

A Translation of “Ōtani University’s Founding Spirit” by Sasaki Gesshō

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With an Introduction by Robert F. Rhodes

INTRODUCTION

The following is a translation of “Ōtani University’s Founding Spirit” (Ōtani daigaku juritsu no seishin 大谷大学樹立の精神), an address given by Sasaki Gesshō 佐々木月樵 (1875–1926), the university’s third president, before the entering class of 1924. As its name shows, Ōtani University was established by the Ōtani denomination (Ōtaniha 大谷派) of Shin Buddhism, popularly known as Higashi Honganji. In this address, Sasaki set forth his vision of Ōtani University as an institution of higher learning whose mission is to make the spiritual resources of Buddhism available to the people, not just of Japan, but of the world. In Sasaki’s own words, its mission is to “liberate” (*kaihō* 解放) Buddhism to the academic world at large. Behind these words lies Sasaki’s conviction that the Buddhist teachings, which had heretofore been widely regarded as the exclusive property of the priests, are worthy of becoming the spiritual foundation of modern society.

1. The Development of Higher Education in the Ōtani Denomination

In order to understand the significance of “Ōtani University’s Founding Spirit,” it may be useful to review briefly the history of the Ōtani denomination’s educational policies from the Edo (1615–1868) to the Taishō (1912–1926) periods. As Sasaki noted in his address, the beginning of Ōtani University can be traced back to 1665 when a Buddhist academy located at the Kanzeonji 観世音寺¹, an ancient temple in Tsukushi 筑紫 in northern

Kyushu, was moved to the grounds of the Kikokutei 枳殻邸², a Higashi Honganji garden located a few blocks east of the head temple in Kyoto. In 1754, the academy was moved to a new site at the intersection of Takakura 高倉 and Uodana 魚棚 streets and was henceforth known as Takakura Gakuryō 高倉学寮 (Takakura Academy). As a part of its religious policies, the Tokugawa shogunate encouraged scholarly activities by Buddhist monks and a number of Buddhist sects created academies for the purpose of studying the works of their founders and patriarchs. The establishment of the Takakura Gakuryō was in part a response to the shogunate's policy. It may be mentioned in passing that the Nishi Honganji 西本願寺 branch of Shin Buddhism had already established its seminary about three decades earlier, in 1638.

A number of students came to study at Takakura Gakuryō from all parts of Japan. By the early 1800's, about a thousand students were enrolled each year.³ The educational program of this school was centered on the *ango* 安居. In India, the *ango* referred to retreats for monks carried out during the rainy season, but at the Takakura Gakuryō, it was used to refer to a fixed period of time in summer when priests gathered for academic instruction. Originally, classes were held only in the summer but the curriculum was subsequently expanded and lectures came to be held in the spring and autumn as well. However, the most important remained the summer lectures, which were called *geango* 夏安居 (summer retreat). It lasted for six weeks, from mid-April to the end of June. During this time, principle

1 The Kanzeonji, located in Fukuoka prefecture, was founded by Emperor Tenji 天智 (626-672) in the memory of his mother Empress Saimei 齊明 (594-661), who died there while leading a military expedition bound for Korea. The temple is known as the site of one of the three ordination platforms of Japan.

2 A spacious garden belonging to the Higashi Honganji, also known as the Shōseien 渉成園.

3 In 1826 there were about 1500 students enrolled. See Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkai 2001a, 19.

lectures (*honkō* 本講) on Shin Buddhist texts were given by the *kōshi* 講師 (literally “lecturer”; this was the highest position in the Higashi Honganji academic hierarchy) and *shikō* 嗣講 (assistant lecturer). In addition, a “private lecture” (*naikō* 内講) was given by a *gikō* 擬講 (novice lecturer). These “private lectures” were not limited to Shin Buddhist texts but extended to texts of other Buddhist traditions as well. The spring and autumn classes were less elaborate and lectures were generally given only by the *gikō*.⁴ Besides these regularly scheduled lectures, less formal classes were frequently organized by interested teachers and students on Buddhist and non-Buddhist topics.⁵ The *ango* underwent various changes in subsequent years but remains an important institution for the academic training of Ōtani denomination priests even today.

With the Meiji Restoration of 1868, a period of grave crisis began for Japanese Buddhists. In 1854, Japan abandoned its long-standing isolationist policy and opened its doors to the west. As a result, Japanese Buddhists were confronted with the need to defend their religion against both new scientific ideas as well as aggressive proselytism by Christian missionaries. In addition, the Meiji government embarked on a policy of separating Shinto from Buddhism, precipitating a frequently violent anti-Buddhist movement known as *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈. As a result of this anti-Buddhist movement, a number of temples were destroyed and numerous monks were defrocked in various parts of Japan.⁶

Like many other Buddhist monks, priests of the Ōtani denomination felt

4 On the *ango* system of the Takakura Gakuryō, see Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkai 2001a, 26–28.

5 For example, in 1830, nine such classes were held on topics ranging from Kegon philosophy and Buddhist logics to the *Shojin hongaiishū* 諸神本懷集 (On the Original Wish of the Various *Kami*), a work discussing the position of Japanese *kami* from the standpoint of Shin Buddhism. See Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkai 2001a, 31–32.

