan-Buddhist themes rather than on Pure Land or even Zen.⁴² If there was any agenda in his writings, it was to enhance the reputation of Mahayana and East Asian Buddhism among readers.

Suzuki also explored a variety of Western religious groups in America. His initial exposure to them occurred during his first year when he visited Chicago for a month to attend various churches on Sunday, presumably ones that Carus had recommended. These may have included some from traditional Christian denominations, but those singled out in one of Suzuki's letters were Swedenborgian, Unitarian, and Society of Friends (Quaker) churches.⁴³ Though he seldom expressed hostility to Christianity, as some Meiji-period Buddhists did, Suzuki clearly felt more comfortable with non-mainstream, progressive religious movements in the West than with conventional denominational Christianity. This was especially true of groups that recognized Buddhism as a potential source of religious truth alongside Western religions. Among them, he had a special interest in Swedenborgianism, the nineteenth-century religious movement based on the mystical and theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772). Suzuki was apparently drawn to it from his association with Albert J. Edmunds (1857–1941), the cataloger of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, who had close ties to Paul Carus and Open Court Publishing. Edmunds maintained a long-standing affiliation with both Swedenborgianism and Quakerism, but at the same time was attracted to Buddhism. He was one of many twentieth-century intellectuals that sought to link Buddhism to a universalist vision of religion, exemplified by Swedenborgianism, in reaction to the exclusivism of traditional Christianity. Suzuki responded positively to these trends, and developed a serious interest in Swedenborgianism that lasted almost two decades.⁴⁴

Another important encounter of Suzuki's while in America was with Beatrice Erskine Lane (1875–1939), who would later become his wife and assist him in many of his English publications. If not for her help, it is possible that Suzuki would never have attained international recognition as an authority on Buddhism. Lane was a widely read and highly skilled writer who had graduated from Radcliffe College, the women's affiliate of Harvard University, in 1898 and received a master's degree in social work from Columbia University in 1908. During the first decade of the twentieth century, she and her mother were exploring religious alternatives to mainstream Christianity. As a result, she attended a lecture by Shaku Sōen in New York on April 8, 1906, when he

⁴² Kirita 2005, "Chosaku nenpyō," pp. 11–15.

⁴³ Letter 65 (1897.9.14), SDZ 36: 305.

⁴⁴ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 18, 19; Tweed 2005; Tweed 2000, pp. 54–55, 185–86 n. 14; Yoshinaga 2014.

was touring America, and she subsequently arranged an individual meeting with him ten days later. On both occasions, Suzuki served as the interpreter. Lane and Suzuki apparently developed an immediate affinity, and they continued their interaction through letters after he returned to LaSalle, where he set about editing Sōen's lectures for publication as *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot*. Their correspondence eventually turned into a long-distance courtship. The following summer, in 1907, Suzuki was asked to give talks on Buddhism at the annual Greenacre religious retreat in Eliot, Maine. Taking advantage of this trip, he arranged to visit Lane and her mother in Connecticut for several weeks. From around that time they quietly laid plans to wed.⁴⁵ This unanticipated relationship emerged during Suzuki's final year in the US, by which time he had acquired considerable knowledge that would aid him in articulating a modern global Buddhism. Serendipitously, just as his American sojourn was coming to a close, he encountered a brilliant woman who, as his spouse, would partner with him in this task.

When Suzuki finally departed from America in February 1908, he did not return to Japan immediately, but spent a year in Europe, funded by Edward Hegeler, where he made new connections with scholars and organizations and continued working on publications that were in progress. His primary host and sponsor was the Swedenborg Society of London, where he spent several months producing a Japanese translation of Emanuel Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell*. This project foreshadowed other works on Swedenborg that Suzuki would undertake in the following years, and it reflected his serious engagement with Swedenborg's ideas. He also managed to complete the last in a series of articles on classical Chinese philosophy for Open Court's journal *The Monist*, all of which he later published in a separate volume, *A Brief History of Early Chinese Philosophy*, in 1914. During this period, Suzuki traveled briefly to France and Germany too, eager to visit libraries and academic institutions to explore their Asian resources and to advance his own research. Throughout this time he remained in contact by mail with Beatrice Lane, Paul Carus, and his own relatives in Japan, giving them reports on stages in his trip. Finally, Suzuki set sail from England at the beginning of February 1909, passing through the Suez Canal, putting into port briefly in Sri Lanka and Singapore, and arriving in Kobe, Japan, at the end of March. From there he would make his way back to Kamakura and Tokyo to launch the next phase of his life.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 24–25; Letter 211 (1907.5.21), SDZ 36: 303–6; Letter 212 (1907.7.17), SDZ 36: 306–7; Letter 213 (1907.7.17), SDZ 36: 307; Letter 214 (1907.9.11), SDZ 36: 307–8; Yokoyama 2006; Dobbins 2021, pp. 25–43.

⁴⁶ "Watakushi no rirekisho," SDZ 26: 528–29, 537; Letters 219–234 (1908.3.5–1909.4.4), SDZ 36: 313–24; Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 25–27, "Chosaku nenpyō," pp. 17, 21; Nishimura 1993, pp. 156–57.

Establishing a Career in Japan

When Suzuki returned to Japan in 1909, he had no means of livelihood. Moreover, because he had never completed a degree in higher education, he was not well positioned to seek an academic appointment. What he did have was an excellent grasp of English, a broad and deep knowledge of Western and Asian thought, a record of publications in both English and Japanese, and extensive experience living abroad. At one point while still in America, Suzuki had mused about becoming a photographer or entering the diplomatic corps of the Japanese government.⁴⁷ And after a short period back in Japan, he also contemplated returning to America to work for Open Court Publishing again with the support of Carus's wealthy father-in-law, Edward Hegeler. But when Hegeler died the following year, that avenue was foreclosed to him.⁴⁸ What finally materialized was a position teaching English in the preparatory division of Gakushūin in Tokyo, which educated Japan's old aristocratic and imperial elite. A classmate and friend from his Kanazawa days, Fujioka Sakutarō, who was a specialist of Japanese literature at Tokyo Imperial University, apparently recommended him for the job, and his other Kanazawa friend, Nishida Kitarō, who was about to become a professor of German at Gakushūin for one year, also had high hopes for him.⁴⁹ Suzuki was initially given a provisional appointment, and in the following year received an ongoing position, which he held until 1921 when he resigned to move to Otani University.

Suzuki's appointment at Gakushūin was as a professor of English in the lower division. He also taught English part-time at Tokyo Imperial University until 1912. One of his former students recalled that Suzuki would sometimes use *Aesop's Fables* as classroom material for learning English.⁵⁰ When Suzuki joined Gakushūin, Nogi Maresuke 乃木希典 (1849–1912), the celebrated general of the Russo-Japanese War, served as president of the school. Suzuki was on the faculty when Nogi famously committed ritual suicide in 1912 out of devotion to the recently deceased Emperor Meiji.⁵¹ In 1916 Suzuki was appointed as the master of one of the dormitories, concurrent with his teaching responsibilities (which felicitously qualified him for special Gakushūin housing). He was particularly active during the years 1917–1920 when his former math teacher from Kanazawa, Hōjō Tokiyuki, became president of the school. During this period, Suzuki's close friend from Kanazawa, Yamamoto Ryōkichi, was also

⁴⁷ Letter 211 (1907.5.21), SDZ 36: 303–6; Hayashida 1995, p. 15.

⁴⁸ Letter 255 (1910.7.31), SDZ 36: 337–39; and “Watakushi no irekisho,” SDZ 26: 529.

⁴⁹ “Watakushi no irekisho,” SDZ 26: 529; “Yafūryūan jiden,” SDZ 29: 157; Yusa, 2002, pp. 100–101, 103–6.

⁵⁰ Asō 1971, pp. 122–28.

⁵¹ Hidaka 1971.



Figure 3. Suzuki, front row center, with faculty colleagues seated on each side, and students gathered around at Gakushūin dormitory in 1918. Reproduced by permission from Matsugaoka Bunko.

named a professor for two years.⁵² In short, Suzuki apparently developed a reputation for reliability and rapport with students during his twelve-year tenure at Gakushūin.⁵³ This position gave him status and job security after returning from America, though ultimately his interests and commitments lay elsewhere.

Suzuki's first years back in Japan were a period of transition in which he continued to work on scholarly topics that he began while overseas. The most prominent among them was Swedenborgianism. After the publication of his Japanese translation of Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* in 1910, Suzuki committed himself to additional projects. In the spring and summer of 1912, he took a four-month trip back to London via the Trans-Siberian Railway. (En route he unfortunately was detained for several days by the Russian authorities on suspicion of spying for Japan.⁵⁴) In London, he presented a paper on "Swedenborg in Japan" at the Swedenborg Society's annual conference and began translating other writings by Swedenborg. The next year, 1913, he published a book-length study of Swedenborg's life and thought; in 1914 he published Japanese translations of two more works of Swedenborg, *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly*

⁵² "Watakushi no rirekisho," SDZ 26: 530–31; Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 27–47.

⁵³ Matsukata 1975.

⁵⁴ "Watakushi no rirekisho," SDZ 26: 529.

Doctrine and Divine Love and Wisdom; and in 1915 he published yet another translation, *Divine Providence*—all of which were lengthy, substantive works. The amount of time and energy Suzuki invested in the study of Swedenborg suggests that he had a deep interest in his teachings. In his biography of Swedenborg, Suzuki highlighted, among other things, Swedenborg's idea of correspondences—that all individuals, objects, and events on earth have correspondences or counterparts in heaven, thereby suggesting that worldly things are a mirror image of transcendent ones—a belief that faintly resembles the Mahayana Buddhist idea of the inseparability of samsara and nirvana. He was also attracted to Swedenborg's identity as a mystic and his ability to affirm mystical knowledge alongside rational and scientific knowledge. Suzuki's fascination with Swedenborg during this period was perhaps inspired by the prominence of Swedenborg's ideas among intellectuals he had met in America and Europe. But Suzuki's interest faded in the late 1910s, giving way, it seems, to Theosophy, another progressive intellectual and religious movement that his wife was drawn to. Nonetheless, Suzuki always prided himself on being the scholar who introduced Swedenborg's thought to Japan.⁵⁵

The most compelling matter for Suzuki during this period was Zen. Living in Tokyo, he was only a short train ride away from Kamakura where Engakuji and his master Shaku Sōen (who was now the head priest of Tōkeiji 東慶寺 Zen temple nearby) were located. Whenever Suzuki had free time from teaching and other school responsibilities, he would go to Kamakura to practice Zen and to participate in various projects that Sōen had initiated. He was given housing at the Shōden'an 正伝庵 cottage within the Engakuji monastic complex, and thereby made Kamakura, not Gakushūin, the principal site of his scholarly and religious activities. During his frequent stays, he would meet regularly with Sōen for *sanzen* sessions in his renewed efforts in koan training. At the same time, Suzuki continued to study Zen's massive literary corpus, no doubt consulting with Sōen, who had a mastery of this literature. The decade that Suzuki spent with Sōen, from 1909 to 1919, thus represented a second and longer phase in his Zen training. During it he amassed a prodigious knowledge of all aspects of Zen, which equipped him, perhaps better than his earlier monastic experience, to publish authoritatively on Zen and to rise to the level of an international expert. It was during this decade that Zen began to figure prominently in Suzuki's writings. The primary venue for them was a new monthly journal called *Zendō* 禅道, or "Zen Way," that Sōen launched in 1910 and Suzuki edited, which was aimed at an educated gen-

⁵⁵ "Watakushi no rirekisho," SDZ 26: 528–29, 530–31; Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 30–31; Andō 2018, ch. 3, "Suedenborogu" スエデンボルグ; *Tenkai to jigoku* 天界と地獄, SDZ 23: 149–556; *Suedenborogu* スエデンボルグ, SDZ 24: 1–67; *Shin Erusaremu to sono kyōsetsu* 新エルサレムとその教説, SDZ 24: 69–153; *Shinryoron* 神慮論, SDZ 24: 155–576; *Shinchi to shin'ai* 神智と神愛, SDZ 25: 1–274; Suzuki 1996.



Figure 4. Shaku Sōen, slightly to the left of center wearing the white *kesa* 袈裟, or Buddhist stole, with Zen followers at Tōkeiji, ca. 1915. Suzuki and his wife Beatrice appear just to the right rear of Sōen. The other foreigner, to the left of Sōen, is M. Thomas Kirby (1877–d.u.), a Canadian introduced by Suzuki to Sōen, whom he ordained and trained in Rinzaï Zen. Reproduced by permission from Matsugaoka Bunko.

eral readership more than a scholarly audience. Over the next ten years, Suzuki published approximately sixty short articles in the journal. In addition, he produced half a dozen English essays on Zen in 1917 and 1918 for a short-lived periodical entitled *The New East*, which were later revised, expanded, and incorporated into his widely popular book *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (1934).⁵⁶ The Gakushūin years thus constituted the last stage in Suzuki's very long apprenticeship to become a global spokesman for Zen. Although he never received Sōen's official *inka* 印可—Zen certification for him to train others in Zen—Suzuki was for all intents and purposes Sōen's foremost scholarly heir in the dissemination of Zen.

Yet another topic that Suzuki began to explore in this period was Pure Land Buddhism. Although he had little interest in it during the preceding two decades, and tended to view it as an inferior form of Buddhism based on a naïve yearning for rebirth

⁵⁶ “Yafūryūan jiden,” SDZ 29: 157–58; Kirita 2005, “Nenpu,” pp. 27–29, 32–39, and 42–47, “Chosaku nenpyō,” pp. 17–25; “Watakushi no rirekisho,” SDZ 26: 530; Jaffe 2015, pp. xxiii–xxiv, xxviii–xxix.

in Amida Buddha's Pure Land paradise after death,⁵⁷ a fortuitous encounter with Pure Land Buddhists of the Shin tradition led him to reconsider it. Through his friend Nishida, who admired Shin Buddhism's *Seishinshugi* 精神主義 (Spirituality) school of thought, which was inspired by Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863–1903), Suzuki was apparently introduced to an important figure in this movement, Sasaki Gesshō 佐々木月樵 (1875–1926), a professor at Shinshū 真宗 University in Tokyo (which would soon be reestablished in Kyoto and renamed Otani University). The two men quickly developed a mutual respect, for each was committed to a modern and progressive approach to Buddhism, Suzuki highlighting Zen and Sasaki Pure Land. Through this connection, Suzuki was recruited in 1910 and 1911 to assist in the English translation of two Pure Land works—a booklet on Shin Buddhism and a medieval biography of its founder Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262). In 1911, Suzuki also published his first article dealing with Pure Land ideas entitled “*Jiriki to tariki*” 自力と他力, exploring the concepts of self-power in humans and other-power in the Buddha. Though his primary activities throughout this decade were focused on Zen and Swedenborgianism, these early Pure Land publications foreshadowed his later work on the topic and his move to Otani University in the following decade.⁵⁸

One other major figure in Suzuki's life during this period was his wife Beatrice. When he left America in 1908, their relationship had blossomed into a commitment to wed, and they maintained contact through an avid correspondence during the year that Suzuki spent in Europe and then after he returned to Japan in 1909. Beatrice herself, after long and systematic preparations, arrived in Japan in February 1911, and they were married on December 12 at the American consulate in Yokohama by a Christian missionary. During their next ten years in Tokyo, Beatrice, who had previous experience as a writer, journalist, and teacher, taught English at several schools in the Tokyo area, including the Government Railway Institute, and occasionally wrote articles on Japanese culture and religion for newspapers and other publications in Japan and the US. She threw herself into learning Japanese ways—practicing Zen in Kamakura, exploring Shingon 真言 Buddhism, reading Japanese literature, and learning flower arrangement and other Japanese arts. In 1916 Suzuki and his wife expanded their family by adopting a baby, half Caucasian and half Japanese, whom they named Alan Masaru Suzuki アラン勝鈴木 (1916–1971). In addition, that same year she returned to the US for several months and persuaded her mother, Emma Erskine Lane Hahn (1846–1927), to join them in Japan. All these events created a lively home situation for Suzuki. Even as Beatrice put down roots in Japan, she continued to pursue several interests that she had in America. One was her commitment to animals,

⁵⁷ *Shin shūkyō ron*, SDZ 23: 7–8; and Dobbins 2015, p. xxii.

⁵⁸ Okusa 1910; Suzuki and Sasaki 1911; “*Jiriki to tariki*,” SDZ 30: 434–37; Dobbins 2015, p. xvi.



Figure 5. Suzuki with his wife Beatrice and their son Alan Masaru in Tokyo ca. 1916. Reproduced by permission from Matsugaoka Bunko.

which grew ever stronger at this point. Because of her limited Japanese-language ability, she sought out other foreigners in Tokyo with similar interests and joined them in forming the Humane Society (Jindōkai 人道会) for the welfare of animals during this period. Suzuki was drawn into these activities and also developed a strong sympathy for animals—which he may never have had if not for his wife. Throughout his life he expressed these sympathies frequently, couching them in Buddhist ideas and values.⁵⁹

Another interest of Beatrice Suzuki's was alternative religious and spiritual movements. Before meeting him, she had explored Hinduism, Christian Science, New Thought, Theosophy, and Bahá'í,⁶⁰ but after encountering him in New York in 1906 she was attracted to Buddhism. She tended, however, to elide these traditions together and to assume a common universal truth in all of them. In Japan, even while focusing her attention on Buddhism, she renewed her commitment to Theosophy, the late nineteenth-century movement that claimed mystical wisdom about an all-pervading Absolute, the knowledge of which was supposedly handed down in secret from ancient masters. Theosophy drew heavily from Hindu and Buddhist concepts and thus fit felicitously with Beatrice's universalist approach to Buddhism. When a Theosophical

⁵⁹ Okamura and Ueda 1999, pp. 208–45; Hayashida 1995, pp. 44–53; Dobbins 2021, pp. 38–44; Yamada 2015, pp. 19–49; Hioki 2019, pp. 25–28; Dobbins 2022b, pp. 108–29.

⁶⁰ “Hashigaki to omoide” はしがきと思い出, in *Seiren bukkyō shōkan* 青蓮仏教小観, SDZ 35: 22.

lodge was established in Tokyo in 1920, she and Suzuki—as well as her mother, Emma Hahn, who had belonged to a Theosophical group in America as early as 1898—became members. Suzuki even served briefly as its president. His involvement with Theosophy over the next decade rose just as his scholarship on Swedenborgianism waned. Though Suzuki always considered himself a Buddhist first and foremost, he had great appreciation for these movements and believed that there was much compatibility between them and Buddhism.⁶¹

In March 1921, Suzuki resigned from Gakushūin to accept a position at Otani University in Kyoto. Shaku Sōen had died in October 1919, bringing to an end Suzuki's many years of formal training with his Zen master, not to mention their many scholarly collaborations. After his death there was some discussion about using a large portion from his estate to endow an academic track in Zen Buddhism at Tokyo Imperial University, for which Suzuki would have been the natural candidate. But the proposal was eventually rejected by the university.⁶² At the same time, his ties at Gakushūin were in decline after the appointment of retired army general Ichinohe Hyōe 一戸兵衛 (1855–1931), with whom Suzuki had less in common, as the new president in 1920. Thus, compelling reasons for remaining in the Tokyo area were fading. By contrast, the draw of Otani University was increasing. His earlier collaborator in Pure Land translations, Sasaki Gesshō, who would become its president in 1924, urged him to take the position, as did his close friend Nishida Kitarō, who was now at Kyoto Imperial University. And Otani offered Suzuki what he later described as a “heaven-shattering amount of money” in salary—two hundred yen monthly—as well as support for his scholarly projects. In addition, his wife Beatrice was offered a position teaching English at Otani with a salary of one hundred twenty yen per month. Suzuki therefore took the fateful step of leaving Tokyo, closing out what might be seen as a very protracted apprenticeship under Shaku Sōen—as well as a protracted exploration of scholarly ideas about religion—and embarking on an extremely productive new phase of his career.⁶³

Suzuki at Otani University

Suzuki was an active and fully engaged faculty member at Otani from 1921 to 1939, though he did not officially retire until 1960. He was already fifty years old when he assumed the post, but it was his first actual appointment in Buddhism (combined with English—no doubt to burnish Otani's image as an internationally-minded institution). By this time Suzuki had acquired a formidable knowledge of Buddhism, Zen, and the

⁶¹ Yoshinaga 2019; Hioki 2020; Dobbins 2021, pp. 28–29.