6 On the *haibutsu kishaku* movement, see Ketelaar 1990.

the urgent need to protect their faith against these threats. One result of this deepening sense of crisis was the establishment of the Gohōjō 護法場 (Academy to Protect the Dharma) in 1868. Although there was widespread recognition that an accurate knowledge of the Bible and other western works was imperative to defend Buddhism against Christianity, many priests felt that it was inappropriate to hold lectures on the foreign faith at a Buddhist seminary like the Takakura Gakuryō. For this reason, the decision was made to establish a separate institution, named the Gohōjō, for the study of non-Buddhist subjects needed to “protect the Dharma.” Progressive scholars from the Takakura Gakuryō, such as Kōzan-in Ryūon 香山院龍温 (1800–1885) and Senshō-in Kūkaku 關彰院空覚 (1807–1871), played a leading role in establishing the Gohōjō. It may be mentioned in passing here that, in “Ōtani University's Founding Spirit,” Sasaki eulogizes Kūkaku as a pioneering figure in the movement to revitalize the educational system of the Ōtani denomination in the Meiji period.

The curriculum of the new academy was divided into four courses: (1) “western teachings” (*yōkyō* 洋教), specifically Protestant and Catholic doctrine and history, (2) astronomy, (3) National Learning (Kokugaku 国学) and (4) Confucianism. The academy's most pressing task was to provide instruction in Christianity so that its teachings could be countered effectively. Nanjō Bun'yū 南条文雄 (1849–1927), who served as the second president of Shinshū University (a forerunner of Ōtani University) recounts how, after Ryūon lectured on Christianity at the Gohōjō, students were divided into two groups to debate the pros and cons of the Christian position that Ryūon had just explicated.⁷ Another important topic taught at the Gohōjō was astronomy. In the early Meiji years, Japanese clerics still accepted the Buddhist world-view which placed Mt. Sumeru at the center of the universe. Knowledge of western astronomy was necessary to reconcile their position with the heliocentric view of the universe, which had been

7 Nanjō 1979, 17. Cited in Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkai 2001a, 45.

introduced to Japan and was being used effectively to undermine the credulity of the Buddhist position.

Moreover, ever since the eighteenth century, Buddhism had been frequently criticized by Confucian scholars and advocates of National Learning as being a degenerate and corrupt religion. The former had denounced Buddhist monks as greedy clerics, lacking the virtues championed by Confucius and intent only on acquiring offerings from their parishioners. Similarly, scholars of National Learning berated Buddhism as a foreign religion alien to Japan. In order to counter such attacks, both Confucianism and National Learning had been taught at the Takakura Gakuryō since the Edo period. This tradition was carried on at the Gohōjō as well. Interestingly, as western powers began to press for the opening of Japan in the latter part of the Edo period, interest in Confucianism and National Learning increased at Takakura Gakuryō and the number of classes on such texts as the *Analects* and *Nihon shoki* increased. Some scholars even began to advocate the unification of the three teachings of Shinto, Confucianism and Buddhism as a way of protecting Japan from outside (i.e., Christian) menaces. Of course, although they were undoubtedly sincere in their hope to defend their country in this way, they probably also hoped to counter the criticism against Buddhism by reconciling it with Shinto and Confucianism.⁸

Although it was established as an independent institution, the Gohōjō was originally considered inseparable from the Takakura Gakuryō. A *kōshi* from the latter served as the director of the Gohōjō and most of the Gohōjō's students belonged to the Takakura Gakuryō. However, a serious rift soon appeared between these two institutions. The students who were exposed to new ideas at the Gohōjō began to express their criticism, not only of the traditional scholarship carried out at the Takakura Gakuryō, but also of the administrative structure of the Higashi Honganji, which they believed was outdated. In March of 1869, three students from the Gohōjō marched to

8 Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai 2001a, 37–38.

Higashi Honganji to demand reforms within the temple administration. They also sent letters to temples throughout Japan, urging their readers to converge on Kyoto to support their action. The students, together with several teachers and staff of the Gohōjō including Kūkaku, were punished for creating this disturbance. However, their actions were not in vain, since a consultative assembly called the Shūgisho 衆議所 was established soon thereafter within the Higashi Honganji to serve as the abbot's advisory board. Furthermore, a few months later in July of 1869, a major reorganization of the sect's administrative structure was announced in which the Higashi Honganji abbot's lay retainers who had traditionally staffed the denomination's administration, were removed from their positions and replaced by priests. When Kūkaku was murdered in October, it was rumored that he was assassinated by a group of these lay retainers, who blamed Kūkaku and the Gohōjō for ousting them from power.⁹

The Gohōjō was closed in 1873 but by then it had completed its task of bringing a new perspective into the Ōtani denomination's educational system. In 1872, the Meiji government promulgated an epoch-making law establishing a state-run system of universal education open to all. It divided the country into eight higher school districts (*daigakku* 大学区), each of which was sub-divided into 32 middle school districts (*chūgakku* 中学区). Moreover, each middle school district was further divided into 210 elementary school districts (*shōgakku* 小学区). A higher school (*daigakkō* 大学校) was established in each higher school district, while a middle school (*chūgakkō* 中学校) and an elementary school (*shōgakkō* 小学校) were created in each middle school and elementary school district, respectively.¹⁰ The following year, Ōtani Kōei 大谷光瑩 (1852-1923), who later became the 22nd abbot of Higashi Honganji taking the name of Gennyō 現如, returned from an inspection tour of Europe and embarked on the reform of the

9 On the Gohōjō and the reform of the Higashi Honganji administrative structure, see Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai 2001a, 46-58.