⁶² Yoshinaga 2019, pp. 6–7.

⁶³ “Yafūryūan jiden,” SDZ 29: 158; “Watakushi no rirekisho,” SDZ 26: 530–31; Kirita 2005, “Nenpu,” pp. 45–48.



Figure 6. Suzuki addressing students at a special assembly at Otani University, sometime in the second half of the 1940s (perhaps on Otani Foundation Day, October 13). Reproduced by permission from Matsugaoka Bunko.

academic study of religion based on both Japanese and Western sources. Moreover, he was well experienced in the production of scholarship because of his editorial work for *Open Court* in America and for *Shaku Sōen's Zen* journal in Japan, his many translations and essays, and his previously published books. At Otani he was welcomed by a broad array of Buddhism specialists who likewise sought to put Japan into conversation with Buddhist scholarship worldwide. With strong support from the university, Suzuki stood poised to produce a stream of scholarship that would raise the profile of Otani, Japan, and himself.

The primary venue in which Suzuki launched his plans was the English-language journal *The Eastern Buddhist*, which he established upon his arrival at Otani. Funding for it was provided by the Higashi Honganji 東本願寺 denomination, with which the university was affiliated. In less than a decade it gained international recognition as an important forum for Buddhist scholarship. From the beginning the declared purpose of the journal was to promote the nonsectarian study of Mahayana Buddhism, which had been overshadowed in English-language writings by Theravada. Joining Suzuki in this endeavor was a dedicated editorial board that consisted of Sasaki Gesshō, his primary ally at Otani; Akanuma Chizen 赤沼智善 (1884–1937), professor of early Buddhism and Pali; Yamabe Shūgaku 山辺習学 (1882–1944), professor of Buddhism and university librarian; and Beatrice Suzuki—all of whom had international experience. Beatrice, who was appointed as professor of English at the same time, served as the

coeditor of *The Eastern Buddhist* alongside Suzuki. Her background in journalism, her education at America's top universities, her proficiency in classical and modern European languages, and her extensive general knowledge contributed greatly to its success—perhaps elevating the journal to a professional level that Suzuki alone could not have achieved. It also became a venue where she published essays on Buddhism herself, primarily popular ones that had an appeal beyond scholarly readers.⁶⁴

Suzuki published an article and/or a translation in all twenty-six issues of *The Eastern Buddhist* that appeared between 1921 and 1939, the heyday of the journal before it was suspended. This sustained outpouring of scholarship is one indication of the energy, breadth, and depth of his work in this period. It covered a wide array of topics: Mahayana, Zen, Pure Land, sutras, mysticism, religious experience, popular Buddhism, and Japanese culture. In many cases, these articles were a synopsis or a fragment of work that was being published elsewhere. In others, they were monograph-length studies that became definitive publications in their own right. Besides these writings, Suzuki's other major works during these two decades included numerous books: *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (first, second, and third series published in 1927, 1933, and 1934 respectively); *Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra* (1930) and its translation, *The Lankavatara Sutra: A Mahayana Text* (1932); *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (1934); *The Training of the Zen Buddhist Monk* (1934); *A Manual of Zen Buddhism* (1935); and *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture* (1938).⁶⁵ Most of these works were published in London with the financial assistance of Ataka Yakichi 安宅 弥吉 (1873–1949), a wealthy entrepreneur in the import business whom Suzuki originally met in the 1890s when they were both lowly students from Kanazawa in Tokyo. It was through Ataka's decades-long patronage that Suzuki was able to complete many of the projects he undertook.⁶⁶ The other major contributor to his works in English was Beatrice Suzuki, whom he frequently acknowledged for editing, improving, and proofreading his manuscripts.⁶⁷ This stream of publications led to Suzuki's growing reputation overseas as an important scholar of Buddhism. In Japan too he was given special recognition with the bestowal of the prestigious DLitt degree (*bungaku hakase* 文学博士) in 1934 for his work on the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*.⁶⁸ This was the first degree in higher education that Suzuki ever received. What is noteworthy about his work in this

⁶⁴ "Editorial," *The Eastern Buddhist* 1, no. 1 (1921), pp. 80–85, and "Editorial," *The Eastern Buddhist* 1, no. 2 (1921), pp. 156–59; Snodgrass 2022, pp. 59–83.

⁶⁵ The Eastern Buddhist Society, Back Issues, Original Series, 1921–58, <https://ebs.otani.ac.jp/indexes/backissuel.html>. Kirita 2005, "Chosaku nenpyō," pp. 25–56.

⁶⁶ "Watakushi no irekisho," SDZ 26: 521; Nishiki 1971.

⁶⁷ For example, Suzuki 1927, p. vii: "The author also owes a great deal to his wife in the preparation and revision of the MS, without which the book would have shown many more imperfections than it does now in various ways."

⁶⁸ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," p. 87.

period is that alongside Suzuki's prolific output in English was a parallel mass of scholarship in Japanese, often written on the same or similar topics but in different formats and venues.

The importance of this wave of books on Zen, all appearing in a little over a decade, was immense. For all intents and purposes they introduced Westerners to the depth and richness of Zen in a way they had not seen before. The works were written in reader-friendly prose and framed Zen in concepts that were easily comprehensible to Americans and Europeans. The key to Suzuki's presentation was his emphasis on *satori*, or Zen enlightenment. He construed all aspects of Zen—meditation, monastery life, koan, *sanzen*, ritual action, sayings of masters, poetics, literary works, artistic expression, and any other part of the tradition—to be contingent on, and aimed at, *satori*.⁶⁹ This enlightenment-centered focus lent itself well to Western concepts of religious experience and mysticism, such as those elucidated by William James,⁷⁰ which Suzuki himself freely embraced. These books, appearing in the 1920s and 1930s, elevated Suzuki to the status of a Zen authority in the eyes of Westerners, and though he continued to publish on other Zen topics in later decades, the contours of his thinking were largely set in this period.

Another area of scholarship that became prominent in Suzuki's repertoire at this time was Pure Land Buddhism. He had an initial interest in it soon after returning to Japan from America, but his full engagement occurred at Otani, which was a Shin Buddhist university in the Pure Land tradition. There he was surrounded by colleagues, especially ones affiliated with *The Eastern Buddhist*, who were committed to a modern and progressive interpretation of Pure Land. Between 1925 and 1939 Suzuki published several major studies on Pure Land, some of monographic length, which shifted the focus from rebirth in Amida Buddha's western paradise after death to the experience of unity with Amida here and now through the *nenbutsu*—the intoning of the Buddha's name. He thus sought to align Pure Land Buddhism with the idea of mysticism just as he did for Zen. From this time, Suzuki also developed an interest in the so-called *myōkōnin* 妙好人 of Shin Buddhism, lowly exemplars of faith in Amida and paragons of religious experience whose pithy sayings and pious lifestyle inspired others. Through these writings, Suzuki also established himself as an important interpreter of Pure Land Buddhism.⁷¹

One noteworthy continuation of Suzuki's previous activities in Tokyo was his association with Theosophy. Beatrice Suzuki was the motive force behind this, but Suzuki himself was a willing and sincere participant. After their move from Tokyo,

⁶⁹ See D. T. Suzuki, "On Satori—The Revelation of a New Truth in Zen Buddhism," in Jaffe 2015, pp. 14–38.

⁷⁰ James 1902.

⁷¹ Dobbins 2015, pp. xx–xxviii, 1–27, 48–114, 130–46.

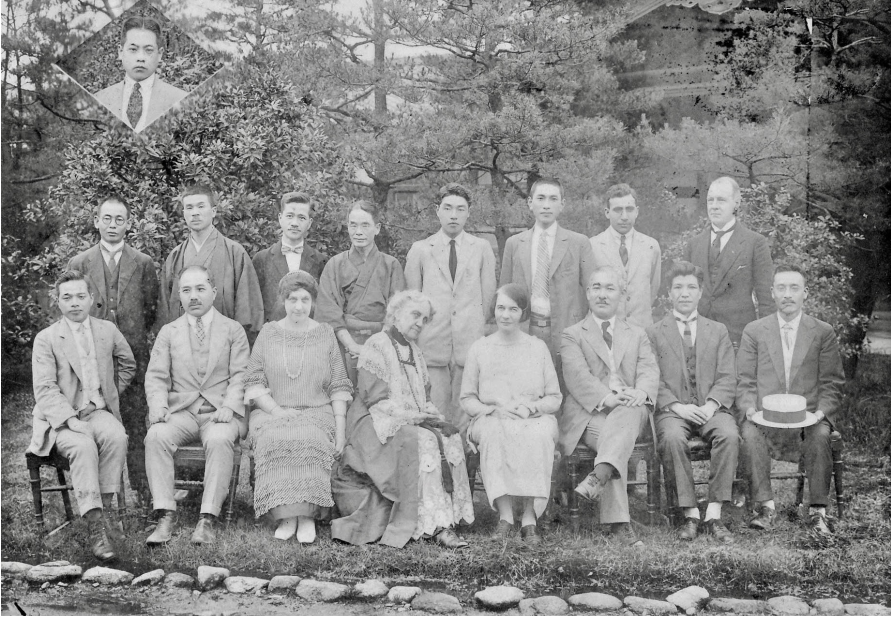


Figure 7. Group picture of the Mahayana Theosophical Lodge in Kyoto at Suzuki's home in 1925. Suzuki is fourth from the left in the rear. Beatrice Suzuki and her mother Emma Hahn are third and fourth from the left in the front. Utsuki Nishū appears at the far left in the front, and Yamabe Shūgaku is second from the left in the rear. Photo courtesy of Yoshinaga Shin'ichi and Shōtokuji temple in Takatsuki.

the Theosophical lodge there soon disbanded. Beatrice thereupon took the initiative to organize a new group in Kyoto, named the "Mahayana Lodge." The primary source of information about it (augmented by several other sources) is a series of letters and reports that she sent to the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, India, between 1924, when the lodge was founded, and 1928. The group included not only her, her mother Emma Hahn, and Suzuki, but also several professors from Otani and Ryukoku, the two prominent Shin Buddhist universities in Kyoto, as well as a few interested foreigners. Beatrice, who served as the secretary, worked primarily with the treasurer, Utsuki Nishū 宇津木二秀 (1893–1951), a professor of English at Ryukoku and head priest of Shōtokuji 正徳寺 temple in nearby Takatsuki 高槻, to handle the logistics and scheduling of the group. Its membership fluctuated between twelve and fifteen during these years. They held meetings about once a month, sometimes at the Suzukis' home, at which members or guests would make presentations. For instance, on December 3, 1927, Suzuki gave a talk entitled "What Appeals to Me

in Buddhism.” There were some periods, especially in 1927, when only a few meetings occurred, primarily because of Beatrice’s recurring sickness and the declining health of her mother. By the late 1920s, the Mahayana Lodge had not increased its membership. Beatrice believed the reason was that the Theosophical teachings were so similar to Buddhism that nothing in them was unique enough to attract the Japanese. Consequently, at the beginning of the 1930s, the Mahayana Lodge apparently became inactive. That was just when many Westerners, who had previously been attracted to Buddhism as an expression of Theosophy, began to discover Buddhism on its own. Beatrice herself never forsook her Theosophical outlook, and Suzuki also continued to appreciate it. But he turned his attention more to publishing works in English that would address the Buddhist interests of Westerners directly.⁷²

Amid Suzuki’s burgeoning scholarly achievements, his personal and domestic circumstances became more complex around this time. Dating back to 1916 when he and his wife adopted their son Alan and when Beatrice’s mother, Emma Hahn, came to live with them, Suzuki and his family required more spacious living quarters and several more servants. They moved to various houses first in Tokyo and then in Kyoto, and finally Suzuki’s friend and benefactor, Ataka Yakichi, built them a large, luxurious home in 1926 just two blocks from Otani. This became their official residence for the next two decades.⁷³ But it was not always a tranquil setting for Suzuki’s research and writing. As Alan grew older, he became rebellious and caused much distress to his parents—perhaps in reaction to the high expectations they had for him.⁷⁴ Also, Beatrice’s mother’s physical condition deteriorated in 1926 and she died at their home in August 1927, placing another great responsibility on the family.⁷⁵ In addition, over the course of the 1920s Beatrice, acting intently on her long-held commitment to the welfare of animals, became a relentless rescuer of stray cats and dogs, bringing hundreds into their household over the course of their marriage—and frequently driving away servants as a result. The situation grew so chaotic that Suzuki proposed setting up a Buddhist animal shelter and took the lead in having it built in Kamakura in 1929. Named the Jihien 慈悲園, or Mercy Shelter, this is where many of Beatrice’s rescued animals were taken. A major partner in this effort was their devoted housekeeper, Sekiguchi Kono 関口この (1881–1948, commonly referred to by the nickname Okono), who shared Beatrice’s love of animals and often exercised direct oversight of the shelter.⁷⁶ All of these circumstances made it difficult for Suzuki to work at home in Kyoto, so he would frequently retreat to Kamakura to do his scholarship at the Shōden’an cottage at

⁷² Algeo 2005; Yoshinaga 2019; Dobbins 2021, pp. 28–29.

⁷³ For the various locations where they lived, see “Watakushi no rirekisho,” SDZ 26: 531.

⁷⁴ Yamada 2015, pp. 51–78.

⁷⁵ Dobbins 2021, pp. 49–50.

⁷⁶ Hioki 2019, pp. 25–32; Dobbins 2022b, pp. 114–22.

Engakuji. He held almost exclusive claim to it, since he had put up the funds to have it rebuilt after it was destroyed in the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923.⁷⁷ Many of his important works originated there. Nonetheless, it was not a perfect retreat, for Beatrice, Alan, servants, and animals would often come too.

During his years at Otani, Suzuki made two momentous trips overseas. The first was to China in May and June of 1934. He had gone to China previously in 1918 when he led thirty-five Gakushūin students on a four-week summer tour, visiting a few Buddhist temples, but more prominently Confucius' hometown of Qufu 曲阜, Mount Tai (Taishan 泰山), the Temple of Heaven (Tiantan 天壇) in Beijing, the Great Wall, and other historic places.⁷⁸ This time, however, Suzuki focused on Chinese Buddhist sites, primarily because his writings drew heavily from Chinese sources, particularly of the Zen tradition. He visited important temples and monasteries in Shanghai 上海, Hangzhou 杭州, Ningbo 寧波, Putuo 普陀, Suzhou 蘇州, Nanjing 南京, Zhenjiang 鎮江, Beijing 北京, Tianjin 天津, and Dalian 大連, as well as in Seoul, Korea. He also met with the famous philosopher and intellectual historian Hu Shih, as well as the renowned literary scholar Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936). Suzuki also discussed Buddhism with Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), the leading modern interpreter of Buddhism in China, and Yinguang 印光 (1861–1940), the foremost reformer of Pure Land Buddhism (whom Suzuki found peculiar because he kept a wall clock in his room during his religious seclusion). Suzuki's reaction to Chinese Buddhism was mixed. On the one hand, he was impressed by the sites and appreciated its long and deep tradition in China, including its reinterpretations of Indian Buddhism and its many subsequent developments. On the other hand, he felt that China had lost its Tang 唐 dynasty Buddhist ideals, allowing Zen to be melded with the Pure Land practice of the *nenbutsu*. And even its Pure Land ideas, he concluded, were not as insightful as Japan's.⁷⁹ These experiences tended to confirm in Suzuki's mind the sophistication of Japanese Buddhism in both the Zen and Pure Land traditions.

The other important trip overseas was a seven-month journey to Europe and America in 1936. The ostensible reason for the trip was to participate in the World Congress of Faiths from July 3 to 17 in London, an event that was modeled on the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, which Suzuki knew well from translating Shaku Sōen's address for it. Suzuki was persuaded to attend by Charles Richard Crane (1858–1939), an American multimillionaire and internationalist with interests

⁷⁷ "Watakushi no irekisho," SDZ 26: 532.

⁷⁸ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 40–42; Matsukata 1975, pp. 72–73.

⁷⁹ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 88–89; "Watakushi no irekisho," SDZ 26: 533; "Yafūryūan jiden," SDZ 29: 158–60; Letter 570 (1934.5.12), SDZ 36: 610; Letter 571 (1934.5.22), SDZ 36: 610–11; Letter 572 (1934.5.26), SDZ 36: 611; Letter 573 (1934.6.4), SDZ 36: 611–12; Letter 574 (1934.6.8), SDZ 36: 612; Suzuki 2008, pp. 81–123.

in Russia, the Middle East, and East Asia, who sought to introduce Westerners to ideas and figures that would stimulate international connections and intellectual exchange. Crane had spent time with Suzuki in Japan in 1930 when he took an extended trip to Asia. He was impressed with Suzuki and subsequently offered to finance a lecture tour of the United States and participation in the World Congress of Faiths. Though hesitant at first, Suzuki finally accepted Crane's offer for he saw it as an opportunity to make valuable contacts in America and Europe and to examine the Dunhuang 敦煌 manuscripts on Zen discovered in cave temples in western China that were archived at the British Museum and the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris.⁸⁰

Suzuki's long journey began with a marathon sprint consisting of a voyage across the Pacific to Seattle, transcontinental rail travel to New York, and a trans-Atlantic cruise on the Queen Mary luxury liner, arriving in London only four days before the World Congress began. Suzuki met with prominent individuals and Buddhist enthusiasts upon his arrival—including Christmas Humphreys (1901–1983) and Alan Watts (1915–1973) of the Buddhist Society in London, which had been associated with Theosophy—and then spent much of the next two weeks participating in the Congress.⁸¹ His most memorable appearance, on July 9, 1936, was in a session on the topic “The Supreme Spiritual Ideal,” in which several eminent scholars, including G. P. Malalasekera (1899–1973) of Sri Lanka and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975) of India, spoke. After others had offered their erudite views, Suzuki rose and declared that he could not possibly explain such a profound concept. Instead he described a simple thatched-roof hut of Japan that opens onto trees, a garden, and a pool of water, in which people feel a bond to the things around them. This, Suzuki intimated, is where the spiritual can be found. His presentation was so unexpected, unassuming, poignant, and powerful that it provoked a standing ovation, and from that moment Suzuki emerged as a major personage at the Congress.⁸² The ideas he presented echoed themes in his essay, “Zen Buddhism and the Japanese Love of Nature,” that he published shortly before departing Japan, and they anticipated his more extensive study *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture*, published two years later (and dedicated to Charles Richard Crane).⁸³

In his remaining months abroad, Suzuki engaged in a wide variety of activities that contributed to his reputation as a scholar and spokesman of Buddhism. On the one hand, he enjoyed a continuous round of invitations and hosted meals after his appearance at the Congress, including ones with well-to-do attendees who had Theosophical and Bahá'í sympathies. In addition, he spent much time at the British Museum

⁸⁰ Jaffe 2022a, pp. 130–44.