10 On the educational system of 1872, see Murakami and Sakata 1981, 48-56.

denomination's educational system. Offices for the translation and compilation of Buddhist texts were created within the Higashi Honganji temple grounds. At the same time, the Takakura Gakuryō was renamed Kanrenjō 貫練場 (Kanren Academy)¹¹ and its curriculum was revised to put greater emphasis on teaching the doctrines of other Buddhist schools besides Shin Buddhism and, for the first time in its history, to include classes on Sanskrit and other secular subjects such as geography, history, mathematics, composition, natural history and physics.¹² From this time on, subjects other than Shin Buddhism came to hold an increasingly important place in the curriculum. Finally, in 1875, the Ōtani denomination created its own comprehensive educational system of elementary schools (*shōkyōkō* 小教校), middle schools (*chūkyōkō* 中教校) and a higher school (*daikyōkō* 大教校). The Kanrenjō was made a higher school under this system. In “Ōtani University's Founding Spirit,” Sasaki emphasizes this event as marking the moment when the Higashi Honganji seminary became a modern academic institution.

Further important changes took place in 1894, when another major reorganization of the denomination's educational system was carried out. On this occasion, five middle schools (*chūgakuryō* 中学寮)¹³ were established in Kyoto, Tokyo, Yamagata, Kanazawa and Kurume. At the same time, the Daigakuryō 大学寮, the new name given to the Kanrenjō in 1882, was restructured into four departments. These four departments were (1) the First Department of the Undergraduate Course (Honka Daiichibu 本科第一部), providing instruction in religion and other subjects, (2) the Second Department of the Undergraduate Course (Honka Dainibu 本科第二部), teaching similar subjects but also holding classes in philosophy and the sciences using European languages as the medium of instruction, (3) a

11 On Ōtani Kōei's trip to Europe and the reforms that followed, see Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai 2001a, 75.

12 Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai 2001a, 79–82.

13 Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai 2001a, 100–102.

Graduate Department and (4) a department centered on the *ango*. As noted above, the *ango* was the core of the Takakura Gakuryō's educational program during the Edo period. Although it had undergone many changes since the Meiji Restoration, it was still an important component of the Higashi Honganji education system. Subsequently, the Daigakuryō was split up in 1896, with its first three departments becoming Shinshū University (Shinshū Daigaku 真宗大学) and the fourth department centered on the *ango* becoming the core of Takakura Daigakuryō 高倉大学寮. Finally, in 1901, Shinshū University was moved to Tokyo under the leadership of Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863-1903).

2. The Life of Sasaki Gesshō

Sasaki Gesshō was born as the second son of Yamada Saisō 山田才相, a priest of the Ganrikiji 願力寺, an Ōtani denomination temple located in Anjō 安城 in Mikawa 三河 (now part of Aichi prefecture)¹⁴. After finishing elementary school, he attended Mikawa Ikuei School (Mikawa Ikuei Kyōkō 三河育英教校) in Okazaki 岡崎 in Mikawa. Subsequently, he entered the First Middle School (Daiichi Chūgakuryō 第一中学寮) in Kyoto, one of Higashi Honganji's middle schools, and graduated in 1896. During this time, he became acquainted with Kiyozawa Manshi. After entering Shinshū University (which was still in Kyoto), Sasaki became involved in Kiyozawa's ultimately unsuccessful movement to reform the Ōtani denomination that lasted from October of 1896 to November of the following year.¹⁵ In 1898, he was adopted by the Sasaki family of the Jōgūji 上宮寺 of Okazaki, famous as one of the three major temples of Mikawa, and took the surname Sasaki.

Sasaki graduated from Shinshū University in 1900. After the university

14 On Sasaki's life, see Yamada 1973.

15 Yamada 1973, 59-60.

was moved to Tokyo, Sasaki entered its graduate division. During his stay in Tokyo, he became a member of the Kōkōdō 浩々洞, a house where Kiyozawa lived together with several of his students, and took an active role in the publication of the Kōkōdō's monthly journal, *Seishinkai* 精神界 (Spiritual World). This journal was very popular among the Japanese intellectuals of the time. Each issue carried an essay by Kiyozawa, setting forth his distinctive understanding of his faith which he termed "spiritual awareness" (*seishin shugi* 精神主義). The journal contained articles by the other members of the Kōkōdō as well. During these years, Sasaki, along with Tada Kanae 多田鼎 (1875-1937) and Akegarasu Haya 暁烏敏 (1877-1954), both of whom also lived at the Kōkōdō, became closely associated with Kiyozawa and eventually earned the nickname "Kiyozawa's trio" (*sanbagarasu* 三羽鳥).

Two months after completing his graduate education in July of 1905, Sasaki was appointed professor at Shinshū University. However, when the Higashi Honganji legislative assembly decided (by a close vote of 26 to 24) to transfer the university back to Kyoto in 1911, Sasaki, along with a number of other professors, resigned. When the university was moved to Kyoto, it was merged with Takakura Daigakuryō and renamed Shinshū Ōtani University (Shinshū Ōtani Daigaku 真宗大谷大学). As noted above, Takakura Daigakuryō and Shinshū University were originally parts of the Daigakuryō before they were separated in 1894. But the education at Takakura Daigakuryō was centered on the *ango*, which, by the Taishō period, boasted a long and illustrious history of over two hundred and fifty years. The professors of Takakura Daigakuryō, which carried on the *ango* tradition, prided themselves on being the guardians of this venerable ethos of scholarly exegesis and were therefore not favorably disposed to modern western-influenced forms of education such as those employed at Shinshū University. On the other hand, the traditional Takakura style of scholarship was considered old-fashioned and even reactionary by many students of Shinshū University. In fact, the tension between the proponents of these

two views of education, one traditional and the other more western-oriented, was one of the underlying causes for the separation of Takakura Daigakuryō and Shinshū University in the first place. In any case, when teachers from Takakura Daigakuryō were appointed professors of the newly created Shinshū Ōtani University, they proved unpopular with the students. The majority of the students at the new school had moved to Kyoto from Tokyo with the transfer of the university and was therefore used to the more modern teaching methods employed in Tokyo. Eventually the students chose to boycott the classes of the teachers they found unacceptable. Although the students were initially dismissed for their action, they were eventually reinstated and an agreement was reached to bring back the professors who had previously resigned from Shinshū University. Consequently Sasaki was recalled to his teaching post in 1912.