⁸¹ Kirita 2005–15, vol. 25 (2011), pp. 21–24; Kirita 2005, “Nenpu,” pp. 95–96.

⁸² Humphreys 1978, pp. 90–91; Watts 1986, p. 191.

⁸³ Suzuki 1936; Suzuki 1938.

reviewing Dunhuang materials, and made a nine-day trip to Paris to examine Dunhuang texts there. This research was important for future publications in order to bring his analysis of Chinese Zen into alignment with the most recent textual evidence. While on the continent, he also traveled for eight days to Hitler's Germany where he visited relatives of Beatrice Suzuki's stepfather, Dr. Albert Johann Hahn (1852–1920), who had been a German immigrant in America and had married her mother, Emma Erskine Lane Hahn. During his final two months in England, Suzuki gave lectures and talks widely—to small audiences such as London's Buddhist Society, as well as at prestigious universities such as Cambridge, Edinburgh, and Oxford. He was assisted in scheduling major appearances by the Japanese Embassy, since Suzuki also had quasi-government sponsorship for his lecture tour through the Foreign Ministry's Society for International Cultural Relations (Kokusai Bunka Shinkōkai 国際文化振興会).⁸⁴

When Suzuki finally departed England in mid-November, he embarked on yet another round of lectures and meetings, this time across the United States. In New York, he was afforded the comfort of Charles Richard Crane's Manhattan apartment, and made forays to Princeton, Brown, Harvard, and the Hartford Museum. He also gave a talk to the Zen students of Sasaki Sōkei-an 佐々木曹溪庵 (1882–1945), a Rinzai priest and erstwhile artist who helped spread Zen in America from the early 1900s and whom Suzuki knew through their common Dharma lineage back to Shaku Sōen. After twelve days on the East Coast, Suzuki traveled by train to Chicago where he was hosted by Ruth Fuller Everett (1892–1967, subsequently named Sasaki after her remarriage to Sōkei-an), who later became an important bridge figure between Zen in America and Japan. Suzuki had given her advice on Zen during her trips to Kyoto in the early 1930s, including an introduction to the abbot of Nanzenji 南禅寺 monastery, where she trained in Zen for four months in 1932. While in Chicago, he presented lectures at the Art Institute and Northwestern University, and also had a reunion with members of Paul Carus's family in LaSalle. Suzuki then traveled by train to California where he was hosted by Charles Richard Crane for four days at his ranch near Palm Springs. Afterward, he visited Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco, where he met variously with Senzaki Nyogen 千崎如幻 (1876–1958), another Dharma heir of Shaku Sōen who trained students in Zen in Southern California; with an intimate follower of Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986), the Indian philosopher who was previously heralded as the new World Teacher by Theosophists; and with Walter Evans-Wentz (1878–1965), the Theosophist who published *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (1927). Suzuki also gave talks to university professors of the so-called Metaphysical Society in Los Angeles and to members of the Nishi Honganji headquarter's temple in San Fran-

⁸⁴ Kirita 2005–15, vol. 25 (2011), pp. 23–38; Kirita 2005, “Nenpu,” pp. 96–99; Letter 595 (1936.10.7), SDZ 36: 622–24; and Letter 596 (1936.11.5), SDZ 36: 624–25.



Figure 8. Suzuki, standing slightly right of center, greeted in Yokohama in January 1937, upon his return from the World Congress of Faiths. To the left is Beatrice Suzuki (wearing a hat), and at the far left is Asahina Sōgen 朝日奈宗源 (1891–1979) of Engakuji. Kneeling in front at the left is Suzuki’s grandniece, Hayashida Kumino 林田久美野 (née Suzuki; 1918–2011), and at the right is his housekeeper, Sekiguchi Kono. Reproduced by permission from Matsugaoka Bunko.

cisco. In the last few days of 1936 and the first few of 1937, Suzuki traveled again by ship across the Pacific—with a seven-hour stop in Honolulu where he met with Gregg M. Sinclair (1890–1976), founder of the Oriental Institute and future president of the University of Hawai‘i.⁸⁵ Suzuki’s many overseas activities during this seven-month period paved the way for his return to the United States in 1949–1958 and foreshadowed his emergence as a well-known intellectual.

During the next three years, Suzuki completed several outstanding research projects—most prominently, his *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture* in 1938, which developed from his overseas talks—and he initiated several new projects as well—for example, his monograph-length essay “The Shin Sect of Buddhism,” published in *The Eastern Buddhist* in 1939. But the event that dominated his life in

⁸⁵ Kirita 2005–15, vol. 25 (2011), pp. 38–44; Kirita 2005, “Nenpu,” pp. 99–101; Jaffe 2022a, pp. 140–42.

1938 and 1939 was the protracted illness and eventual death of Beatrice Suzuki from cancer. She was diagnosed in March 1938, and over the next sixteen months—except for two five- or six-week periods in late spring and mid-fall of 1938—she was a patient at St. Luke’s Hospital in Tokyo, receiving radiation treatment and pain management. During this time, Suzuki resided as much as possible at the Shōden’an cottage in Kamakura, instead of Kyoto, and would often alternate days with their longtime housekeeper Sekiguchi Kono to visit or sit with Beatrice in the hospital. Though in constant pain, she was alert most of these months during which she and Suzuki edited her writings on Shingon Buddhism and an article she wrote on Shin Buddhist hymns (*wasan* 和讃). Over the course of her hospitalization she read some 480 books, both fiction and nonfiction, according to Suzuki’s count, reflecting what a prodigious reader she was. Suzuki even consulted with her about the German translation of his *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* just nine days before she died, but at that point she was too weak to give him useful feedback. One worry during Beatrice’s entire hospitalization was their wayward son Alan. In the summer of 1938, his reckless affair with a young woman led to a potential paternity suit by her family. And just weeks before Beatrice’s death, his determination to marry yet another woman, Kubo Nobu 久保ノブ (1916–2009), against their wishes, resulted in their alienation from him. It was in this sad context that Beatrice died on July 16, 1939.⁸⁶

In the wake of his wife’s death, several important changes occurred in Suzuki’s life. The first was the suspension of publishing *The Eastern Buddhist* in 1939. Its discontinuation suggests what an indispensable role Beatrice Suzuki played for almost two decades as its coeditor.⁸⁷ Only in 1965, after a couple of fitful attempts to revive it earlier, was the journal published again as a new series. Second, Suzuki himself produced far fewer publications in English over the next ten years.⁸⁸ There were many reasons for this drop-off, most notably, his isolation from the United States and England during the war. But it may also reflect the extent to which he had previously depended on his wife to edit and polish his manuscripts. Third, there was a gradual but inexorable shift in his residency away from Kyoto to Kamakura. Suzuki had long used the Shōden’an cottage at Engakuji as a retreat for research, and he spent considerable time there during Beatrice’s long hospitalization in Tokyo. In the next few years, however, he began to build his own research library in Kamakura—Matsugaoka Bunko—at the nearby Tōkeiji Zen temple (where his master Shaku Sōen had been head priest). Suzuki thereby slowly decreased his presence at Otani University (though he continued to be

⁸⁶ Kirita 2005–15, vol. 25 (2011), pp. 53–85; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 26 (2012), pp. 1–33; “Hashigaki to omoide,” in *Seiren bukyō shōkan*, SDZ 35: 22–25; Hayashida 1995, pp. 58–64; Yamada 2015, pp. 106–12.

⁸⁷ “Notes,” *The Eastern Buddhist* 7, nos. 3/4 (1939), p. 376.

⁸⁸ Kirita 2005, “Chosaku nenpyō,” pp. 54–74.

listed as a member of its teaching faculty until 1960, when he finally assumed emeritus status).⁸⁹ He did retain possession of their grand house near the campus, and stayed there during his many trips to Kyoto, but Kamakura largely became his new base of operation.

Wartime and Postwar Years

The 1940s were a time of great trauma and change for Suzuki, as they were for Japan overall. He began the decade nearly seventy years old, but still had many unforeseen accomplishments ahead of him. Suzuki's life during this period can easily be divided between the wartime and postwar years. During the former, while residing principally in Kamakura, he concentrated on research and writing though he continued to network with scholars, acquaintances, and Buddhist figures. During the latter, he assumed a higher profile in the public eye, as Japan searched for a new national identity and a new relationship with its erstwhile wartime adversaries. In both of these phases, Suzuki continued to be an active and creative scholar.

In the years between 1940 and 1945, Suzuki's daily life and activities progressed steadily from normal to dire, especially as the war began to rage. After Beatrice Suzuki's death he was still obligated to teach at Otani University, and he offered such courses as "Comparative Religious Experience in Buddhism and Christianity" in 1940, "Mysticism East and West" in 1941, "Zen and Pure Land" in 1942, "Pure Land Thought" and "William James's 'Varieties of Religious Experience'" in 1943, and "Theories of Religion" and "Rudolph Otto's Views on Religion" in 1944. But the actual number of days that he taught and the number of students available to take his classes declined drastically over these years, so that by 1945 Otani was virtually a nonteaching institution. Throughout this period Suzuki minimized the time he spent in Kyoto and returned to Kamakura every chance he had. Suzuki also continued to receive invitations to give talks during these years to schools, clubs, temples, and religious groups, and he made appearances not only in Tokyo but also in Nagoya, Kanazawa, Nagano, and Kyoto. But they too became fewer as time wore on. Suzuki also continued to interact with friends, scholars, colleagues, acquaintances, relatives, publishers, supporters, and strangers. His most frequent visits were with Nishida Kitarō, his high school classmate and lifelong conversation partner, who had retired to a house near Kamakura and whose unexpected death on June 7, 1945, shook Suzuki profoundly. Other frequent interactions were with the businessman Ataka Yakichi, Suzuki's longtime benefactor; Sugihira Shizutoshi 杉平巖智 (1899–1984), a former student and instructor at Otani; and Furuta Shōkin 古田紹欽 (1911–2001), a young Zen scholar who became Suzuki's protégé. From 1943 to 1945 living conditions in Japan deteriorated

⁸⁹ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," p. 216.



Figure 9. Suzuki, front row center, participating in Nishida Kitarō's funeral at Tōkeiji on June 13, 1945. He is seated between Nishida's widow, Koto 琴, on the left, and his second son, Sotohiko 外彦, on the right. Reproduced by permission from Matsugaoka Bunko.

dramatically, and Suzuki and his housekeeper Sekiguchi Kono sometimes had to rely on gifts of vegetables, fruits, rice, bread, chestnuts, and other foodstuffs. Suzuki himself chopped firewood and helped with gardening at the cottage. In the last eight months of the war they lived with constant reports of air raids and fire-bombings close by, and were often kept awake at night. Notwithstanding the chaos of these years, Suzuki managed to produce several important publications.⁹⁰

The first was a study of Bankei 盤珪 (1622–1693), an overlooked Zen master of Japan's early modern period who propounded a unique teaching known as “unborn Zen” (*fushō Zen* 不生禪), the idea that the Buddha mind is inherent in all people and all things prior to any differentiation between them. Bringing together several earlier lectures and articles, Suzuki published his *Bankei no fushō Zen* 盤珪の不生禪 (Bankei's Unborn Zen) in 1940 and expanded it in his *Zen shisōshi kenkyū* 禪思想史研究 (Studies in Zen Intellectual History), volume 1, in 1942.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Kirita 2005–15, vol. 21 (2007), pp. 1–137; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 23 (2009), pp. 1–113; Kirita 2005, “Nenpu,” pp. 110–36.

⁹¹ *Bankei no fushō Zen*, SDZ 1: 345–491; *Zen shisōshi kenkyū*, SDZ 1: 1–344.

The second area of research in this period was Pure Land Buddhism, which resulted in a collection of essays published in 1943, *Jōdokei shisōron* 浄土系思想論 (Intellectual Issues in the Pure Land Tradition). The first long chapter was simply a Japanese translation of his English essay, “The Shin Sect of Buddhism,” that appeared four years earlier in *The Eastern Buddhist*. But the remaining five chapters were original, inspired primarily by his reading of such foundational Shin Buddhist texts as the *Muryōjūkyō* 無量壽經 (Larger Pure Land Sutra) and Shinran’s magnum opus *Kyōgyōshinshō* 教行信証 (Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Enlightenment). In these essays Suzuki engaged Shin Buddhist doctrine at a sophisticated level, and brought his own thought-provoking interpretations to it, emphasizing the inseparability between the Pure Land paradise and this world of samsara, between nirvana and the experience of faith, and between Amida Buddha and ordinary sentient beings. This book contains some of Suzuki’s earliest references to his trademark concept of *sokubi no ronri* 即非の論理, the logic of simultaneous identification and differentiation.⁹²

The third major work that Suzuki produced during the war years was his *Nihonteki reisei* 日本的靈性 (Japanese Spirituality) in 1944. To a certain extent he combined his interests in Zen, Pure Land, and Japanese culture in this one book. His basic thesis was that Japan has a distinct spiritual character—which he identified using the rare word *reisei* 靈性 instead of the more commonplace term for spirit, *seishin* 精神—that can reconcile contradictions and unify dualities even while acknowledging their differences. Buddhist teachings from India and China, Suzuki argued, merged with this Japanese outlook, which flourished among peasants and samurai warriors, that is, people living down-to-earth lives close to the soil. The net effect was to produce Japan’s highest and most insightful forms of Buddhism, specifically, Zen and Pure Land of the Kamakura period (1185–1333), which he considered distinctive in Buddhism. When Suzuki wrote this book, he may have regarded it as his most creative contribution to Buddhist thought, but in the context of World War II it had mixed implications. Because it valorized Japanese spirituality so highly—and because Suzuki’s writings and research then tended to focus on Japanese topics rather than Chinese ones, as they had in the previous decade—his views seemed in step, at least obliquely, with the Japanese cultural chauvinism that was ascendant during the war years. Suzuki himself, in a new preface to *Nihonteki reisei* when it was republished in 1949, claimed that he actually wrote the work as an alternative to the ultranationalistic portrayal of the Japanese spirit during the war.⁹³ But whether it was read and received that way when it first appeared in 1944 is hard to say.

Suzuki’s views on Japanese nationalism and the war effort have become a matter of controversy for some scholars. Because he was cooperative and valuable to the American

⁹² *Jōdokei shisōron*, SDZ 6: 1–320.

⁹³ *Nihonteki reisei* 日本的靈性, SDZ 8: 1–223 (especially p. 9 for Suzuki’s claim).

authorities in Japan during the immediate postwar years, and because he became admired in America and Europe during the 1950s and 1960s, there has long been the assumption that he had no sympathy for Japanese nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s. But recent research has shown that his idealization of the traditional samurai, who maintained Zen equanimity while wielding the sword, was sometimes held up as a model for Japan's armies, and also that translations of Suzuki's writings on Zen were popular and respected in Nazi Germany. In addition, Suzuki maintained cordial ties with several German intellectuals that were enthusiastic supporters of the Third Reich, including Karlfried Graf Dürckheim (1896–1988), who was an envoy assigned to Tokyo in the war years.⁹⁴ On the other hand, Suzuki was never an outspoken defender of the government at the height of the war, as some Japanese intellectuals were. Moreover, government authorities may have had suspicions about Suzuki's genuine loyalties, since he had lived many years in America as a young man and had married an American woman. Whatever Suzuki's sentiments may have been, he never offered a public apology after the war for actions or writings that may have increased ultranationalism, even if unintended, as did several other Japanese intellectuals such as Tanabe Hajime 田辺元 (1885–1962).⁹⁵

If Suzuki's life during the war was low-key, he was catapulted into public view in the postwar period. With the sudden occupation of Japan by the American military in September 1945, and amid mounting purges and eventual war crimes trials of Japanese leaders, many sought Suzuki's advice. He was uniquely qualified to speak to Japanese and foreigners alike because of his deep familiarity with both cultures. Over the next year, Japanese educators, publishers, businessmen, politicians, community leaders, and journalists—some previously known to him, but others not—attempted to meet with Suzuki or to interview him. Moreover, American soldiers and officers began to encounter Suzuki, and his reputation spread in certain circles of the military. Under these circumstances he was comfortable enough to write a letter to the American Occupation headquarters on October 4, 1945, expressing his views on Shinto—which Americans had considered the ideological inspiration for Japan's ultranationalism.⁹⁶

The extent to which Suzuki became a spokesman in the postwar period is reflected in the fact that he was invited to give lectures at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo to the

⁹⁴ Kirita 2005–15, vol. 21 (2007), p. 114; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 23 (2009), p. 6; Baier 2013; Victoria 2014; Bieber 2015.

⁹⁵ Unno and Heisig 1990, p. 284.

⁹⁶ Kirita 2005–15, vol. 23 (2009), pp. 100–13, esp. 106; and Kirita 2005–15, vol. 24 (2010), pp. 1–30. The content of Suzuki's letter to the American headquarters is not known. It has never been made public, if it even survives. It is noteworthy that according to Suzuki's diary on October 3, 1945, the day before he wrote the letter, a person named "Uyeda" visited Suzuki, whom he characterized as "a strange Shintoist." Their conversation, whatever it may have consisted of, perhaps provoked Suzuki to write this letter.

emperor and empress of Japan on April 23 and 24, 1946, only eight months after Japan's surrender.⁹⁷ The process by which he was selected is unclear, but it is certain that he could not have been chosen without the approval of the American Occupation authorities and their designated Japanese officials. From this time, Suzuki began to emerge as an advocate for a new Japan. The actual contents of the two lectures were organized around some of Suzuki's standard Buddhist themes: people must awaken to the spiritual world of nondiscriminative awareness beyond the mundane world of discriminative reasoning, while also realizing that those worlds are intertwined; past emperors, Buddhist masters, and poets attained such realizations; one must understand the karmic consequences of past actions and live with them, but at the same time transcend them in nondiscriminative awareness; and the Mahayana ideals of wisdom, compassion, and the interpenetration of all things are expressions of such spiritual awareness.⁹⁸ By happenstance, at the time Suzuki was presenting these lectures, Christmas Humphreys, the British barrister and founder of the Buddhist Society of London, was spending seven months in Japan, from February to September 1946, as part of a delegation to compile evidence against high-profile wartime leaders for the upcoming war crimes tribunal. Humphreys was a tremendous admirer of Suzuki, having read his *Essays in Zen Buddhism* in the 1920s and 1930s and then having met with him during Suzuki's long stay in London in 1936. In Japan, Humphreys visited Suzuki frequently in Kamakura, often spending the night, and collaborated with him to produce an English version of the lectures held at the Imperial Palace. Suzuki dictated translations of them, which Humphreys transcribed and later had Suzuki review. This English version was issued as *The Essence of Buddhism* by the Buddhist Society of London in 1946, even before the Japanese version was published.⁹⁹ Humphreys was in fact instrumental in having Suzuki's English writings, both earlier works and future ones, published in England over the next ten years, based on a legal "memorandum of agreement" that they signed during his stay in Japan. Humphreys' promotion of Suzuki's writings contributed greatly to his reputation in the West.¹⁰⁰

An important concept appearing in Suzuki's lectures to the emperor is the idea of *reisei*, spirituality, which was the theme of his 1944 book. In the postwar context, Suzuki sought to advance this concept as a spiritual ideal around which Japan could renew itself. This is seen particularly in two new books that he published—*Reiseiteki*

⁹⁷ Kirita 2005–15, vol. 24 (2010), p. 11.