In 1921, Sasaki embarked on a study tour of Europe and America to observe the state of higher education there. The group, which was sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Education, consisted of seven people and included professors from various institutions of higher learning as well as several officials associated with the Ministry of Education.¹⁶ Sasaki kept a detailed journal of his trip and subsequently wrote about it in various publications.¹⁷ According to his journal, Sasaki left from the port of Kobe in August and arrived at Marseilles the next month. The group then traveled to England, visiting London, Cambridge, Oxford, Rugby and other schools. Subsequently they toured Germany, France and Italy and returned to Japan. The tour made a lasting impression on Sasaki. He was especially impressed

16 Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkai 2001a, 296.

17 This journal has been privately published in three volumes and a copy is kept at the Ōtani University library. See Sasaki 2005, 2007a and 2007b. Nine short essays recording Sasaki's impressions of his journey are collected together and reprinted under the title "Ōbei zakkan" 欧米雑感 (Miscellaneous Thoughts on the Journey to Europe and America). They are found in the sixth volume of Sasaki's collected works. See Sasaki Gesshō Zenshū Kankōkai 1928, 6: 875–940.

by the fact that religion was a major component of university life in Europe. He was also struck by the important role played by the dormitory, and sought to create such dormitories when he returned.

A new stage in the history of Japanese higher education began in 1918 with the passage of the University Law (Daigakurei 大学令), which allowed for the first time the establishment of private universities. Formerly, the only universities that had been recognized were national universities. Although a number of private institutions of higher learning (including Shinshū University) had existed in Japan, they were legally classified as professional schools (*senmon gakkō* 専門学校) and were not licensed as universities. However, with the number of young people wishing to gain higher education rapidly expanding, it became necessary for the government to authorize the establishment of private universities.¹⁸ Within a year after the passage of the new law, Keiō Gijuku and Waseda applied for, and were granted, university status. Other schools quickly followed.

In 1920, Sasaki was appointed to the Kyōgaku Shōgikai 教学商議会 (Consultation on Doctrine), a committee formed to consider whether or not Shinshū Ōtani University should seek university status. The committee recommended that it should. Although a special committee appointed by the Ōtani denomination's legislative assembly to consider this recommendation first rejected it, the assembly eventually accepted the recommendation.¹⁹ As a result, Shinshū Ōtani University sought and received university status

18 This point is made in an article found in the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun* dated April 16, 1918. Cited in Oda 2002, 45.

19 Several reasons for the initial opposition can be suggested. To be recognized as a university, it was necessary to establish an educational foundation with assets of at least 500,000 yen to maintain the school. This large sum may have seemed prohibitive. Moreover, there may have been misgivings about restrictions concerning religious matters in the University Law. Under the new law, universities were not allowed to establish faculties providing instruction in the teachings of specific religions and were prohibited from using the name of specific religions

in 1922.²⁰ At that time, the name was changed to Ōtani University and the curriculum was greatly expanded.²¹ It may also be mentioned that Daisetz T. Suzuki, the world-renown scholar of Zen Buddhism, became a professor at Ōtani in 1921. In the same year, Sasaki founded the Eastern Buddhist Society with Suzuki in order to spread knowledge about Mahāyāna Buddhism to the world. The society immediately began publication of its journal,²² *The Eastern Buddhist*, which continues to this day.

3. Sasaki as a Scholar of Buddhism

Sasaki was an indefatigable scholar.²³ His collected works, published in 1928, consists of six hefty volumes.²⁴ Despite its title, this collection does not contain all of his writings; many important works, including studies written in German and English (such as *A Study of Shin Buddhism*, a collection of essays published by the Eastern Buddhist Society in 1925) were not included. As Yamada Ryōken notes, Sasaki had three major areas of interest: (1) Shinran and Shin Buddhism, (2) Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist thought and (3) Kegon thought. Among his earliest works were three studies on Shinran's

or religious denominations in their names. It was for this reason that the name Shinshu Ōtani University was changed to Ōtani University and, although a Department of Buddhist Studies was established within the Faculty of Letters (Bungakubu 文学部), no independent Faculty of Buddhist Studies was established when Ōtani was granted university status in 1922. See Kusano 2009, 109–112.

20 For a detailed account of the process whereby Ōtani University became licensed as a university under the University Law, see Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkai 2001a, 272–75 and 289–92.

21 The growth of the curriculum is apparent from the chart comparing the classes taught at Ōtani in 1921 and 1923. See Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkai 2001a, 276–79.

22 On Daisetz T. Suzuki and the Eastern Buddhist Society, see Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Inkai 2001a, 285–86.

23 Sasaki's scholarly works are discussed in detail in Yamada 1973, 62–65.

24 See Sasaki Gesshō Zenshū Kankōkai 1928.

biography, all published between 1910-11: *Shinran shōnin-den* 親鸞聖人伝 (Biography of Shinran, 1910), *Shinran-den sōsho* 親鸞伝叢書 (Collection of Shinran's Biographies, 1910) and *Shinran den'eki* 親鸞伝絵記 (Notes on the Illustrated Biography of Shinran, 1911). These works were followed by *Shina Jōdokyōshi* 支那浄土教史, a lengthy history of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism, published in 1913. Towards the end of his life, he published two major works on Shin Buddhism: *Shinshū gairon* 真宗概論 (Outline of Shin Buddhism, 1921) and *Shinrankyō josetsu* 親鸞教序説 (Prolegomenon to Shinran's Teachings, 1923).

Sasaki also wrote extensively on Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist thought. Yamada points out that, in his studies, Sasaki sought to go beyond the narrowly sectarian perspective that had dominated the study of Buddhist texts up to this time. To do so, he made it a point to compare all available translations when studying a particular text, an approach now taken for granted but quite novel in his age.²⁵ In 1917, Sasaki published *Muchaku ronshū* 無着論集 (Studies on Asaṅga). This was followed by *Seshin ronshū* 世親論集 (Studies on Vasubandhu) in 1919 and *Ryūju no chūgan oyobi sono tetsugaku* 龍樹の中観及其哲学 (Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika and its Philosophy) in 1926. It may also be mentioned here that Sasaki's edition of the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* entitled *Shōdaijōron: kanyaku shihon taishō* 攝大乘論

25 It may be mentioned that Sasaki's studies were based mainly on Chinese translation of Buddhist texts. Nanjō Bun'yū, who had served as the second president of Shinshū University, had only recently introduced the study of Sanskrit texts to Japan after learning the language under F. Max Müller at Oxford between 1879 and 1884. Moreover, it was only in the 1930's that Japanese Buddhist scholars began to utilize Sanskrit and Tibetan texts routinely in their research. This approach was pioneered in Japan by Yamaguchi Susumu 山口益 (1895-1976), who became the 15th president of Ōtani University in 1950. Yamaguchi studied under Sylvain Lévi in Paris during 1927-29, where he learned to investigate Buddhist texts by comparing their Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese versions. The fact that this approach became normative in Buddhist Studies in Japan is in large part due to Yamaguchi's influence.

—漢訳四本対照 (Mahāyāna-saṃgraha: Comparative Edition of the Four Chinese Translation) was published posthumously in 1931. This volume, which prints the four Chinese translations of this text side by side for easy comparison (and includes the Tibetan text in the appendix) is a valuable work which can still be used with profit today.

Finally, the third area of Sasaki's interest was Kegon thought. His representative works in this field include *Busshin oyobi sono hyōgen* 佛心及其表現 (The Buddha-mind and its Expression, 1919), *Daijō Bukkyō taikēi Kegon kyōgaku* 大乘仏教体系華嚴教学 (Kegon Doctrine as a System of Mahāyāna Thought, 1919), *Yama tengū-e oyobi sono kaisetsu* 夜摩天宮会及其解説 (The Assembly at Yama's Heaven and its Explication, 1920) and *Kegonkyō no atarashiki mikata* 華嚴經の新しき見方 (A New Approach to the Kegon Sūtra, 1923). Sasaki was well versed in Kegon philosophy, but here again he attempted to get beyond the traditional interpretations of the Kegon dogmatics to grasp anew the essence of the teachings presented in the *Huayan Sūtra* (Japanese: *Kegonkyō*)²⁶.

4. Sasaki's Vision of Ōtani University as Expressed in "Ōtani University's Founding Spirit"

In 1924, Sasaki became the president of Ōtani University. In May of the following year, he gave an address entitled "Ōtani University's Founding Spirit" to the entering class of freshmen on the occasion of the matriculation ceremony. In this address, he set forth his desire "to liberate Buddhism to the world," that is to say, to make the insights of Buddhism available, not just to the Buddhist priesthood, but to everyone.²⁷

Sasaki begins this address by recounting the historical background of the university, starting with the establishment of the Takakura Gakuryō in the

26 Yamada 1973, 63.

27 "Ōtani University's Founding Spirit" is discussed in Yamada 1974, Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai 2001a, 307-312 and Oda 2002.

Edo period and tracing the various reforms and reorganizations that it subsequently underwent. After pointing out that Buddhism has long been an essential element in the spiritual and cultural life of Japan, possessing “an inexhaustible scholastic potential which we can proudly proclaim to the world today,” Sasaki turns to the main theme of his address: that, although Buddhism had long been considered the exclusive property of monks, it must now “be disseminated as an academic discipline to the people from our schools, that is to say, through education.” In this context, Sasaki stresses the achievements of his predecessors in gradually transforming the Takakura Gakuryō into a modern institution of higher learning. As noted above, he praises Kūkaku’s efforts at the Gohōjō to incorporate western subjects into the Ōtani denomination’s educational system, and alludes to Nanjō Bun’yū’s efforts to encourage the study of Sanskrit and Kiyozawa Manshi’s work in introducing the study of the philosophy of religion into the university. He also proudly mentions the founding of the English language Buddhist journal *The Eastern Buddhist*, which made it possible to publish the results of the research of the Ōtani University’s professors in a western language. This final point is significant, since it reveals Sasaki’s hope of making Ōtani University the world’s leading center of the study of Buddhism.

After describing its background, Sasaki turns to Ōtani University’s new curriculum, instituted when the school was granted university status under the University Law of 1918. Here he underscores the fact that the study of Buddhism holds a paramount place among the subjects taught at the university. However, he also emphasizes that the method used to study it differs radically from the traditional methodology of Buddhist Studies. Sasaki argues that, formerly, the Buddhist sūtras were read through the lens of later sectarian exegesis, or, to use Sasaki’s own words, “as they have been diced by the knives of the commentaries of the various Buddhist denominations.” But now, he proclaims, Buddhism is to be studied by coming face to face with Śākyamuni and Shinran and savoring “the true

meaning of the Buddhist sūtras themselves, just as they are, full of vitality.” Only then, Sasaki asserts, is it possible to get beyond narrow sectarian positions and recreate Buddhist Studies as a genuine academic discipline.