⁹⁸ *Bukkyō no taiti* 仏教の大意, SDZ 7: 1–79.

⁹⁹ Suzuki 1946a (1972), pp. 67–111.

¹⁰⁰ Humphreys 1978, pp. 120–39; Blacker 1997. Concerning the later revision of this "memorandum of agreement" between Suzuki and Humphreys, see Letter 1352 (1954.1.29), SDZ 38: 10–12; Letter 1361 (1954.3.20), SDZ 38: 19; Letter 1366 (1954.4.9), SDZ 38: 23; Letter 1374 (1954.5.13), SDZ 38: 31–32; and Letter 1381 (1954.5.28), SDZ 38: 38.

Nihon no kensetsu 靈性的日本の建設 (The Construction of a Spiritual Japan) in 1946 and *Nihon no reiseika* 日本の靈性化 (The Spiritualization of Japan) in 1947,¹⁰¹ as well as in reprints of his *Nihonteki reisei* in 1946 and 1949. What is noteworthy about the two new works is the extent to which Suzuki went beyond the claims of his original book. He specifically critiqued the wartime regime for its lack of spiritual awareness in ways that he did not dare during the war, and he singled out Shinto as an insufficient basis for his ideal of spirituality. Suzuki thus reoriented and redeployed his concept of *reisei* for this purpose in postwar Japan. Though he presented *reisei* as a highly significant idea at this time in Japan's history, it faded somewhat from Suzuki's scholarship after the 1940s.

Suzuki's publications during the postwar period also included new work on Zen. Though he had written about Zen extensively in the previous two decades, his encounter with Dunhuang archival materials, which he examined during his visits to London and Paris in 1936, altered and expanded his views. His new research focused particularly on documents associated with the Chinese Zen patriarchs Bodhidharma (ca. 5th–6th c.) and Huineng 慧能 (d. 713), which antedated the Zen sectarian sources that his earlier publications relied on. Unfortunately, Suzuki could work on these texts only briefly in the late 1930s and sporadically in 1943 and 1944. But in the postwar period he redoubled his efforts and completed a series of studies which were eventually published in 1951 as *Zen shisōshi kenkyū*.¹⁰² This brought Suzuki's work up to the leading edge of Zen research, as he addressed earlier criticisms of his scholarship for overlooking Dunhuang sources.¹⁰³ An influential English publication that resulted from this research was *The Zen Doctrine of No Mind* of 1949, an explication of Huineng's seminal teachings found in the so-called "Platform Sutra."¹⁰⁴

One other noteworthy publication from this period was Suzuki's English text *Living by Zen*.¹⁰⁵ From the end of the war until Suzuki left for the United States in 1949, a steady stream of American and British visitors, many affiliated with the Allied Occupation and the military, sought out Suzuki for advice on Zen. They included Christmas Humphreys, Richard DeMartino (1922–2013), Philip Kapleau (1912–2004), Albert Stunkard (1922–2014), Donald Richie (1924–2013), R. H. Blyth (1898–1964), and many more. Some, such as Humphreys and Blyth, were quite knowledgeable of Suzu-

¹⁰¹ *Reiseiteki Nihon no kensetsu* 靈性的日本の建設, SDZ 9: 29–258; *Nihon no reiseika* 日本の靈性化, SDZ 8: 225–420.

¹⁰² SDZ 2: 1–456. Concerning Suzuki's research and publications on Zen in these decades, see Jaffe 2015, pp. xxxii–xxxiv.

¹⁰³ "List of New Books and Reprints," *Times Literary Supplement* 1927; Barrett 1989; Jaffe 2015, p. 39.

¹⁰⁴ Suzuki (1949b) 1986.

¹⁰⁵ Suzuki 1949a.



Figure 10. Suzuki working in his study at the Shōden’an cottage at Engakuji, Kamakura, in 1948. Reproduced by permission from Matsugaoka Bunko.

ki’s writings, while others were attracted to Zen for the first time. As Suzuki became aware of the scope of this interest, he realized the need for a new introductory text in English, and as a result he wrote *Living by Zen*, published in Japan in 1949. This work covers many of the same topics found in his earlier *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* of 1934—Zen in everyday life, satori, and koan—and elucidates them using sayings and anecdotes found in his previous publications. But it also introduces themes that Suzuki began to explore in the 1940s, such as Bankei’s “unborn Zen” and the poems of the Shin Buddhist *myōkōnin* Asahara Saichi 浅原才市 (1850–1932) extolling the Pure Land chant of Amida Buddha’s name. Unlike *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, this work does not use the concept of mysticism to explain Zen, but instead employs the language of existentialism that was common in mid-twentieth-century religious writing. *Living by Zen* reflects Suzuki’s later, more developed thought better than his *Introduction* does. He produced it as a new textbook for learning about Zen. By the time it was published, however, a reprint edition of *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* was circulating in the West, thanks to Christmas Humphreys. And though *Living by Zen* was soon available there, too, it never overtook his earlier text in popularity. *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* is probably the book for which Suzuki is best known.

During the immediate postwar period, Suzuki emerged as a prominent figure in various social, cultural, and scholarly settings. In recognition of his outstanding contributions he was awarded the Bunka Kunshō 文化勲章 (Order of Culture) by the emperor in November 1949. By this time, however, he was overseas again, having shifted his focus once more to Western interest in Zen. Previously, in the late 1930s he had contemplated an extended stay abroad, for he had received invitations to teach at the Oriental Institute of the University of Hawai‘i. But Beatrice Suzuki’s illness and death intervened, and then the war thwarted any such chance. In 1947 or 1948, however, he again began to explore the possibility of going abroad. There is no extensive record of what opportunities Suzuki considered, but it is clear, first of all, that he was in communication with faculty members of Yale University, apparently about an invitation to go there.¹⁰⁶ He also corresponded with Charles A. Moore (1901–1967), professor of philosophy at the University of Hawai‘i; Ruth Fuller Everett Sasaki, by then at the First Zen Institute of America in New York; and Richard A. Gard (1914–2007), a PhD student at Claremont Graduate School in Southern California, who had studied in Japan from 1939 to 1940 and had assisted Suzuki with typing and proofreading.¹⁰⁷ By December 1948, there was a response from Yale indicating that the university could not provide funds to bring him to America.¹⁰⁸ By March 1949, though, Suzuki had settled on an alternative plan to travel to the University of Hawai‘i in June, first to attend the Second East-West Philosophers’ Conference and then to teach a course in the fall semester.¹⁰⁹

When Suzuki embarked on his new journey to the West (no doubt with the approval of the American Occupation authorities in Japan), he was in many ways at a transitional point in his personal life. In October 1948, he moved his possessions from Kyoto and returned the sumptuous house there to his longtime patron, Ataka Yakichi, who had built it for Suzuki. Three-and-a-half months later Ataka himself, who funded many of Suzuki’s publications and projects, including the initial construction of his Matsugaoka Library, died.¹¹⁰ Suzuki’s son Alan, for his part, with whom he had a delicate reconciliation, still had not emerged as someone he could rely on. He was working in the entertainment industry and, after estrangement and divorce from his first wife, married the immensely popular singer Ike Mariko 池真理子 (1917–2000) in 1948 (with whom Suzuki actually had a very cordial relationship). Alan’s single distin-

¹⁰⁶ In March 1948, Suzuki received a letter from Johannes Rahder, professor of Japanese at Yale, and he met with David N. Rowe, assistant professor of international relations at Yale, in June 1948; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 24 (2010), pp. 70, 77.

¹⁰⁷ Kirita 2005–15, vol. 24 (2010), pp. 35, 36, 52, 53, 60, 63, 67, 81; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 26 (2012), pp. 42, 53; and Kirita 2005–15, vol. 21 (2007), pp. 1, 7, 11, 15, 16, 28, 30, 35, 38, 44, 45.

¹⁰⁸ Kirita 2005–15, vol. 24 (2010), p. 94.

¹⁰⁹ Letter 1039 (1949.3, day unknown), SDZ 37: 209–11.

¹¹⁰ Kirita 2005, “Nenpu,” pp. 153, 154; “Watakushi no irekisho,” SDZ 26: 535; and Kirita 2005–15, vol. 21 (2007), p. 91.

guishing achievement in life was to write the lyrics to the 1947 hit song “Tokyo Boogie Woogie.”¹¹¹ Finally, Suzuki’s trusted housekeeper, Sekiguchi Kono, who had been a stabilizing influence in his household for over three decades, died on July 2, 1948. In these unsettling circumstances—and with his own personal finances dwindling—Suzuki felt somewhat bereft.¹¹² Little did he know that he was about to launch a dazzling new phase in his life, even at the age of seventy-eight.

Rise to Fame in America

When Suzuki flew to Honolulu on June 16, 1949—except for several months spent back in Japan on three occasions—he began a nine-and-a-half year sojourn abroad. This was not an orderly and well-planned residency. Rather, it unfolded in stages as Suzuki expanded his network of contacts and pursued opportunities that presented themselves. Since he was operating with limited financial means, he was prone to accept a wide variety of paid invitations, great and small, from teaching or lecturing in high-profile settings to giving talks at Japanese-American temples and gatherings. Because he was elderly and not used to caring for himself, he tended to depend on others for hospitality and daily assistance. But he was charming and resourceful and managed to attract the support that he needed. Over the course of these years, his celebrity grew, so his financial and mundane needs were met more easily. But with advancing age and increased claims on his time, it became difficult for him to fulfill all of his commitments. Nevertheless, he operated with surprising energy for someone in their eighties. And he won the hearts of many people he met, carrying his newfound fame without airs.

The official reason for Suzuki’s trip abroad was to participate in the Second East-West Philosophers’ Conference at the University of Hawai‘i from June 20 to July 29, 1949. Suzuki’s interactions with the university dated back to the mid-1930s when he met and corresponded with Gregg Sinclair, who established the Oriental Institute on campus in 1936. Sinclair had wanted Suzuki to come as a visiting faculty member on two previous occasions and also to participate in the First East-West Philosophers’ Conference in 1939. Because of Beatrice Suzuki’s illness and death, however, he was not able to attend.¹¹³ He nonetheless submitted a paper to the conference in absentia

¹¹¹ Yamada 2015, pp. 121–51; and Kirita 2005–15, vol. 24 (2010), p. 91. For a performance of Alan’s hit song “Tōkyō bugiugi” 東京ブギウギ, see Kasagi Shizuko 笠置シズ子 (1914–1985), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SfpSymF0MI>. Accessed April 5, 2022.

¹¹² Kirita 2005–15, vol. 24 (2010), pp. 78–79.

¹¹³ Letter 576 (1935.1.26), SDZ 36: 613; Letter 578 (1935.3.9), SDZ 36: 614; Letter 598 (1937.3.10), SDZ 36: 626–27; Letter 599 (1937.5.15), SDZ 36: 627–28; Letter 603 (1937.5.25), SDZ 36: 630; Letter 604 (1937.6.7), SDZ 36: 630–31; Letter 628 (1938.8.1), SDZ 36: 652–53; Letter 629 (1938.12.10), SDZ 36: 653–54; Letter 632 (1939.1.24), SDZ 36: 656; and Letter 634 (1939.3.23), SDZ 36: 657. (Letter 578 is misdated as 1935; it should be 1937.)

entitled “An Interpretation of Zen-Experience,” which was well received.¹¹⁴ In 1949, when Sinclair, who was now president of the university, and Charles Moore, professor of philosophy, organized the second conference on a much grander scale—with the sponsorship of several foundations, including the Rockefeller—they sought Suzuki’s participation again. And they paired their invitation with the possibility of teaching a seminar on Zen at the university during the fall semester. This prospect appealed to Suzuki as he sought opportunities in America. At the conference he was recognized as a major contributor, presenting a paper on “Reason and Intuition in Buddhist Philosophy.” In it, he differentiated between the Buddhist ideas of *vijñāna* and *prajñā* and mapped them onto the concepts of reason and intuition. He argued that reason depends on dualistic distinctions whereas intuition functions without them, and he sought to illustrate this by explicating paradoxical exchanges between masters and disciples in the Zen classics.¹¹⁵ This argument, consistent with Suzuki’s longtime portrayal of Zen, was problematic for some philosophers, particularly those of the analytic and logical positivist schools of thought, but over the next decade it won a receptive audience among psychoanalysts, theologians, artists, and religionists.

Suzuki spent a total of seven and a half months in Hawai‘i, residing the whole time at the Pensacola Hotel. Beyond the conference and university course, he stayed busy with frequent talks, predominantly to Japanese-American Buddhists. The most common were to Shin Buddhist congregations of the Higashi and Nishi Honganji denominations, to whom he would often speak on Pure Land topics such as the *myōkōnin* Saichi. He also gave presentations to Sōtō 曹洞 Zen, Nichiren 日蓮, and Shingon Buddhist groups that were equally eager to host him. For such events he even traveled beyond Oahu to the outer islands—Maui, Kauai, and the Big Island of Hawai‘i. Over and above the hospitality provided by various groups and individuals, Suzuki received the help of Richard DeMartino, the young American stationed with the military in Japan after the war who met Suzuki in 1947, committed himself to learning from him, followed him to Hawai‘i, and became a regular assistant during his years back in America. DeMartino is representative of the many Caucasian Americans who were attracted to Suzuki’s teachings on Zen during the postwar period. In January 1950, as his time at the University of Hawai‘i drew to a close, Suzuki met with Professor Moore and President Sinclair to discuss the possibility of teaching there again during the following academic year. Though he did not pursue this opportunity, this type of networking and exploration of options became essential for Suzuki’s continued residency in America.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ His paper for the First East-West Philosophers’ Conference appears in Moore 1944, pp. 109–36. For representative reviews of this volume, see Eby 1945; Avey 1945.

¹¹⁵ Moore 1951, pp. 17–48. For an account of the conference, see Klausner 1951.

¹¹⁶ Kirita 2005, “Nenpu,” pp. 155–57; and Kirita 2005–15, vol. 22 (2008), pp. 1–4. See also Dobbins 2016, pp. 50–52.

Suzuki's next appointment was at Claremont Graduate School, east of Los Angeles, where he taught twice: a course on Zen and Japanese Culture in the spring of 1950 and a course on Pure Land Buddhism one year later in the fall of 1951. Suzuki had been in communication with Claremont throughout his stay in Honolulu, and looked forward to relocating to the US mainland (and ultimately to the East Coast).¹¹⁷ He arrived in Los Angeles on February 2, 1950, accompanied by DeMartino, and was met by Ashikaga Enshō 足利演正 (1910–1984), professor of Japanese at UCLA who was a graduate of Otani University and a Shin Buddhist priest, and by Richard Gard, who was working on a PhD at Claremont and who offered Suzuki accommodation in his home. During both semesters at Claremont, Suzuki taught his seminar once a week while at the same time establishing extensive contacts in Southern California. He had a strong tie, for instance, to the Higashi Honganji headquarters temple in Los Angeles, where he gave many talks on Pure Land Buddhism and where he frequently spent the night whenever he preferred to stay downtown. In addition, he often visited Senzaki Nyogen, fellow disciple of Shaku Sōen and Zen teacher to a small following of Caucasian students in Los Angeles. One of them, a young woman named Katharine Edson (b. 1932?–d.u.), whom Suzuki sometimes referred to in his diaries as Kofū (her Buddhist name), had previously flown to Hawai'i for a month to help him with typing, and in Southern California chauffeured him many places.¹¹⁸ Suzuki also met regularly with DeMartino and Gard, instructing each in Buddhist texts, including ones necessary for Gard's dissertation. Another new acquaintance was the famous British author Aldous Huxley (1894–1963), who was working as a Hollywood screenplay writer at the time. This was the period when Huxley was exploring hallucinogen-induced mystical experiences, detailed in his 1954 work *The Doors of Perception*, in which Suzuki's ideas are cited.¹¹⁹ Also, Suzuki developed cordial ties with various Japanese-American temples on the West Coast, including ones affiliated with the Nishi Honganji denomination (for instance, in Fresno), and he gave talks at many of them during the summer of 1950. These groups welcomed his presentations on Shin Buddhism and thus provided a setting for Suzuki to continue to explore Pure Land ideas, later resulting in important publications, even as interest in Zen surged among

¹¹⁷ Letter 1114 (1949.8.17), SDZ 37: 225–26; Letter 1120 (1949.10.16), SDZ 37: 232; Letter 1121 (1949.10.16), SDZ 37: 232–33; Letter 1122 (1949.10.18), SDZ 37: 233–34; Letter 1123 (1949.10.18), SDZ 37: 234–35; Letter 1124 (1949.10.22), SDZ 37: 235–36; and Letter 1126 (1949.11.19), SDZ 37: 238–39.

¹¹⁸ Kirita 2005–15, vol. 22 (2008), pp. 2, 7, 10; and Letter 2672 (1952.10.17), SDZ 40: 91–92.

¹¹⁹ Huxley (1954) 1970, pp. 18–19. For instances of Suzuki's interaction with Huxley, see Kirita 2005–15, vol. 22 (2008), pp. 6–7, 10, 78. Suzuki had been aware of Huxley's book *The Perennial Philosophy* (1947) while still living in Japan, before he traveled to Honolulu in 1949. See Letter 1089 (1949.3, day unknown), SDZ 37: 209–11.

other Americans.¹²⁰ Suzuki's second semester at Claremont—in the spring of 1951, after a one-year hiatus—followed a similar pattern to his first semester: teaching his course once a week, continuing his interactions with DeMartino, Senzaki, Ashikaga, Kofū, Higashi Honganji, Fresno Buddhist Church, Huxley, and many others, but renting an apartment close to campus during his stay. Suzuki again had an active and productive semester at Claremont, but by this time his attention was focused on the East Coast.¹²¹

It is not known exactly how Suzuki's two semesters at Claremont came to be separated by a year, but in all likelihood it was because other opportunities intervened. Specifically, the Rockefeller Foundation (one of the sponsors of the East-West Philosophers' Conference) offered him a grant for the fall of 1950 to give lectures on the East Coast, and then extended it into the spring of 1951 for a three-part series of lectures at Columbia University.¹²² This was a pivotal year for Suzuki because New York provided the setting in which he emerged as a renowned intellectual in America. During his initial seven months, he was given housing at Union Theological Seminary near Columbia, and he quickly became active on many fronts. He presented lectures at Princeton, Cornell, Yale, New York University, Wesleyan, University of Chicago, Northwestern, Harvard, and Boston University, and then at Columbia, where he offered a three-lecture series on Kegon 華嚴 and Zen Buddhist thought in March 1951. In addition, he gave ten weekly talks on Zen at the Church Peace Union (founded by the Carnegie Foundation) in the fall and winter, and six talks in the spring at the New York Buddhist Church, an affiliate of the Nishi Honganji denomination. Besides these, he made presentations to members of the Vedanta Society in New York, to students at Ruth Fuller Sasaki's First Zen Institute, to a psychology seminar in Princeton, and to various other groups. Suzuki also became acquainted with a wide variety of people including the Christian theologians Paul Tillich (1886–1965) and Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971); Tsunoda Ryūsaku 角田柳作 (1877–1964), the founder of Japanese studies at Columbia; and Chang Chung-yuan 張鍾元 (1907–1988), a scholar of Daoist philosophy then at Columbia. In addition, he met frequently with Richard DeMartino for lessons and, occasionally, with Albert Stunkard (who was a physician) and Philip Kapleau, all of whom pursued Zen after meeting Suzuki in occupied Japan. Perhaps the most influential friends that Suzuki made during this period were the psychoana-

¹²⁰ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 159–61; and Dobbins 2016, pp. 52–54. His article "Infinite Light" (Suzuki 1971a) probably resulted from talks he gave at the Fresno Buddhist Church in May 1950 and June 1952.