Through this new curriculum, Sasaki continues, he hopes to achieve three things. The first goal is to liberate Buddhism to the academic community, that is to say, to make the spiritual resources of Buddhism accessible to everyone, not just to the priesthood. The second point, which concerns the means by which to realize the first goal, is to spread Buddhism to the people through education. In 1924, two years after Ōtani University was granted university status and a year before Sasaki delivered “Ōtani University's Founding Spirit,” it became possible to grant teacher's licenses to the graduates of the university.²⁸ Sasaki hoped that these teachers would serve to disseminate Buddhism through their work in the classrooms. Finally, since it is impossible to achieve these goals without suitably trained people, Sasaki emphasizes the need to nurture the faith and religiosity of the students. Hence he sets forth the third and most important goal, to cultivate each student's “authentic religious character,” i.e., to foster genuine religiosity in the students.

At the end of the address, Sasaki sets forth three watchwords or “mottos” for fostering the religious sensibility of the students. These three mottos, which embody the educational goals of the university, are “to carry out your duties,” “to respect one another” and “be true to yourself.” Significantly, these three mottos are expressed using non-religious language. This is in sharp contrast to the position taken by Kiyozawa, the first president. In his “Address for the Opening of Shinshū University,” given when the university was moved to Tokyo in 1901, Kiyozawa used the traditional language of Shin Buddhism to declare that the university's goal is to nurture students who are capable of “having faith oneself and teaching others to have faith”

28 Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai 2001a, 648, entry for September 11, 1924.

(*jishin kyōninshin* 自信教人信), in other words, people of faith who are also²⁹ capable of spreading their faith to others. Although the educational ideal enunciated by Kiyozawa and Sasaki are fundamentally identical, the fact that the latter deliberately avoided using religious language in expressing it reveals how the university's self-image changed from that of a seminary of a specific Buddhist denomination to a that of a modern institution of higher learning open to all.

In March of 1926, less than a year after giving this address, Sasaki passed away.

5. The Text of “Ōtani University's Founding Spirit”

Finally, a word must be said concerning the text of “Ōtani University's Founding Spirit.” Presently, there exist several versions of this address. First, there remains a draft of this speech in Sasaki's own hand. This manuscript, kept in the Ōtani University Library, was published in 1975 on the occasion of his fiftieth memorial service.³⁰ Next, there is a version printed in the *Ōtani Daigaku Yōran* 大谷大学要覧 (Otani University Hand-³¹book) of 1925. As Oda Ken'yū has noted, this version of the address was changed in many places, sometimes quite drastically, to make its meaning more readily understandable to the readers. The third version is the one found in volume 6 the *Sasaki Gesshō Zenshū* 佐々木月樵全集 (Collected Works of Sasaki Gesshō) published in 1928.³² In this version, most of the additions found in the second version above are deleted. Hence, with the exception of some minor points, this third version is generally identical with

29 Tamura 2006, 85.

30 Ōtani Daigaku 1975. It is also reprinted in Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai 2001b, 532–38.

31 Reprinted in Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai 2001b, 538–45.

32 Sasaki Gesshō Zenshū Kankōkai 1928, 6: 823–31. It is also reprinted in Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai 2001b, 545–51.

the first version above. Next, there is a fourth version found in *Chōwa no kyōen* 調和の饗宴 (Banquet of Harmony), a collection of talks given on the occasion of Sasaki's seventh memorial service and published in 1933. This is based on the third version above but includes corrections made to the text by Tada Kanae.³³ The final version is that found in the pocket notebook (*gakusei techō* 学生手帳) distributed to the students of Ōtani University. This is also based on the version found in Sasaki's collected works but has been divided into seven sections, each with its own title, to make it easier to follow.

The translation which follows is based on the first of the five versions of the address mentioned above. However, for the convenience of the readers, the section titles found in the pocket notebook version of the text have also been included in the translation.

TRANSLATION

Ōtani University's Founding Spirit

(Ōtani daigaku juritsu no seishin 大谷大学樹立の精神)

Sasaki Gesshō 佐々木月樵

With the beginning of this academic year, this university has completed the reorganization of its preparatory (*yoka* 予科) and undergraduate (*gakubu* 学部) courses. I am very happy to have the opportunity today to welcome the many new students who are entering the preparatory course, the undergraduate course, and the graduate course (*senmonbu* 専門部) and attending this matriculation ceremony³⁴ here in this lecture hall in such a significant year.

33 These four versions are discussed at length in Oda 2002, 45–48.

34 The original term used here is *senseishiki* 宣誓式, literally, pledge ceremony. In Japan, the school year begins with a ceremony to welcome the entering class of

The History of the University

This university originally began two hundred and fifty-nine years ago, when the academy at the Kanzeonji 観世音寺 in Tsukushi 筑紫³⁵ was moved to the Kikokutei 枳殻邸 in Kyoto. Since then, it has served as a monastery (*shūdōin* 修道院) to train the youth of the Ōtani branch of the Honganji 本願寺³⁶. This monastery, in response to the changing times, was first organized as a modern academic institution in 1875 (Meiji 8)³⁷. After that, it was reorganized into [a comprehensive educational system consisting of] a university and middle school in 1894 (Meiji 27)³⁸. [Then] the study of Buddhism was divided along sectarian lines in 1899 (Meiji 32)³⁹. In 1911 (Meiji 44), Shinshū University was merged with the Takakura Gakuryō to form Shinshū Ōtani University, thereby achieving the goal of unifying our denomination's educational institutions⁴⁰.

In these ways, the monastery of the Tokugawa period first became a [modern] academic institution in the Meiji period. In terms of its structure,

freshmen to the university. One of the highlights of this ceremony is the reading of a pledge by a representative of the student body in which he or she vows to act in a way that is befitting of a university student.

35 Tsukushi refers to Chikuzen 筑前 and Chikugo 筑後 provinces, corresponding to present-day Fukuoka and Saga prefectures, respectively.

36 Popularly known as Higashi Honganji.

37 See page 17 above.

38 See page 17 above.

39 In article five of the Regulations for Shinshū University (Shinshū Daigaku Jōrei Seitei 真宗大学条例制定) established in this year, the undergraduate course was divided into four departments: Shūjō 宗乗 (Shin Buddhism), Kegon 華嚴, Tendai 天台 and Shōsō 性相 (i.e., Hossō 法相 dogmatics). See Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai 2001b, 193.

40 In 1911, Shinshū University was moved from Tokyo to Kyoto, where it was merged with Takakura Gakuryō to form Shinshū Ōtani University. On the circumstances surrounding this event, see Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai 2001a, 241-54.

it has undergone four major changes in its organization. However, in terms of content, studies of Buddhism and the other subjects remained just as before, with the same curriculum as in the Tokugawa period. But, as we moved into the Taishō period, various dramatic changes in the world of thought both within and outside Japan occurred, and our grave responsibilities as Buddhist educators became apparent to all. Hence, our university felt the necessity of carrying out a fundamental reform of the curriculum this time for sure. Since the spring of 1918 (Taishō 7), frequent meetings were held and eventually the current curriculum was established in 1920 (Taishō 9).⁴¹ Finally, this spring the reorganization of the entire curriculum was completed.⁴²

Having participated in those discussions from the beginning and now,⁴³ however incompetent, being charged with the position of university president, I believe that it is not only my honor, but also my duty, to take this opportunity to relay to the faculty and the student body the founding spirit of the university.

41 With a view towards applying for university status under the University Law, a new curriculum was established, featuring the requirement that all students must take classes on Buddhism and Shin Buddhism. Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai 2001a, 272–75, 280 and 289–92.

42 The new curriculum, established in 1920, went into effect the following year, starting with the entering class of 1921. Since both the preparatory and undergraduate courses were three years long, the curriculum of both courses would have been totally switched over to the new system when the freshman class entered the university in 1924. Sasaki took this opportunity to deliver “Ōtani University’s Founding Spirit” to the newly matriculated class, setting forth his vision of the future of the university.

43 Sasaki was a member of the Kyōgaku Shōgikai 教学商議會 (Consultation on Doctrine), a committee that met in 1920 to discuss, and ultimately propose, that Shinshū Ōtani University seek university status under the University Law of 1918. See Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Hensan Iinkai 2001a, 273.

Religion and Education

In the first place, it goes without saying that religion and education are the essential elements of the spirit of our country's people. Moreover, education must always be based on religion if it is to foster true human character, while religion must always rely on education if it is to keep from falling into superstition—an ever present danger. Among the various religions, Buddhism, in particular, has been an essential element of Oriental culture and the religion which has governed the lives of the people of our country from ancient times. In addition, among the various teachings of the Orient, Buddhism possesses an inexhaustible scholastic potential which we can proudly proclaim to the world today. Of course, inasmuch as Buddhism is first and foremost a religion, there is no question that it must be preached from the temple halls to all of the people of our country. But at the same time, I think it is hardly necessary to state that, from now on, it must be disseminated as an academic discipline to the people from our schools, that is to say, through education. This is even more so because, since the beginning of the Taishō era, this is what has been desired by people everywhere in our country and not just in the fields of religion and education. However, ever since the Meiji Restoration, state, public and private universities have been too busy importing Occidental civilization and have not had the leisure to reflect on matters within. Since that is the case, today and in the future, the inexhaustible treasury of the Dharma must be opened up and made widely available to the public. But at which school should this be done? And who should do it?

The Difficulties Faced by Our Forerunners

Fortunately, our predecessors have already considered this matter carefully since early on, and have cleared the path that we should follow in the future. That is to say, during the first years of Meiji, the study of non

-Buddhist works was prohibited in our academy. Hence people like the martyr Senshō-in 闍彰院⁴⁴ constructed the Gohōjō 護法場 (Academy to Protect the Dharma) outside our school,⁴⁵ and applied themselves to importing foreign philosophy. Worn-out copies of the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress* and other works he used there are preserved in our library. And even now, at his temple we can still see the memorial he wrote, with the martyr's blood distinctly visible on it.⁴⁶ The straw raincoat that he used during his travels is hung nearby in the hallway of our library and one look at it suffices to recall some of the many hardships that he had to endure. As for former President Nanjō, although he had conducted his comparative study of the Sanskrit and Chinese versions of the *Larger Sūtra* in England, it was only thirty-odd years later that he was finally able to lecture on it here.⁴⁷ Moreover philosophy of religion finally came to be taught at our university

44 Refers to Kūkaku 空覚 (1807-1871), a noted Higashi Honganji scholar-monk of the Meiji period. Kūkaku became a *gikō* 擬講 (novice lecturer) at the Takakura Gakuryō in 1849. Two years later, he was forced to take responsibility for a well-known case of heresy called the Tonjō jiken 頓成事件 (Sudden Enlightenment Controversy) and resigned. He was only able to return thirteen years later, in 1863. Kūkaku served as mediator between the Ōtani denomination and the government in the aftermath of the 1871 religious uprising (*ikki* 一揆) in Ōhama 大浜 in Mikawa 三河, in which graduates from the Gohōjō were involved. He was one of the leading teachers of the Gohōjō but was assassinated in 1871. Sasaki thought highly of Senshō-in and wrote a lengthy article to commemorate his life entitled "Senshō-in's Death" (Senshō-in no shi 闍彰院の死)," published in 1920 by Saihōji (Kūkaku's temple) on the occasion of the fiftieth memorial service for Senshō-in's death. The article is reprinted in Sasaki Gesshō Zenshū Kankōkai 1928, 6: 833-68.