¹²¹ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 170–72; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 22 (2008), pp. 70–79; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 27 (2013), pp. 1–4; and Dobbins 2016, pp. 57–58.

¹²² Jaffe 2022a, pp. 146–47. Suzuki was in communication with the Rockefeller Foundation concerning a grant while he was teaching at Claremont in Southern California. See Kirita 2005–15, vol. 22 (2008), pp. 8, 9, 15.

lyst Karen Horney (1885–1952) and her patient Cornelius Crane (1905–1962), the multimillionaire heir to the Crane plumbing fortune (and nephew of Charles Richard Crane), both of whom became fascinated with Zen. They welcomed him into their rarefied circles of New York's intellectual and cultural elites, and Crane invited him for brief vacations at his palatial mansion in Ipswich, Massachusetts. Though Horney would die prematurely a year and a half later, Crane would go on to become Suzuki's financial patron for almost a decade. By the time Suzuki left the East Coast in May 1951, he had emerged as a highly visible figure among New York's intelligentsia.¹²³

Suzuki was away from New York for almost nine months. He traveled back to Japan for the first time in nearly two years, stopping along the way for two weeks in Los Angeles (where he participated in Richard Gard's PhD dissertation defense at Claremont)¹²⁴ and two weeks in Honolulu (where he met with Professor Charles Moore and others). In Japan, he spent a total of three months—residing at the Shōden'an cottage in Kamakura, meeting with a parade of visitors, giving talks and lectures, traveling to Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto, and Kanazawa for invited appearances, and being hosted by politicians, intellectuals, and even the prime minister. Apparently, word of Suzuki's activities in America contributed to his renown in Japan. He met with relatives whenever he could—Alan, Mariko, and their newborn daughter, Maya 麻耶 (b. 1951), as well as his grandniece Hayashida Kumino 林田久美野 (née Suzuki; 1918–2011), and grandnephew Suzuki Ichio 鈴木伊智男 (1920–1985)—and he continued his plans to expand the Matsugaoka Library, to which Cornelius Crane made a generous contribution. Suzuki's summer in Japan flew by and soon he was preparing to return to America. As previously scheduled, he taught a course on Pure Land Buddhism at Claremont in the fall semester of 1951, and there interacted with his many acquaintances as before. Even DeMartino traveled from New York to continue his studies with him. During this time, the Rockefeller Foundation provided an extra grant to support Suzuki's work on a proposed book on Kegon philosophy. As he went about his duties during these four months at Claremont, Suzuki maintained his New York contacts, and after a Christmas and New Year's vacation in Fresno, he completed his teaching and flew to New York at the beginning of February 1952.¹²⁵

This time in New York, Suzuki was affiliated with Columbia University, which became his primary base of operation for most of his stay in America. Though Columbia was a welcoming environment for Suzuki, his regular source of income remained unsettled. Early in his travels to America, he thought that his only hope for

¹²³ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 162–67; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 22 (2008), pp. 30–55; Dobbins 2016, pp. 54–56; and Jaffe 2022a, pp. 146–47.

¹²⁴ Kirita 2005–15, vol. 22 (2008), p. 56.

¹²⁵ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 167–72; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 22 (2008), pp. 55–79; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 27 (2013), pp. 1–4; Dobbins 2016, pp. 56–58; Jaffe 2022a, pp. 146–47.

financial security was to write a book or two in English and to live on the proceeds, and even now as he returned to Columbia he was assured of only a one-semester appointment in the Department of Chinese and Japanese, apparently funded by Cornelius Crane.¹²⁶ During the next year, 1952 to 1953, Crane again provided funds for his position, this time as an “Associate in Religion,” and in the subsequent years, 1953 through 1957, Crane continued to fund his appointment, thereby providing Suzuki some financial stability and continuity.¹²⁷ With Columbia as a platform, Suzuki gave lectures or seminars each week, which were open to the public and occasionally drew large crowds. It was in this setting, as well as in other venues such as his weekly talks at the Church Peace Union, that his interpretation of Zen spread to a wider audience. As a result Suzuki began to emerge as a public intellectual on two levels. First, he was recognized in scholarly circles as a thinker of the highest caliber. This is reflected in his invitation two years in a row to the Eranos Conference in Ascona, Switzerland, which was a small elite gathering of world-class humanists organized by Carl G. Jung (1875–1961), the leading humanistic psychoanalyst of the period. There Suzuki presented a paper on “The Role of Nature in Zen” in the summer of 1953 and on “The Awakening of a New Consciousness in Zen” in 1954. From this time, Suzuki was widely considered a leading authority in the West on Buddhism.¹²⁸ Second, Suzuki’s reputation spread at the popular level as well, so that he became the talk of the town in New York and the national press. Articles on Zen or Suzuki began to appear around 1957 in mass-circulation magazines such as *The New Yorker*, *Vogue*, *Time*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Harper’s Weekly*. As a result, Zen attracted followers among artists, musicians, writers, psychoanalysts, clerics, and spiritual seekers of all types. In these publications, Suzuki was often cast in the role of the wise and benevolent sage from the East, with flamboyant eyebrows and speaking in paradoxes—an Orientalist stereotype that was rampant during the Zen boom.¹²⁹ For him, such popularity was both a blessing and a curse, for on the one hand Zen reached audiences far beyond his own academic and religious circles, but on the other it gave rise to wildly divergent interpretations, as well as critiques such as Arthur Koestler’s 1960 book *The Lotus and the Robot*.¹³⁰ From this point onward Suzuki’s fame was secure.

Throughout Suzuki’s stay in America, he continued his research and writing, though at times his ability to do so was curtailed by his many academic and social obligations.

¹²⁶ Letter 1146 (1950.7.15), SDZ 37: 264–65; Letter 1208 (1951.1.6), SDZ 37: 325–26; Kiritā 2005–15, vol. 22 (2008), p. 57; Jaffe 2022a, p. 147.

¹²⁷ Jaffe 2022a, pp. 147–48.

¹²⁸ Jaffe 2015, pp. 113–35, 136–63; Dobbins 2016, pp. 60–61.

¹²⁹ Mettler 2018, pp. 131–79; Iwamura 2011, pp. 23–62. For a good example of the popular depiction of Suzuki in the mass media, see Sargeant 1957, pp. 34–53.

¹³⁰ Koestler 1960, pp. 227–75.



Figure 11. Suzuki, center, with philosopher Martin Heidegger and his wife, Elfride, right, and psychotherapist Karlfrid Graf Dürckheim and his wife, Maria, left, on July 8, 1953, while traveling in Germany prior to the Eranos Conference. Reproduced by permission from Matsugaoka Bunko.

Nonetheless, he managed to produce several noteworthy publications. Some were the outcome of formal scholarly presentations, such as his papers for the East-West Philosophers' Conferences and the Eranos Conferences—of which three were included in his collection *Studies in Zen*, published by Christmas Humphreys and the Buddhist Society of London in 1955.¹³¹ Another new work was his book *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, which came out in 1957. This was a product of Suzuki's decades-long fascination with mysticism—including his study of the medieval Christian cleric and theologian Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260–1328)—dating back to his earliest years in America and his reading of William James. Mysticism was a concept that Suzuki invoked during most of his career to explain Zen, and in this work he applied it to Shin Buddhism

¹³¹ Suzuki 1955. This collection contains Suzuki's essays, "An Interpretation of Zen-Experience" (submitted in absentia to the First East-West Philosophers' Conference, 1939), "Reason and Intuition in Buddhist Philosophy" (Second East-West Philosophers' Conference, 1949), and "The Role of Nature in Zen Buddhism" (Eranos Conference, 1953).

as well, especially the *nenbutsu* verses of the *myōkōnin* Asahara Saichi, whom Suzuki studied extensively during the last twenty years of his life.¹³² Another important publication was *Zen and Japanese Culture*, appearing in 1959. It was a revised and expanded version of his *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture* of 1938, which the Bollingen Foundation (which sponsored his trips to the Eranos Conferences) supported for republication. Adding new sections on swordsmanship (which became controversial), tea ceremony, and haiku, Suzuki struggled amid his busy schedule to complete the manuscript between 1955 and 1958, and finally submitted it shortly before he moved back to Japan.¹³³

Another book from this period was *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, coauthored with Erich Fromm (1900–1980) and Richard DeMartino, published in 1960. Fromm, like Suzuki’s earlier interlocutor Karen Horney, was a well-known psychoanalyst of the Neo-Freudian school, who divided his time between New York and Mexico. He had read Suzuki’s works and met him in early 1954 through Albert Stunkard, a psychiatrist and Zen student of Suzuki’s who had taken Fromm’s course on psychoanalysis at the New School for Social Research in New York. Fromm also attended Suzuki’s seminars at Columbia and began exchanging ideas with him. Subsequently, he organized a week-long workshop in Mexico in August 1957 for the purpose of exploring Zen with about fifty psychoanalysts and psychologists. Suzuki’s long essay in this volume comprises the four lectures and a response that he presented at the workshop, containing his standard ideas about Zen couched in common categories used by psychoanalysts, such as the “unconscious” and the “self.” Fromm’s essay, for its part, sought to identify parallels between psychotherapy and Zen, describing both as an attempt to restore the well-being of individuals by helping them see through deceptions and uncover a deep-seated unconscious awareness.¹³⁴ One more book that Suzuki worked on during this period was an interpretive study of Zen and Mahayana thought, especially the Kegon philosophy of interpenetration, mutual dependence, and affirmation of all things. Kegon was the topic for which Suzuki received funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, both for his 1951 lectures at Columbia and for his proposed book. Though he was never quite able to complete it, in 2016 the Matsugaoka Library did publish his lectures from 1952 and 1953 (with a Japanese translation) based on a partially revised manuscript that Suzuki left behind.¹³⁵

¹³² Suzuki 1957. In the year before he died, Suzuki expressed regret for having used the idea of mysticism to explain Zen; see Suzuki 1965a, p. 124.

¹³³ Jaffe 2010, pp. vii–xxviii.

¹³⁴ Suzuki, Fromm, and DeMartino 1960; Fromm 1986, pp. 127–30; Stunkard 2004, pp. 221–23; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 28 (2014), p. 5; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 29 (2015), pp. 37–40; Jaffe 2015, pp. 164–88.

¹³⁵ Suzuki 2016.

One serendipitous event that occurred during Suzuki's stay in America was his encounter with the family of Frank Masao Okamura (1911–2006) and particularly with his teenage daughter Mihoko (b. 1935). Their names first appeared in Suzuki's diaries in the spring of 1952 after he returned to New York from Claremont.¹³⁶ Mihoko had attended his lectures at Columbia,¹³⁷ and this is apparently how they met, though Suzuki may have also encountered the family through the New York Buddhist Church where he frequently gave talks. At the time, he was living a spartan life in Butler Hall at Columbia, and gradually the Okamuras, especially Mihoko, began helping him with chores. During the next year, while still a high school student, she became a frequent assistant—typing, running errands, preparing meals, and tidying up—all the while sharing with Suzuki her questions about Buddhism and other concerns. As an octogenarian, he became so dependent on her that he asked her to accompany him on out-of-town trips, several to Cornelius Crane's mansion in Ipswich, Massachusetts, and, more significantly, on a tour of Europe from June to September of 1953 when he participated in the Eranos Conference.¹³⁸ By the beginning of 1954, Suzuki's tie to the Okamuras had become so close that they invited him to live in their newly acquired brownstone on New York's Upper West Side where he enjoyed not only spacious living quarters but also a warm family environment and Japanese cooking.¹³⁹ This became his official residence until he moved back to Japan in 1958, providing him with comfort and peace of mind, which he had lacked in his previous residences in America.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, Mihoko Okamura quickly became his fulltime secretary and personal assistant, returning with him to Japan in 1958 and looking after his daily needs till the time of his death. Some scholars credit her with bringing much joy and ease into Suzuki's life during his twilight years.¹⁴¹

During his time in the US, the pace of Suzuki's activities and travels never let up. In fact, as his fame grew, more invitations and requests arrived and his commitments multiplied. Between 1953 and 1958, he gave lectures at many universities and colleges: not only Columbia but also Haverford, Union Theological Seminary, Washington University in St. Louis, University of Arkansas, Vassar, Sarah Lawrence, Queens, West Point, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Goucher, Brandeis, Wellesley, Radcliffe, and others. He was also a featured speaker at the Brussels World's Fair in

¹³⁶ Kirita 2005–15, vol. 27 (2013), pp. 9, 11. For an overview of Frank Okamura's life, see his obituary: "Frank Okamura, Bonsai Expert, is Dead at 94," *New York Times*, 2006.1.14.

¹³⁷ Okamura 1986, pp. 166–67.

¹³⁸ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 182–86.

¹³⁹ Kirita 2005–15, vol. 28 (2014), pp. 2–3.

¹⁴⁰ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 188, 210–11.

¹⁴¹ Okamura and Ueda 1999, pp. 267–96; Nishimura 1993, pp. 201–5.

Belgium in May 1958,¹⁴² and a special guest at a symposium dedicated to Paul Carus in LaSalle, Illinois, in September 1957. In addition, he was invited by Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964) to participate in the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's birth in November 1956 but had to decline because of his obligations at Columbia.¹⁴³ Suzuki also gave talks to Buddhist groups in Toronto, Cleveland, and Chicago, and to Quaker groups in Philadelphia, as well as numerous presentations to the New York Buddhist Church and its affiliated American Buddhist Academy. Suzuki also socialized with a wide variety of people: not only DeMartino, Stunkard, Kapleau, Tsunoda, Chang, and the Okamuras, but also psychoanalysts Karen Horney, Kondō Akihisa 近藤章久 (1911–1999), B. Joan Harte (1915–d.u.), and Erich Fromm, Indian diplomat Rajeshwar Dayal (1909–1999), artists Rudolph Ray (1891–1984) and Dimitri Romanovski (1887–1971), Egyptologist Elizabeth Thomas (1907–1986), and Cornelius Crane and his social circle. He also met emerging counterculture figures in America who were influenced by his writings: the novelist Jack Kerouac (1922–1969) and the poet Allen Ginsberg (1926–1997).¹⁴⁴ Moreover, during this period, Suzuki served as a senior colleague or mentor to several important Japanese who came to America for academic work: Ōtani Kōshō 大谷光紹 (1925–1999), the heir apparent to the headship of the Higashi Honganji denomination in Japan; Abe Masao 阿部正雄 (1915–2006), a young professor of philosophy at Nara University; and Hisamatsu Shin'ichi 久松真一 (1889–1980), retired professor of philosophy at Kyoto University. His life was thus filled with interactions of many different types.¹⁴⁵

Throughout his years in America, Suzuki made a number of trips to other countries, mostly in conjunction with speaking engagements and usually accompanied by Mihoko Okamura. For the Eranos Conferences, they traveled together in Europe for three-and-a-half months in the summer of 1953 and two months in the summer of 1954, visiting England, Switzerland, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, and Austria. In addition to sightseeing, their travels included lectures by Suzuki in such places as Oxford, Cambridge, Zurich (at the Jung Institute), Amsterdam, Marburg, Stuttgart, and Munich, as well as multiple talks for the Buddhist Society of London.¹⁴⁶ In May and June of 1958, when Suzuki spoke at the Brussels World's Fair, they traveled for a total of seven weeks and added Scotland, Ireland, and Spain to the places they had visited.¹⁴⁷ Suzuki's association with Erich Fromm also made possible

¹⁴² For Suzuki's address at the Brussels World's Fair, see Wilson and Moriya 2016, pp. 194–98.

¹⁴³ Letter 1820 (1956.8.15), SDZ 38: 401–2.

¹⁴⁴ Kerouac 1960; and Fields 1995.

¹⁴⁵ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 178–210 *passim*.

¹⁴⁶ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 182–86, 190–92; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 27 (2013), pp. 63–85; and Kirita 2005–15, vol. 28 (2014), pp. 20–30.

¹⁴⁷ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," p. 210.

two summer trips to Mexico—for three weeks in August and September 1956 and for two months in July and August 1957. Officially these were to present lectures at Mexico City College in 1956 and to participate in Fromm's workshop for psychoanalysts in 1957. But Suzuki—accompanied by Okamura and, on the second trip, by DeMartino too—made these into working vacations in comfortable accommodations—translating Zen texts, but also sightseeing that included archaeological sites and even a bullfight.¹⁴⁸ In all of these travels Suzuki was an intellectually engaged tourist and an appreciative guest, establishing ties with people in many countries.

Three of the most consequential trips that Suzuki made during this period were back to Japan: for three months in the summer of 1951 (as mentioned above), for two-and-a-half months in the summer of 1952, and for four months in the fall and winter of 1954. The reason these were important is that, on the one hand, they heightened his prestige in Japan, thereby laying the groundwork for his return in 1958, and, on the other, they deepened his relationship with his American benefactor, Cornelius Crane. During his 1952 trip, Suzuki hosted a month-long tour of Japan for Crane, his ex-wife Catherine (Isabella Parker Browning Crane) Bernatschke (1906–1987), Karen Horney, her actress daughter Brigitte Horney (1911–1988), and a few others—assisted extensively by DeMartino. They visited Buddhist temples, historic spots, scenic sites, and artistic events in Tokyo, Kamakura, Hakone, Nagoya, Gifu, Ise, Toba, Nara, and Kyoto, giving concretion to their imagined land of Zen. This experience intensified Crane's interest in Buddhism, leading to another three-month trip in the fall of 1954, joined then by psychoanalysts Kondō Akihisa and B. Joan Harte, and guided mostly by DeMartino. Suzuki provided introductions for the group and met them frequently during their early days in Japan—in Tokyo, Yokohama, and Kamakura—as well as later in Kyoto. Crane's attraction to Japan (as well as his marriage to a Japanese woman, Sawahara Miné 沢原ミネ [1917–1991], the following year, 1955) presaged his increased support of Suzuki and the promotion of Zen.¹⁴⁹

In the 1952 and 1954 visits, Suzuki also solidified his connections in Japan by networking with colleagues, leaders of society, and other influential figures. His emerging prominence in the US prompted Japanese newspapers, magazines, and radio programs to interview him frequently. As usual, he was asked to give talks and lectures to many types of groups—at Otani University in Kyoto, of course, and at temples in Kanazawa, but also at Kyoto University in a memorial lecture on the tenth anniversary of Nishida Kitarō's death and at the Ryūmonsha 龍門社, a prestigious civic

¹⁴⁸ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 203–4, 207–8; and Kirita 2005–15, vol. 29 (2015), pp. 15–18, 37–40.

¹⁴⁹ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 168–70, 176–77, 192–94; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 22 (2008), pp. 58–69; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 27 (2013), pp. 19–22; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 28 (2014), pp. 32–33, 41–44; Dobbins 2016, pp. 56–57, 60; Jaffe 2022a, pp. 145–47.

club in Tokyo dedicated to business ethics. It is also noteworthy that in late July 1952 Suzuki was invited to present his impressions of America to the emperor and empress of Japan and to have a discussion with the crown prince shortly before his return to the US. In addition, in 1954 he met several times with the folk crafts aestheticist and philosopher Yanagi Sōetsu 柳宗悦 (1889–1961) and the renowned potter Hamada Shōji 濱田庄司 (1894–1978) as he contemplated revisions for his book *Zen and Japanese Culture*. While pursuing this busy schedule, Suzuki simultaneously made plans for the expansion and improvement of the Matsugaoka Library facilities, which would provide him with a home in the future (in place of the Shōden'an cottage at Engakuji). He also introduced Mihoko Okamura to life, arts, and culture in Japan. Just before they returned to America in January 1955, Suzuki received the prestigious Asahi Culture Prize from one of Japan's major newspapers, which, paired with his Bunka Kunshō (Order of Culture) award in 1949, placed him in the top tier of intellectuals and cultural figures in Japan.¹⁵⁰

During Suzuki's last year and a half in America his circumstances changed significantly as a result of the so-called Zen Studies Society, founded and underwritten by Cornelius Crane in 1957. As a Zen specialist employed by the Society, Suzuki was able to step down from his position at Columbia University after his last lecture of the semester in May 1957¹⁵¹ and to dedicate himself fulltime to research and writing. When Crane began planning the Society, Suzuki imagined his contribution would be to translate approximately ten Chinese Zen classics with the assistance of DeMartino and other native English speakers.¹⁵² His appointment assured him of a lavish salary of \$8000 annually for a five-year term (in addition to expenses for travel and assistance). Till then Suzuki had received \$4000 a year from Columbia, plus a supplement of \$325 a month and an occasional stipend for Mihoko Okamura, all funded by Crane.¹⁵³ This new salary freed him from the financial worries he had experienced earlier, and Crane thus became the third great patron in Suzuki's life, after Edward Hegeler and Ataka Yakichi. Though Suzuki was always appreciative of his support, Crane was a difficult person to please. He had his own ideas about promoting Zen in the West and quickly became dissatisfied with the activities of the Society and Suzuki's own productivity. He felt that Suzuki committed too much time to invited talks and that his publications were too scholastic and too slow to appear. Suzuki defended himself to Crane, and to his credit Crane continued to make payments even after Suzuki returned to Japan in

¹⁵⁰ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 175–78, 192–95; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 27 (2013), pp. 17–26; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 28 (2014), pp. 32–48; Dobbins 2016, p. 60.

¹⁵¹ Kirita 2005–15, vol. 29 (2015), p. 33.

¹⁵² Letter 1796 (1956.7.15), SDZ 38: 379–82.

¹⁵³ Letter 1622 (1955.7.24), SDZ 38: 226–27; Letter 1504 (1955.2.27), SDZ 38: 129–30; and Kirita 2005–15, vol. 27 (2013), p. 49.

1958, up until Crane's untimely death in 1962.¹⁵⁴ In old age, however, just as Suzuki was gaining financial security, his strength and ability to deliver on his many commitments were declining.

Suzuki spent seven of his last fourteen months in America not in New York but in Cambridge, Massachusetts, living in the Continental Hotel at Crane's expense and continuing to receive Mihoko Okamura's assistance. The appointment of his longtime intellectual ally Hisamatsu Shin'ichi as a visiting professor at Harvard Divinity School in the fall semester of 1957 was what drew him to Cambridge. Hisamatsu had been a philosophy student of Nishida Kitarō's and later a professor at Kyoto University and, inspired by his own Zen practice, founded the FAS Society in the 1940s to promote Zen ideas and meditation among lay enthusiasts. He had many common interests with Suzuki including Zen and the fine arts, on which he had recently completed a book,¹⁵⁵ just as Suzuki was making final revisions for his own *Zen and Japanese Culture*. Actually, Suzuki was indirectly responsible for bringing Hisamatsu to America, for he had recommended him to the Rockefeller Foundation for sponsorship.¹⁵⁶ During these seven months the two met frequently, they gave a public presentation together about Zen in America (which was later published in Japan),¹⁵⁷ and they traveled to Washington, DC, in March 1958 to present lectures on Zen and the arts at the Institute of Contemporary Art. Suzuki also used this time to give talks in the Boston area and beyond, and worked on completing *Zen and Japanese Culture*. He was also contacted by the National Broadcasting Company and invited to appear on television in its Wisdom series. He was interviewed for the program at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in March 1958, and it was aired on national television the next year, thereby amplifying his fame in America.¹⁵⁸ In April 1958, Hisamatsu departed from Cambridge, and soon afterward Suzuki returned to the Okamura residence in New York. Following his month-and-a-half trip to Europe to speak at the Brussels World's Fair, Suzuki began to prepare for his move back to Japan.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Jaffe 2022a, pp. 147–50; Letter 2112 (1958.4.20), SDZ 39: 49–50; Letter 2113 (1958.4.22), SDZ 39: 50–52; Letter 2130 (1958.7.7), SDZ 39: 66–67; Letter 2171 (1958.10.18), SDZ 39: 102–3; and Letter 2179 (1958.11.19), SDZ 39: 111.

¹⁵⁵ Hisamatsu 1958 was later published in an English translation as *Zen and the Fine Arts* (1971). Also, see Letter 2070 (1958.1.20), SDZ 39: 8, concerning Suzuki's recommendation to have Hisamatsu's work translated into English.

¹⁵⁶ Letter 1738 (1956.3.27), SDZ 38: 326.

¹⁵⁷ Suzuki and Hisamatsu 1959b, pp. 16–29.

¹⁵⁸ Letter 2082 (1958.2.12), SDZ 39: 20–21; Letter 2091 (1958.2.25), SDZ 39: 27–28; and Smith 1967, pp. 150–52. The television program was broadcast after Suzuki had returned to Japan.

¹⁵⁹ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 208–10; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 29 (2015), pp. 41, 42; Letter 2058 (1957.12.24), SDZ 38: 607–8; Letter 2093 (1958.2.25), SDZ 39: 28–29; and Letter 2098 (1958.3.6), SDZ 39: 33.



Figure 12. Suzuki interviewed by Huston Smith at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in March 1958 for a program in the *Wisdom* series of NBC television, broadcast on April 19, 1959. Reproduced by permission from Matsugaoka Bunko.

Suzuki's nine-and-a-half year stay in America was not systematically planned and at times was peripatetic and financially precarious. But it was perhaps the most influential period of his life. He appeared on the American scene just as interest in Buddhism peaked, and he provided the expertise, articulation, and personal touch with which to communicate it best. He was in a sense the right person in the right place at the right time with the right message. Besides his countless talks and lectures, his major publications from this period—on mysticism, psychoanalysis, and Japanese culture—were significant and well received, though they were inspired less by his research interests when he arrived in America than by requests and proposals made to him once there. His activities reverberated even after his departure in subsequent publications such as his short book *Shin Buddhism* compiled from talks at the New York Buddhist Church and the article “Infinite Light,” based on presentations at the Fresno Buddhist Church.¹⁶⁰ Most importantly, Suzuki helped ignite a Zen boom that outstripped anything he could have foreseen, though it sometimes unfolded in ways he did not endorse. It signaled a new intellectual and religious orientation in the West, and Suzuki stood at its inflection point. Thus, he may have failed at some of his often-stated goals—writing a

¹⁶⁰ Suzuki 1970b, 1971a.

major work on Kegon philosophy and producing a compendium of Zen texts¹⁶¹—but he nonetheless contributed mightily to this cultural shift.

Twilight Years in Japan

When Suzuki arrived back in Japan in November 1958 he was eighty-eight years old. His return, though vaguely planned for several years, was neither inevitable nor perfectly executed. For one thing, he had many commitments in America that were still pending, especially to the Zen Studies Society. At one point in 1956, Suzuki even contemplated seeking a permanent residence visa to stay in the United States.¹⁶² Another concern was that at his advanced age it might be physically easier to live in America than to readjust to Japanese housing, which was cold in winter and hot in summer.¹⁶³ Whatever misgivings he had, there were enough countervailing factors to enable his return, and he finally took the momentous step of shipping all his possessions back to Japan, including over a thousand books he had accumulated in America, and scheduling his trip home. There Suzuki remained, except for three trips overseas, until his death in July 1966.

Suzuki planned to live not at Engakuji's Shōden'an cottage but in facilities attached to the Matsugaoka Library. Though legally established as a foundation, Matsugaoka was for all intents and purposes Suzuki's own research center and private residence during this stage of his life. Besides the storage areas for his enormous collection of books (containing both his and his wife's), it included a research room where his own desk was located, a sitting room, and a gathering room, as well as separate living quarters. Building such a research library was originally the brainchild of Suzuki's Zen master, Shaku Sōen, who left money for its establishment at Tōkeiji, where he had been the head priest, located across the road from Engakuji. But after his death in 1919, the temple used Sōen's bequest for other purposes and, when Suzuki sought to initiate the project after Beatrice's death in 1939, Tōkeiji compensated by ceding land for the library on the hill behind the temple, known as Matsugaoka, or Pine Hill. Then throughout the 1940s and 1950s, when construction materials were scarce in Japan, Suzuki had it built in stages—using his own funds and also seeking donations from benefactors such as Ataka Yakichi, Cornelius Crane, and later Idemitsu Sazō 出光佐三 (1885–1981), founder of Idemitsu Kōsan 出光興産 petroleum company. Another person instrumental in Matsugaoka's development was Furuta Shōkin, the Zen scholar and protégé who looked after Suzuki's affairs, including Matsugaoka and Shōden'an,

¹⁶¹ Letter 1796 (1956.7.15), SDZ 38: 379–82; Letter 2076 (1958.2.2), SDZ 39: 14–16; Letter 2113 (1958.4.22), SDZ 39: 50–52; and Letter 2130 (1958.7.7), SDZ 39: 66–67.

¹⁶² Letter 1796 (1956.7.15), SDZ 38: 379–82.

¹⁶³ Letter 2068 (1958.1.19), SDZ 39: 5–6.

while he was away in America. When Suzuki returned to Japan in 1958, his official address was at Matsugaoka, though at first he spent most of his time at a hot springs hotel in nearby Atami 熱海 until an additional kitchen and dining room could be added to the facilities. Though this became Suzuki's home from then on, Matsugaoka was not an easy place for an octogenarian to live. It was located at the top of a 147-step stone stairway with no access by car.¹⁶⁴

Another concern of Suzuki's in returning to Japan was who would take care of him in old age. It would seem natural for his son Alan to assume this responsibility, but his life at that point was still rather unstable and unpredictable. He was divorced from his second wife, Ike Mariko, in 1952, a year after their child Maya was born, and remarried in 1953 to Shikiba Mikako 式場美香子 (1924–d.u.), the daughter of a famous psychiatrist and social/cultural commentator, only to become estranged from her several years later and divorced again in 1965. (Suzuki himself maintained a close relationship with Ike Mariko and Maya throughout his life.) Alan also seemed to drift from one type of work to another—music production, English subtitling of Japanese films, magazine editing, photography, and working for Yashica camera manufacturer intermittently.¹⁶⁵

Instead of looking to Alan, Suzuki turned to his grandniece, Hayashida Kumino, for he had a long and special relationship with her family. Her father, Suzuki Ryōkichi 鈴木良吉 (1877–1920), was, strictly speaking, Suzuki's nephew, but the two were close in age and shared a strong interest in America. Ryōkichi, like Suzuki, traveled to the US for work and study (including at Harvard and New York University) from 1898 to 1906, the same time that Suzuki was living in LaSalle. After returning to Japan, Ryōkichi married, had a family, and subsequently developed an import business that marketed trucks from America. When Suzuki returned in 1909 and began teaching at Gakushūin (and in 1911 married Beatrice), he became very close to Ryōkichi's family in Tokyo. Tragically, Ryōkichi died in 1920 at the young age of forty-two, and during this crisis Suzuki made the unusual commitment to support his widow Suzuki Hatsuko 鈴木初子 (1885–1945) and their five children. Kumino was their fourth child and only daughter, and grew up, along with her brothers, visiting the Suzukis frequently. By the 1950s, she was married to Hayashida Sueo 林田末雄 (1910–1992) and had two small children of her own. When Suzuki was back in Japan for four months in 1954, he asked Kumino if she and her family would move into the living quarters of the Matsugaoka Library, at first to look after it in his absence and then to care for him in old age. She and her husband consented to do so, thereby assuring Suzuki of a secure situation after his return.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Furuta 1971, Ban 2016, and Hayashida 1995, pp. 102–4.

¹⁶⁵ Yamada 2015, pp. 141–50, 205–13, 233–36; and Ike 2006, pp. 6–7.

¹⁶⁶ Hayashida 1995, pp. 6–27, 95, 101–2.

When he made these arrangements, Suzuki did not yet know that Mihoko Okamura would also be willing to move to Japan and continue helping him. She had provided excellent assistance in America and he was eager for her to continue, but at the same time he realized that Okamura, in her early twenties, might want to pursue a different future. By following him to Japan, though, she became Suzuki's most attentive caretaker, and in the process changed the course of her own life.¹⁶⁷ Once Suzuki was settled in Japan, for additional support he hired a housekeeper, who was recruited by Hayashida Kumino, and a typist, Kudō Sumiko 工藤澄子 (d.u.), a lay Zen practitioner who was proficient in English and worked for the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC).¹⁶⁸

Suzuki's daily life, after he was finally ensconced at Matsugaoka, was governed by customs and routines that he had developed over the years. He tended to sleep about six hours a night, from midnight till around 6:00, and occasionally to take a nap during the day. When he got up in the morning he would often sit in meditation for a short time. His morning toilette invariably included rubbing himself down with a cold wet towel, shaving, and cleaning his razor. For breakfast he always had black tea and bread (not rice) along with an egg or oatmeal. He would eat rice gruel (*okayu* お粥) or something light for lunch, and have a moderate dinner that might, or might not, include meat. Suzuki was particularly fond of *yudōfu* 湯豆腐 (simmered tofu) and Chinese cuisine. He also had the thrifty habit of keeping old envelopes to use as memo paper and of washing out his underwear by hand each night, a practice that perhaps dated back to his monastery days as a young man. Suzuki's daily activities were structured around research projects, letter-writing, and receiving visitors. He typically had several projects underway simultaneously in different spaces of the library and would move from one to another whenever his attention waned. For exercise, he would walk back and forth in the garden next to the building, thereby augmenting his regular stair-climbing inside the living quarters. Suzuki always took pleasure in the flowers of the garden—dahlias, peonies, morning glories, and others—and also in the cats of the household. His love of flowers and animals harked back to his days with Beatrice Suzuki who was an enthusiast of both. At Suzuki's age it was difficult to climb the long stone stairway at Matsugaoka, so whenever he returned from events, his grandniece would frequently bring out a sitting cushion for him to stop and rest on two or three times on his climb. Another problem was his declining hearing and failing eyesight.

¹⁶⁷ Letter 2068 (1958.1.19), SDZ 39: 5–6, and Letter 2069 (1958.1.19), SDZ 39: 6–7, addressed to Hayashida Kumino, concern preparations for returning to Japan and whether Mihoko Okamura might accompany Suzuki.

¹⁶⁸ Hayashida 1995, pp. 105–6, 128–29, 131; Letter 2442 (1962.4.22), SDZ 39: 309; and Letter 2443 (1962.4.22), SDZ 39: 310. Both are also mentioned in Kirita 2005–15, vol. 29 (2015), pp. 43, 44, 50, 54, 55, 56. The housekeeper's name was Kazuko 和子.

Suzuki began to suffer hearing loss while still in America and to use a hearing aid. But he never felt comfortable with it and lamented that he could not participate easily in discussions. Also, he found it hard to work during the extreme temperatures of winter and summer. In fact, beginning in 1961 Suzuki would spend a couple of months each summer at the mountain villa of his new benefactor Idemitsu Sazō in Karuizawa 軽井沢 where he could escape the heat and concentrate on his work. In these settings, Suzuki was constantly assisted by Okamura and often by Hayashida and her family.¹⁶⁹

During this period, Suzuki was inundated with invitations for talks, interviews, public engagements, and appearances of all types. Because these events usually offered an honorarium, he accepted many to help finance the Matsugaoka Library and to augment his income, especially after Cornelius Crane's death in 1962 when he lost his annual stipend from the Zen Studies Society. Among them were lectures at universities and temples, similar to ones he had done in the past: Otani University (multiple times), Waseda University (1960), Kyoto University (1962), Hanazono 花園 University (1962), Chion'in 知恩院 temple (1959), Engakuji (1960), Higashi Honganji (1961), and elsewhere. He was also an invited speaker at various types of events: the orientation of American Fulbright scholars in Japan (1959 and 1964), the 2500th commemorative celebration of Śākyamuni Buddha (1959), an Idemitsu company gathering (1960), the Tenth Anniversary of the Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies (1961), the Japan-US Joint Psychiatric Conference (1963), and others. Suzuki also became a frequent participant in roundtable discussions (*zadankai* 座談会) and dialogues (*taidan* 対談) with other eminent figures—for instance, with Shin Buddhist thinkers Kaneko Daiei 金子大栄 (1881–1976) and Soga Ryōjin 曾我量深 (1875–1971) and Kyoto University philosopher Nishitani Keiji 西谷啓治 (1900–1990) in 1961 on the topic of Shinran's world; with Zen scholar and Jesuit priest Heinrich Dumoulin (1905–1995) in 1963 on the intersection of Buddhism and Christianity; and with pottery master Bernard Leach (1887–1979) in 1966 on the Eastern and Western spirit.¹⁷⁰

Since it was not easy for Suzuki to travel, he would often cluster commitments together in a single trip—sometimes far away, to Kyoto or Nagoya or Kyushu or Hokkaido, and sometimes nearby, to Tokyo—and would spend the night in hotels as needed. Mihoko Okamura almost always accompanied him on these trips. When

¹⁶⁹ Akizuki (1967) 2004, pp. 43–48; Hayashida 1995, pp. 106–7; Letter 2202 (1959.2.3), SDZ 39: 128–29; Letter 2222 (1959.4.4), SDZ 39: 143–44; Letter 2243 (1959.7.21), SDZ 39: 156–57; Letter 2403 (1961.5.29), SDZ 39: 275–79; Letter 2411 (1961.8.20), SDZ 39: 283–84; Letter 2434 (1962.3.23), SDZ 39: 301–2; Letter 2462 (1962.10.23), SDZ 39: 319–20; Letter 2509 (1964.2.23), SDZ 39: 354–55; Letter 2534 (1964.9.22), SDZ 39: 371–72; and Letter 2577 (1966.1.30), SDZ 39: 394–95.

¹⁷⁰ Kirita 2005, “Nenpu,” pp. 211–27 *passim*.

traveling to Kyoto, Suzuki would occasionally meet with Ruth Fuller Sasaki, who had established an outpost of the First Zen Institute of America at the Daitokuji 大徳寺 monastery where she introduced many foreigners to Zen monastic practice—including the American poet Gary Snyder (b. 1930)—and organized collaborative groups to translate Zen texts into English. In addition to these activities, Suzuki had a constant stream of interviews with the media, including several radio and television appearances with NHK, Japan's public broadcasting corporation. These interviews were conducted either in recording studios or at his Matsugaoka home, or even at the Karuizawa summer villa. Some resulted in autobiographical accounts, which have become invaluable resources for studying Suzuki's life (though he did not always remember dates and details accurately in them).¹⁷¹ The vast majority of his appearances in this period resulted in short publications not only in scholarly journals but also in newspapers, magazines, and newsletters.¹⁷² The demands on his time no doubt interfered with Suzuki's research and writing projects, but they nonetheless have provided a rich record of his wide interests and involvements late in life.

The major research projects that Suzuki aspired to complete during these years, in addition to his study of Kegon philosophy, were largely those mentioned from the time he joined the Zen Studies Society in America: translations of Chinese Zen classics and compiling a Zen dictionary or compendium (subsequently described as a handbook)—all to be published in English.¹⁷³ Suzuki frequently said that he expected to live no more than five more years, so he felt some urgency to complete these works.¹⁷⁴ It was clear to him, though, that he could not do them by himself. Thus, he recruited younger collaborators to work on the projects—Japanese scholars to assist with core textual research and writing and English-speaking scholars to translate and polish the manuscripts for publication. This plan was contingent on having sufficient funding to hire scholars to assist him. Soon after returning to Japan in 1958, Suzuki began meeting regularly with a young Zen scholar and practitioner, Akizuki Ryōmin 秋月龍珉 (1921–1999), to compile selections for the Zen handbook.¹⁷⁵ As for which Chinese classics

¹⁷¹ The most important of these are: “Yafūryūan jiden,” SDZ 29: 147–63 (based on an interview conducted at the NHK studios in February 1961); and “Watakushi no ririkisho,” SDZ 26: 503–39 (based on interviews by the *Nihon keizai shinbun* 日本経済新聞 in July 1961 at Karuizawa). A third important autobiographical source from this period is the short essay, “Early Memories,” in Suzuki 1970a, pp. 1–12 (also found in Abe 1986, pp. 3–12), based on notes taken by Mihoko Okamura and Carmen Blacker when Suzuki was in his nineties.

¹⁷² For the full list of Suzuki's publications during this period, see Kirita 2005, “Chosaku nenpyō,” pp. 96–124.

¹⁷³ Letter 1796 (1956.7.15), SDZ 38: 379–82; Letter 2113 (1958.4.22), SDZ 39: 50–52; Letter 2279 (1959.12.16), SDZ 39: 184–85; and Letter 2506 (1964.2.20), SDZ 39: 348–51.

¹⁷⁴ Letter 2279 (1959.12.16), SDZ 39: 184–85; Letter 2285 (1960.1.29), SDZ 39: 190–92; Letter 2297 (1960.3.7), SDZ 39: 200–202; and Letter 2506 (1964.2.20), SDZ 39: 348–51.

¹⁷⁵ Letter 2188 (1958.12.30), SDZ 39: 116–17; and Letter 2194 (1959.1.16), SDZ 39: 123–24.

to include, Suzuki identified different ones at different times as the primary texts he wanted to focus on: the Song-dynasty account of noteworthy figures in the Zen lineage known as the *Record of the Transmission of the Lamp* (*Keitoku dentō roku* 景德伝灯録); the collection of koans entitled the *Blue Cliff Record* (*Hekiganroku* 碧巖録); and the sayings of several eminent Zen masters—Huineng 慧能 (d. 713), Mazu 馬祖 (709–788), Zhaozhou 趙州 (d. 897), Huangbo 黃檗 (d. 850), Linji 臨濟 (d. 866), and Dahui 大慧 (1089–1163).¹⁷⁶ Among the proposed works, Suzuki soon abandoned plans to oversee the translation of the *Record of the Transmission of the Lamp*, since funding for it was awarded by the Bollingen Foundation to Chang Chung-yuan, the scholar of Chinese philosophy whom Suzuki knew well from Columbia (even though Suzuki feared that Chang might be insufficiently versed in Zen to do justice to the text).¹⁷⁷ Of the other planned works, Suzuki had already published an important book in English on Huineng's teachings at the time that he embarked on his long stay in America.¹⁷⁸ After returning to Japan he took up an in-depth study of Zhaozhou in collaboration with Akizuki, resulting in a critical, annotated edition of his sayings, published in Japanese but not English.¹⁷⁹ Finally, during his last years he also focused on the *Blue Cliff Record*, hoping to translate and elucidate ten or twenty of its one hundred koan cases.¹⁸⁰ This research ultimately yielded only two short articles in English published around the time of his death.¹⁸¹ Thus, notwithstanding Suzuki's plans and aspirations, he managed to complete very few translations of the Chinese classics during this period. His advanced age and the crush of other demands cut short his ability to work on them.

The urgency that Suzuki felt during these years to produce reliable translations of Zen classics was provoked largely by the proliferation of works in English that he regarded as inaccurate or problematic. In the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, Suzuki held a virtual monopoly on information circulating in the West about Zen through his English writings. But in the 1950s and 1960s, as interest in Zen boomed (partly because of

¹⁷⁶ Akizuki (1967) 2004, pp. 49–52; Letter 2075 (1958.2.1), SDZ 39: 13–14; Letter 2188 (1958.12.30), SDZ 39: 116–17; Letter 2209 (1959.2.20), SDZ 39: 133–34; Letter 2346 (1960.9.16), SDZ 39: 234–36; Letter 2431 (1962.2.20), SDZ 39: 297–98; Letter 2506 (1964.2.20), SDZ 39: 348–51; and Letter 2507 (1964.2.21), SDZ 39: 351–53. An alternate list of essential Zen texts can be found in Jaffe 2015, p. 195.

¹⁷⁷ Letter 2262 (1959.9.30), SDZ 39: 170–71; Letter 2297 (1960.3.7), SDZ 39: 200–202; Letter 2401 (1961.5.21), SDZ 39: 270–73; and Letter 2404 (1961.6.15), SDZ 39: 279–81. For the abridged translation of this text, see Chang 1971. On p. xiv, Chang thanks Suzuki for his guidance and advice on the text.

¹⁷⁸ Suzuki 1949b.

¹⁷⁹ Suzuki and Akizuki 1962. See also Letter 2475 (1963.3.25), SDZ 39: 328.

¹⁸⁰ Letter 2431 (1962.2.20), SDZ 39: 297–98; Letter 2432 (1962.2.20), SDZ 39: 299–300; Letter 2459 (1962.9.15), SDZ 39: 316–17; and Letter 2582 (1966.4.30), SDZ 39: 397–98.

¹⁸¹ Suzuki 1965b, 1966.

Suzuki's own activities in the US), diverse publications began to appear, all claiming to propound Zen authentically. Some writers, such as Alan Watts and Christmas Humphreys, derived their information primarily from Suzuki, though they added their own interpretations.¹⁸² Others, such as Paul Reps and Garma C. C. Chang, produced works that Suzuki considered suspect or misleading (though Suzuki's own assumptions about Chinese Zen were themselves skewed by his grounding in the Japanese tradition).¹⁸³

Besides publications, Suzuki was also alarmed by a wide variety of activities undertaken in the name of Zen. He singled out, for instance, the "Beatniks" and the "Beat generation": "They grossly misrepresent Zen, and there are some people [who] imagine that Zen is really responsible for the movement."¹⁸⁴ Also, Suzuki took issue with certain Zen masters who became increasingly influential in Western circles. Though he himself had trained with no master after Shaku Sōen's death in 1919, Suzuki had cordial relationships with many, especially after traditional monasteries gravitated toward the model of Zen pioneered by Sōen, Engakuji, and scholars like Suzuki. In the 1950s and 1960s, for instance, he was on excellent terms with Asahina Sōgen 朝日奈宗源 (1891–1979) of Engakuji, Yamada Mumon 山田無文 (1900–1988) of Myōshinji 妙心寺, and Shibayama Zenkei 柴山全慶 (1894–1974) of Nanzenji 南禅寺. There were a few masters, however, whom Suzuki disapproved of. The most noteworthy one was Yasutani Hakuun 安谷白雲 (1885–1973), the Zen priest who eventually established the lay Zen organization Sanbō Kyōdan 三宝教団 (Three Treasures Sangha), and who even trained some of Suzuki's own protégés such as Philip Kapleau. Suzuki considered Yasutani's teachings superficial and overly psychological. Hence, when Yasutani gained influence over pivotal members of the Zen Studies Society after Cornelius Crane's death, Suzuki himself cut ties with the Society.¹⁸⁵ This turn of events reflects the profound diversification of Zen occurring in the West at the end of Suzuki's life and his waning ability to dominate its narrative and guide its direction.

Even while Suzuki struggled to produce English translations of Chinese Zen texts, his work on other projects did indeed result in major publications—most notably,

¹⁸² Watts 1957; Humphreys 1949.

¹⁸³ Reps and Senzaki 1957; Chang 1959. In Letter 2286 (1960.1.29), SDZ 39: 192–94, Suzuki referred to Reps as "a kind of charlatan." In Letter 2278 (1959.12.16), SDZ 39: 183–84, Letter 2282 (1960.1.10), SDZ 39: 188–89, Letter 2285 (1960.1.29), SDZ 39: 190–92, and Letter 2297 (1960.3.7), SDZ 39: 200–202, Suzuki described Chang variously as the "worst case," posing "as someone who understands Zen thoroughly," but who makes "strange mistakes occasionally which will never be committed by those who are well versed in the older literature of Zen." See also Jaffe 2015, pp. liii–liv. Concerning Suzuki's skewed view of Chinese Buddhism, see Sharf 1995a, pp. 46–51.

¹⁸⁴ Letter 2285 (1960.1.29), SDZ 39: 190–92; and Letter 2286 (1960.1.29), SDZ 39: 192–94. See also Jaffe 2015, p. liv.

¹⁸⁵ Letter 2490 (1963.7.31), SDZ 39: 338–40; Letter 2507 (1964.2.21), SDZ 39: 351–53; Letter 2460 (1965.4.20), SDZ 39: 383–84; and Letter 2574 (1965.12.22), SDZ 39: 392. See also Jaffe 2015, p. liii.

his translation of Shinran's Pure Land classic, *Kyōgyōshinshō*. Ironically, Suzuki never planned to translate this work, and in fact had criticized it three decades earlier as too scholastic and abstruse, declaring that it would have been better for Shinran if the text had never existed.¹⁸⁶ But Shin Buddhism always treated it as Shinran's magnum opus, and the Higashi Honganji denomination wanted it translated for the 700th anniversary of his death in 1961. Thus, sectarian officials appealed to Suzuki in 1956 while he was still in America, and after some negotiation he consented to undertake it. Suzuki had a decades-long connection to Higashi Honganji because of Otani University's affiliation and because it had underwritten *The Eastern Buddhist* journal. At this point the denomination was willing to commit substantial resources to the *Kyōgyōshinshō* project. In 1958, a translation committee was formed that included Suzuki as its chair and Ōtani Kōshō as its president (the Higashi Honganji heir apparent, whom Suzuki had mentored in America). Suzuki also recruited Richard DeMartino to assist in the work.¹⁸⁷ Others involved in the project included Nishitani Keiji, the Kyoto University philosopher, and Bandō Shōjun 坂東性純 (1932–2004), a bright young Shin priest and scholar whom Suzuki recommended for graduate study at Oxford University.¹⁸⁸ Suzuki translated the first two of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*'s six fascicles in 1959 and 1960, and the next two in 1961. Though he never completed the last two fascicles, the first four were enough for the publication to move forward, for they contained the crux of Shinran's ideas. Suzuki did not meet the original deadline, but he continued to revise his draft over the next few years and eventually decided on several new and startling translations of key terms in Shinran's teachings—for example, “living” for the word *gyō* 行 (instead of “religious practice”) and “prayer” for the word *gan* 願 (instead of “vow”). Such departures from conventional terminology infused Shinran's Pure Land ideas with new perspectives—specifically, a more immanent and non-dualistic understanding. After Suzuki's death in 1966, the Eastern Buddhist Society was charged with adding introductions, notes, an extensive glossary, appendices, and an index to his core translation in order to complete the work as Suzuki had envisioned it. It was finally published by the denomination in a luxury edition for the 800th anniversary of Shinran's birth in 1973.¹⁸⁹

Another work in English that Suzuki had not planned, but nonetheless completed near the end of his life, was the book *Sengai: The Zen Master*, containing one hundred and twenty-eight reproductions of simple, somewhat whimsical ink drawings by the Zen priest Sengai 仙厓 (1750–1837), with an introduction by Suzuki as well as anno-

¹⁸⁶ “Shinshū zakkan” 真宗雜觀, SDZ 31: 385–88.

¹⁸⁷ Letter 2191 (1959.1.6), SDZ 39: 120–21; and Letter 2207 (1959.2.17), SDZ 39: 132–33.

¹⁸⁸ Letter 2269 (1959.10.22), SDZ 39: 176–77.

¹⁸⁹ Suzuki 1973b (2012), pp. xiii–xvi; Suzuki 2012, pp. ix–xxiii.

tations for each illustration and translations of its calligraphy.¹⁹⁰ This collection of paintings was owned by Suzuki's benefactor, the industrialist Idemitsu Sazō, and was the reason for their original contact with each other. (Suzuki had seen photos of some of Idemitsu's paintings in a catalog of an exhibition in America in 1956 and wrote to him.) Idemitsu collected Sengai's sketches from the time he was a young man—inspired by the fact that he was from the same hometown—and he used them to adorn his company's widely circulated wall calendars each year. Suzuki himself had written a short essay on Sengai decades earlier and considered his humor and folk wisdom to be a unique expression of religious insight. As their friendship developed (and as Idemitsu continued to make donations to Suzuki's projects and to share his mountain villa with him), they agreed in 1963 that Suzuki would write a book in English on Sengai's drawings, building on the annotations he had made for the annual calendars. The manuscript was largely complete at the time of Suzuki's death in 1966, and was finally brought to publication in 1970 by Eva van Hoboken (1905–1987), a German artist and writer who attended Suzuki's lecture at the Eranos Conference in 1953 and who visited Japan in 1959 and 1961 to seek his guidance on Zen.¹⁹¹ This work, as well as Suzuki's translation of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, demonstrates his broad and diverse interests even as the Chinese Zen classics loomed large in his mind, and it shows his sense of indebtedness and reciprocation to patrons and organizations that supported him throughout his life.

In addition to these projects Suzuki was drawn into various events, activities, meetings, and friendships simply by virtue of his stature and fame. He was included by default in plans to resuscitate *The Eastern Buddhist* after attempts to revive it in the late 1940s and 1950s failed. These meetings resulted in a relaunch of the journal as a new series in 1965.¹⁹² Suzuki also received numerous visits from notable foreign guests at his Matsugaoka residence. The theologian Paul Tillich and his wife spent a day with him in June 1960 during their two-month trip to Japan. Suzuki had been an acquaintance of Tillich's during the 1950s in New York. This trip helped inspire Tillich's book *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions* published in 1963.¹⁹³ Also, the influential young scholar of world religions Huston Smith (1919–2016) visited Suzuki in June 1962. He had been Suzuki's interviewer for the television episode in the *Wisdom* series that had been broadcast in America.¹⁹⁴ In addition, the avant-garde

¹⁹⁰ This work has been republished; see Suzuki (1971c) 1999.

¹⁹¹ Idemitsu 1970. Also, see "Sengai Oshō" 仙厓和尚, SDZ 19: 179–82; Letter 2232 (1959.6.12), SDZ 39: 148–49; Letter 2513 (1964.4.4), SDZ 39: 358–59; and "Zadankai: Sengai no Zenga ni tsuite" 座談会：仙厓の禪画について in Suzuki 1973c, vol. 5, pp. 173–206.

¹⁹² Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 221, 223, 224.

¹⁹³ Fukai 2013, pp. 38–39; Okamura and Ueda 1999, p. 157; Tillich 1963.

¹⁹⁴ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," p. 220; Smith 1967, pp. 150–52; and Okamura and Ueda 1999, p. 156.

composer John Cage (1912–1992) came to Matsugaoka in October 1962 and again in 1964. Cage had audited Suzuki's classes at Columbia in the 1950s and considered Zen one of the great influences on his ideas and musical compositions.¹⁹⁵ During this period, Suzuki also deepened his friendship with a number of Japanese entrepreneurs and industrialists. They included not only Idemitsu Sazō, but also Nomura Yōzō 野村洋三 (1870–1965), former president of the Hotel New Grand in Yokohama (who actually served as the interpreter for Shaku Sōen at the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893); Matsukata Saburō 松方三郎 (1899–1973), well-known journalist, businessman, and president of the Boy Scouts in Japan, who had been a student of Suzuki's at Gakushūin; Matsunaga Yasuzaemon 松永安左衛門 (1875–1971), former president and government consolidator of electrical power utilities; and Chadani Yasusaburō 茶谷保三郎 (b. 1882), former president of Olympus Optical Corporation and an executive of Ataka Yakichi's company.¹⁹⁶ Among other events, Suzuki was honored in 1964 with the first-ever Tagore Award from India, presented in commemoration of the Indian poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) who received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. Suzuki and his wife Beatrice had heard Tagore speak in Tokyo in 1916 during his first tour of Japan, and Suzuki was his interpreter for talks he gave in Kyoto during his second tour in 1924.¹⁹⁷

From the time Suzuki returned to Japan in 1958 he maintained communication with countless acquaintances abroad primarily through a robust correspondence. Among his published letters from this period, approximately half were written in English, mostly to people overseas.¹⁹⁸ Suzuki's fame continued to spread through his burgeoning book sales, and even at his advanced age he was eager to take advantage of opportunities to travel abroad again. The first one came a half year after his return to Japan when he attended the Third East-West Philosophers' Conference in Hawai'i in the summer of 1959. Suzuki was a special guest at the meeting, and according to one account he "brought down the house" when, in reaction to the question whether Buddhism is life-affirming or life-denying, he responded, "Living is another form of dying."¹⁹⁹ During the conference, the University of Hawai'i bestowed an honorary doctorate degree on Suzuki, as well as on two other distinguished Asian participants: the Indian philosopher and statesman Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and the Chinese philosopher and intellectual Hu Shih.²⁰⁰ Ironically, Hu had published a critique of Suzuki's ahistorical and non-

¹⁹⁵ John Cage, "An Autobiographical Statement," https://johncage.org/autobiographical_statement.html; Larson 2013; Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," p. 221.

¹⁹⁶ Okamura and Ueda 1999, pp. 158–91.

¹⁹⁷ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 37, 52, 223, 224; and Kirita 2005–15, vol. 19 (2005), p. 67.

¹⁹⁸ Letter 2181 to Letter 2589 (1958.12.2 to 1966.7.1), SDZ 39: 112–402.

¹⁹⁹ Kurtz 1960, p. 37.

²⁰⁰ Moore 1967, pp. 17–18.



Figure 13. Suzuki accompanied by Matsunaga Yasuzaemon, left, Mihoko Okamura, right, and Furuta Shōkin, far right, in a tea ceremony at Atami in January 1959. Reproduced by permission from Matsugaoka Bunko.

rational approach to Chinese Zen only six years earlier, to which Suzuki offered his own critique of Hu's approach for disregarding Zen's "*prajñā*-intuition."²⁰¹ Notwithstanding their differences, both were eminent scholars of Zen whose paths crossed several times during their careers—in China in the 1930s and in New York in the 1950s. After the conference, Suzuki stayed in Honolulu for a further three-and-a-half weeks working on his projects and renewing old friendships, while Okamura, who had accompanied him, made a quick nine-day trip back to New York to visit her parents.²⁰²

The second trip that Suzuki took overseas was to India for four weeks as a state guest in December 1960 and January 1961 accompanied not only by Okamura but also by Furuta Shōkin, his young colleague and future director of Matsugaoka Library who

²⁰¹ Hu Shih 1953; Suzuki 1953. Concerning other misgivings that Hu Shih had about Suzuki, see Stunkard 2004, pp. 203–9.

²⁰² Kirita 2005–15, vol. 29 (2015), pp. 51–53; Kirita 2005, “Nenpu,” pp. 213–14.

had visited India previously in 1956. Suzuki had received invitations for various events and writing assignments in India during the 1950s, but had to decline them because of his obligations in America. He was eager, however, to accept this one. His trip was facilitated, it seems, by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, whom Suzuki first met in 1936 at the World Congress of Faiths in London and who shared honors with him at the University of Hawai'i in 1959. Radhakrishnan was a prominent scholar of Asian religions, known for interpreting Vedantic Hinduism in terms of religious experience and non-duality, just as Suzuki did with Zen. After stepping down as Professor of Eastern Religion and Ethics at Oxford University, Radhakrishnan was elected Vice President of India in 1952 (and would go on to become President in 1962). Suzuki's trip through India was a mixture of scheduled appearances and visits to religious sites. Arriving in Kolkata, he spent two days at academic and scholarly institutions and meeting officials, including the governor of West Bengal. Then he traveled for a week to famous Buddhist locations: the pilgrimage sites of Śākymuni Buddha's birth, enlightenment, first sermon, sutra preaching, and death, as well as the ruins of the ancient scholastic monastery of Nalanda. Next, he spent three days in Delhi on official business: meeting Radhakrishnan, giving a public lecture, visiting Delhi University, and taking a side trip to see the Taj Mahal in Agra. After that, Suzuki flew to Mumbai for several academic appearances, interspersed with visits to the celebrated archaeological sites of Ajanta, Ellora, and Elephanta. Finally, he traveled to Chennai to give a special lecture at the university, and from there returned to Kolkata for his trip back to Japan.²⁰³ It is remarkable that Suzuki was able to undertake such an arduous journey at the age of ninety, but it fulfilled a lifelong dream, for he had wanted to visit India in 1909 while returning to Japan from Europe.²⁰⁴

The third trip overseas was to the US in June and July of 1964. Suzuki and Okamura first spent a short time in New York where he stayed in Butler Hall at Columbia University, as he had done in the early 1950s,²⁰⁵ and she visited her parents. The highlight of this leg of the trip was a long meeting and discussion with Thomas Merton (1915–1968), the famous Catholic monk of the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky who had published extensively on mysticism and religious life. Suzuki and Merton had begun a correspondence five years earlier, resulting in Suzuki's contribution to a joint publication on the themes of emptiness, innocence, and the recovery of paradise. Their meeting in New York is sometimes cited as an example of Buddhist-Christian dialogue, which flourished among religious thinkers in the mid- and late twentieth cen-

²⁰³ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 216–18; Letter 2369 (1960.11.22), SDZ 39: 248–49; Letter 2385 (1961.1.22), SDZ 39: 257–61; and Letter 2455 (1962.8.31), SDZ 39: 314.

²⁰⁴ "Watakushi no nirekisho," SDZ 26: 537.

²⁰⁵ Letter 2523 (1964.6.22), SDZ 39: 365.

tury.²⁰⁶ The second leg of the trip consisted of a three-and-a-half week stay in Hawai'i to attend part of the Fourth East-West Philosophers' Conference. By this time Suzuki had become a venerable presence at these meetings and was invited to give one of the public addresses. He consented to do so and proposed the title "The Individual Person in Zen Buddhism," but requested to attend the conference for only one week. The reason he gave was his "defective hearing," which prevented him from participating in discussions, as well as his old age and high blood pressure. Though he was persuaded to stay three weeks, his involvement was limited.²⁰⁷ In the waning days of the conference he flew back to Japan by jetliner (instead of propeller plane), and then traveled to Idemitsu's mountain villa in Karuizawa for most of August and September 1964 where he could work in comfort.²⁰⁸ This was Suzuki's final trip abroad.

Suzuki's last two years were filled with the same type of activities that occupied him during the previous six. He continued his research and writing projects: studying koan cases from the *Blue Cliff Record*, polishing his translation of Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō*, and writing annotations of Sengai's paintings. He also continued to make public appearances, including lectures at Otani University in November 1964; gave interviews with NHK television in September 1965; and recorded dialogues with various figures such as the American scholar of Buddhism Winston King (1907–2000) in August 1965 and March and May of 1966,²⁰⁹ the celebrated potter Bernard Leach in May 1966, and the Shin Buddhist thinker Kaneko Daiei in July 1966. Suzuki also continued to welcome new scholars to work with him at Matsugaoka, most notably a young Japanese research assistant named Satō Taira Kenmyō 佐藤平顕明 (b. 1939), who helped him compile a comprehensive edition of the Pure Land verses of Asahara Saichi, the *myōkōnin* whom Suzuki most admired, which was published in Suzuki's name after his death.²¹⁰ Finally, Suzuki continued to spend a couple of months each summer at Idemitsu's mountain retreat in Karuizawa to work and to refresh himself. He thus remained active right up to the end of his life, though the pace of his activities inevitably slowed.²¹¹

²⁰⁶ Merton 1986; Letter 2220 (1959.3.31), SDZ 39: 141–42; Letter 2260 (1959.9.25), SDZ 39: 169; Letter 2266 (1959.10.10), SDZ 39: 174; Letter 2268 (1959.10.20), SDZ 39: 175–76; Letter 2274 (1959.11.22), SDZ 39: 180–81; Wilson and Moriya 2016, pp. 201–25.

²⁰⁷ Letter 2498 (1963.10.4), SDZ 39: 342–43; Letter 2499 (1963.10.4), SDZ 39: 343–44; Letter 2509 (1964.2.23), SDZ 39: 354–55; Letter 2512 (1964.3.21), SDZ 39: 358; and Letter 2534 (1964.9.22), SDZ 39: 371–72.

²⁰⁸ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," p. 224; Letter 2524 (1964.6.30), SDZ 39: 366; Letter 2525 (1964.7.11), SDZ 39: 367; Letter 2526 (1964.7.14), SDZ 39: 367–68; and Letter 2527 (1964.7.14), SDZ 39: 368.

²⁰⁹ Suzuki and King 1987, pp. 77–88; Suzuki and King 1988, pp. 82–100.

²¹⁰ Suzuki 1967.

²¹¹ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 224–27.

Suzuki's physical condition during the last two decades of his life was remarkably good considering his age. He received excellent medical care both while living in New York and after returning to Japan. Perhaps his greatest long-term affliction was poor dental health. Over the years, he frequently had dentists treat, repair, or artificially replace teeth. Occasionally, Suzuki suffered from colds or the flu, but he would typically recover in a week or two by curtailing his activities and resting. In addition, he suffered from periodic vitamin deficiencies resulting in anemia and would receive supplements as needed.²¹² During his years back in Japan, his health was monitored closely, and he went regularly for check-ups and tests at St. Luke's Hospital in Tokyo, where Beatrice Suzuki had died.²¹³ Probably the impairments that affected his daily activities the most were his progressive deafness and deteriorating eyesight. The other condition of concern was his blood pressure—reported at one point to be 170/70 and at another over 200.²¹⁴ Systolic levels that high could foreshadow a stroke or heart failure. But in the end that was not what Suzuki would succumb to.

Suzuki's Death

The day before Suzuki died, he was scheduled to leave for his annual summer trek to the mountain villa in Karuizawa. Idemitsu Sazō had sent a car and driver to transport him and Mihoko Okamura there, as well as his manuscripts, books, and other belongings. But from early morning Suzuki experienced intense stomach pain and waves of vomiting. Okamura and his grandniece Hayashida Kumino, who both assisted him throughout his last day of life, quickly decided that the trip was impossible and began telephoning for medical assistance. At first a neighborhood doctor came and gave him injections for nausea and pain, and they sent Satō Taira Kenmyō, the young scholar in residence at Matsugaoka, to local pharmacies for prescriptions. But when there was no improvement, Okamura next managed to get a doctor from Yokohama National Hospital and one from St. Luke's Hospital in Tokyo to come. Arriving separately around noon, they quickly decided that Suzuki's condition was serious, administered morphine for pain, and requested an ambulance to take him to St. Luke's. But the transfer was not easy. When the ambulance arrived around 2:30 p.m., they first had to carry Suzuki by gurney down the long stone stairway at Matsugaoka; next they had to wait in Kamakura for a police escort; and finally, they

²¹² Kirita 2005–15, vol. 22 (2008), pp. 3–4, 14–16, 50, 72–74; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 27 (2013), pp. 3–4; Kirita 2005–15, vol. 28 (2014), pp. 5, 12, 41, 50–51, 68–71; and Kirita 2005–15, vol. 29 (2015), pp. 29, 41, 42.

²¹³ Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," pp. 215, 219, 222.

²¹⁴ Stunkard 2004, pp. 212–18; and Kirita 2005–15, vol. 29 (2015), pp. 55, 57.

had to navigate the traffic in Tokyo. It was 5:00 in the afternoon by the time they arrived at the hospital.²¹⁵

Suzuki was immediately admitted and ushered to a private room. Nurses and attendants checked his blood pressure and set an intravenous line, and later in the evening took an x-ray, gave him a blood transfusion, conducted an electrocardiogram, and set up an oxygen tent for him. Suzuki's primary physician at St. Luke's, Hinohara Shigeaki 日野原重明 (1911–2017), along with several consulting doctors, began to examine him, and concluded that he had an intestinal obstruction or rupture of some type (identified later in a postmortem as an "intestinal strangulation" [*kōyakusei chōbeisoku* 絞扼性腸閉塞]). Hinohara ruled out surgery because of Suzuki's condition and age, and he informed Okamura that he might not survive through the night. Hence, they sought to control his pain, allow him to sleep, and hope for improvement. In the meantime, word spread quickly among Suzuki's friends, colleagues, relatives, and acquaintances that he was gravely ill, and many began to show up at the hospital. They included abbot Asahina Sōgen of Engakuji, head priest Inoue Zenjō 井上禪定 (1911–2006) of neighboring Tōkeji, businessman Matsukata Saburō, protégé Furuta Shōkin, research assistant Satō Taira Kenmyō, typist Kudō Sumiko, various employees of the Idemitsu company, and many, many others. The number grew so large that the nursing staff became alarmed and severely restricted access to Suzuki's room. As a result, they set up a kind of vigil in the hallway. Among the visitors was Suzuki's son, Alan. When he came into the room, Okamura roused Suzuki who weakly acknowledged him. This was their last meeting.²¹⁶

During the night Suzuki stirred at one point and Okamura asked him in English, "Would you like something?" He replied, "No, nothing. Thank you."²¹⁷ These were his last words. Various people have ascribed special meaning to these parting words. Some have emphasized the term "nothing," suggesting that Suzuki embodied a perfect state of *mu*, or Zen nothingness, at that moment. Others have highlighted the words "thank you," reflecting a Shin Buddhist mindset of gratitude.²¹⁸ His response, however, may simply have been Suzuki's natural, everyday way of interacting with Okamura—with calmness, warmth, appreciation, and no fuss. Around 4:30 a.m., his breathing became irregular and a small, select circle of people gathered around his bed. Finally, between 5:00 and 5:30, Tuesday morning, July 12, 1966, Suzuki quietly passed away.²¹⁹

Suzuki's funeral occurred two days later at Tōkeji just down the hill from the Matsugaoka Library, conducted by Asahina Sōgen of Engakuji and hosted by Idemitsu

²¹⁵ Hayashida 1995, pp. 130–37.

²¹⁶ Hayashida 1995, pp. 137–42; Yamada 2015, p. 223.

²¹⁷ Okamura and Ueda 1999, pp. 89–90; Okamura and Ueda 1997, p. 89; Nishimura 1993, p. 209.

²¹⁸ Yamada 2015, pp. 224–25.

²¹⁹ Hayashida 1995, p. 142. Most accounts indicate that Suzuki died at 5:05 a.m., but Hayashida indicates 5:25 a.m. See Kirita 2005, "Nenpu," p. 227.

Sazō and Matsukata Saburō. Some eight hundred people came to pay their respects, including eminent public figures and personal acquaintances. Four days later, on July 18, a large memorial service was held at Asakusa Honganji 浅草本願寺 temple in Tokyo as the first weekly service in the seven-week Buddhist mourning period. It was organized by Higashi Honganji in collaboration with Otani University to honor Suzuki, and hosted by Ōtani Kōshō.²²⁰ Subsequently, his ashes were divided into three portions and interred at three sites. The first was the cemetery of Tōkeiji, at the foot of Matsugaoka, together with Beatrice Suzuki's and near the graves of his close friend, philosopher Nishida Kitarō, and his longtime patron, Ataka Yakichi (as well as near the future grave of Idemitsu Sazō). The second was the ancestral gravesite of Suzuki's family at Nodayama 野田山 Cemetery in Kanazawa, again alongside his wife's and next to the graves of their longtime housekeeper, Sekiguchi Kono, and Beatrice's mother, Emma Hahn. The third was the enormous and venerable cemetery at Okunoin 奥之院 of the Shingon Buddhist complex on Mount Kōya 高野, where Beatrice Suzuki frequently retreated in the summer, again together with her ashes.²²¹ Today Suzuki is memorialized each year on the anniversary of his death in a ceremony at the Matsugaoka Library in Kamakura as well as at Otani University and other institutions closely associated with him. He lives on in his massive corpus of writings and in the ideas he embedded in Buddhism worldwide.

Suzuki's Significance

Suzuki was a scholar and academic by profession, but he emerged as such a multifaceted figure that it is hard to identify his primary contribution to Buddhism. Over the arc of his life, a number of goals and objectives stand out. The first, dating from his early adulthood, was to defend and restore Buddhism, which had been dismissed as a backward, superstitious religion during Japan's race to modernize in the nineteenth century. Like many young intellectuals of the period, Suzuki immersed himself in Western philosophy, literature, and psychology to identify themes through which Buddhism could be reconceptualized, rendering it compatible with the modern age. In doing so, he equipped himself with a vocabulary and method of thinking which, unforeseen at the time, prepared him to present Buddhism cogently and persuasively to Westerners.

A second goal of Suzuki's was to promote Mahayana Buddhism as a legitimate form of the religion, especially the traditions of East Asia. He and other nineteenth-century Japanese, as they encountered the portrayal of Buddhism in other parts of world, came to realize that Mahayana was often viewed as a diluted or degenerate offshoot, in contrast to the perceived authenticity of Theravada. As part of his scholarly mission,

²²⁰ Nishimura 1993, pp. 209–15.

²²¹ Okamura and Ueda 1999, p. 90; and Hashimoto 1971.



Figure 14. Suzuki's grave at Nodayama Cemetery in Kanazawa. The central monument has Suzuki's posthumous name, Yafūryūan Daisetsu Koji 也風流庵大拙居士, written vertically on the right, and Beatrice Suzuki's posthumous name, Seiren'in Biwa Myōen Daishi 青蓮院琵琶妙演大姉, written on the left. The monument to the right is for Beatrice's mother, Emma Erskine Lane Hahn, inscribed with her posthumous name, Hannyain Haramitta Daishi 般若院波羅蜜多大姉, and the monument to the left is for Sekiguchi Kono, Suzuki's housekeeper, inscribed with her posthumous name, Jihien Ninpō Myōzui Daishi 慈悲園仁峯妙隨大姉. Photo by the author.

Suzuki sought to alter this image and to elevate Mahayana. He did so by launching *The Eastern Buddhist* journal, by translating Mahayana texts, by explicating its ideas, and by linking it to Buddhist themes already admired in the West. He thereby helped create an international discourse on Mahayana and introduced people to its Japanese modes of understanding, all through the concepts and categories used to revitalize Buddhism in Japan.

A third goal in Suzuki's life was to impart Zen Buddhism to the West, though it was not a prominent goal at the beginning of his career. Then, he simply included Zen among the legitimate forms of Buddhism in his valorization of Mahayana. He was nonetheless responsive to anyone wanting to learn Zen meditation, for he himself was a product of Zen's expanded overture to lay practitioners at Engakuji. Westerners interested in Zen were relatively few in the 1910s and 1920s, and increased only slightly in the 1930s. Whenever Suzuki encountered them, he would gladly discuss Zen ideas and often suggest that they seek the guidance of a qualified Zen master. By the late 1940s,

and especially in the 1950s and 1960s, there was a virtual explosion in the number of Americans and Europeans interested in Zen, triggered in great part by Suzuki's own writings. Whether anticipated or not, he was suddenly cast in the role of a modern-day Bodhidharma to the West—likened, that is, to the semi-legendary Buddhist patriarch who transmitted Zen from India to China.²²² As Zen aspirants beat a path to Suzuki's door, he seemed to embrace his new role as Zen's champion. By then his earlier goals of rehabilitating Buddhism in Japan and legitimating Mahayana were largely accomplished. Although some Western neophytes looked upon Suzuki as a certified Zen master,²²³ he never pretended to have such status. He always operated as a scholar and thinker seeking to inspire a sympathetic understanding of Buddhism through his writings and talks. Today there is a tendency to treat Suzuki's long career as a protracted endeavor to spread Zen worldwide. But that was not his explicit plan from the start. Rather, it was a mission thrust upon him in the last decades of his life, which he gladly accepted.

As a scholar, Suzuki was a force of nature. His steady and relentless production of works in both Japanese and English yielded a huge oeuvre virtually unmatched by other scholars of Buddhism. Among them are writings on Zen, Mahayana, Pure Land, Japanese culture, and many other topics that have had an enduring influence both inside and outside the academic world. Notwithstanding his range and depth, Suzuki cannot be characterized as the foremost textual scholar or philosophical thinker of his generation. Among his contemporaries, Murakami Senshō 村上專精 (1851–1929) and Ui Hakuju 宇井伯寿 (1882–1963), both professors of Tokyo University, were far more proficient in the critical analysis of Chinese and Sanskrit texts. Likewise in the realm of philosophy, his childhood friend and lifelong conversation partner, Nishida Kitarō, the recognized founder of the Kyoto school of philosophy, as well as Nishida's intellectual heirs, Tanabe Hajime and Nishitani Keiji, are usually ranked more prominently.

Suzuki's importance lies instead in his more synthetic and multidimensional treatment of Buddhism. He had his own ideas about religious awakening, awareness, and living—derived from diverse sources, both Asian and Western—and from them he made critical choices about what to emphasize from earlier Buddhism and what to treat as extraneous. In doing so, Suzuki, like many of his era, considered his work to be an elucidation of the essence of Buddhism.²²⁴ This process resulted in a new and compelling construction of the religion for the modern world. His interpretations largely set the contours for the reception of Buddhism in the West, and became widely influ-

²²² Kapleau 1986, pp. 202–3.

²²³ The introduction to the Causeway edition of Suzuki's *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (New York: Causeway Books, 1974), p. vi, makes the unfounded claim that Suzuki was “officially designated” as “a Zen master.”

²²⁴ Suzuki's focus on the essence of Buddhism is characteristic of the essentialist scholarly approach of his day, which has subsequently been criticized in postmodern scholarship. See Faure 1993, pp. 3–11.

ential in Japan as well. In effect, Suzuki was arguably the most inventive and insightful Buddhist “theologian” of the twentieth century, bringing together classical texts, Buddhist motifs, Western conceptualizations, and popular culture. That may be his great contribution to Buddhism.

ABBREVIATION

SDZ *Suzuki Daisetsu zenshū* 鈴木大拙全集. Edited by Hisamatsu Shin’ichi 久松真一, Yamaguchi Susumu 山口益, and Furuta Shōkin 古田紹欽. 40 vols., new ed. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1999–2003.

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* This section lists several fundamental and commonly used works for research on D. T. Suzuki.

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