45 On the Gohōjō, see pages 14-16 above.

46 When Kūkaku was assassinated, he was carrying a memorial address to the emperor requesting government support for Shin Buddhist efforts to propagate its teaching among the people in order to counter the missionary activities of Christianity. The text of the memorial is found in Sasaki Gesshō Zenshū Kankōkai 1928, 6: 863-68.

only as the result of unimaginable efforts by President Kiyozawa,⁴⁸ who served before President Nanjō.

However, thanks to the efforts of such pioneers, Buddhist and non-Buddhist academic disciplines were introduced into our university one after another. Not only has it become possible for anyone to study Sanskrit, Pāli, Tibetan and various non-Buddhist subjects openly and freely, but in celebration of former President Nanjō's seventieth birthday, we were able to publish the Sanskrit edition of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, with the professors and students of our university doing everything, from the casting of the type to the typesetting.⁴⁹ We have come to the point where we occasionally publish a part of our research in our English language journal, *The Eastern Buddhist*, so that, in some small measure, the results of our studies on Buddhism are now being exported to the world. These are matters of mutual congratulation. However, we should not remain satisfied with this.

In this way, since the beginning of the Taishō period, both the inward and outward study of Buddhist doctrines, undertaken from both Buddhist and

47 Nanjō Bun'yū, a pioneer of Sanskrit studies in Japan, served as the president of Shinshū University from 1903-1911 and 1914-1923. He studied Sanskrit at Oxford under F. Max Müller (1823-1900) from 1879 to 1884. In 1883, Nanjō published *A Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka*, popularly known as the *Nanjō Catalogue*, as well as *Sukhāvatī-vyūha*, a Sanskrit edition of the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life* which he edited with Müller.

48 Kiyozawa Manshi was the leader of a religious movement called Seishinshugi 精神主義 (Spiritual Awareness). Kiyozawa was born into a samurai family in Owari (now Aichi prefecture). He became a priest of the Ōtani denomination in 1878 and studied religious philosophy at Tokyo University. In 1888, he returned to Kyoto to become principal of the Jinjō Chūgakkō 尋常中学校 (Normal Middle School) there. Soon thereafter, he embarked on an experiment in asceticism and became ill with tuberculosis. In 1896, he began a movement to reform the Ōtani denomination which ultimately ended in failure. He was appointed the first president of Shinshū University in 1901 but resigned the next year. He died in 1903 from tuberculosis.

49 Nanjō 1923.

non-Buddhist perspectives, have been conducted together within our university. However, since various new subjects were added and the curriculum expanded, they have become entangled with traditional Buddhist doctrinal studies. Hence, the practice of the Buddhist path and academic research into Buddhism came to be perceived as being mutually contradictory, causing needless worry to the public for a time. Taking all these matters into consideration, our university has here undertaken a fundamental revision of its educational system.

The Aspiration of our University

As Article One of our bylaws states, our university aims to provide instruction in the academic skills required to undertake research in Buddhist Studies, Philosophy and Humanities and, moreover, to delve into their most profound depths.⁵⁰ As indicated in the bylaws, our university differs from other national, public and private universities, as well as the universities of various Buddhist denominations, in that we place Buddhist Studies at the head of the various academic disciplines—all instruction and research are centered around it. Therefore, the preparatory course of our university includes classes on the fundamentals of Buddhist texts, which can be found neither in other high schools nor in preparatory courses of other public or private universities. Specifically, in the first year, students learn about Śākyamuni as depicted in the Āgamas and about the life and teachings of Shinran. This is because we firmly believe that Buddhism always starts with Śākyamuni, while the culmination of Buddhism as a religion is truly to be found in Shin Buddhism (Jōdo Shinshū or True Pure Land School). For this reason, freshmen first come face to face with Śākyamuni and Shinran.

50 In 1924, the Ōtani University was reorganized into three departments: Buddhist Studies (Bukkyōgakka 仏教学科), Philosophy (Tetsugakuka 哲学科) and Humanities (Jinbungakka 人文学科). However, all students were required to take courses in Buddhism and Shin Buddhism.

Subsequently, after starting from Śākyamuni, during the second and third years, they become familiar, on the one hand, with Śākyamuni's sūtras, such as the *Huayan*, *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Lotus* and *Mahāparinirvāṇa*. At the same time, on the other hand, they also gain clear understanding of the *Larger Sūtra*, *Contemplation Sūtra* and *Smaller Sūtra*, the fundamental sūtras for Shinran Shōnin 親鸞聖人 (1173-1262). Thus, in paying close attention to these strands, the warp and woof of Buddhism, students come face to face with most of the important Buddhist sūtras. When I say "come face to face," I mean, not to study the sūtras as they have been diced by the knives of the commentaries of the various Buddhist denominations, as was the case until now, but to savor the true meaning of the Buddhist sūtras themselves, just as they are, full of vitality. Unless this foundation is complete, no one can enter the undergraduate course or, I fear, even embark on the study of Buddhism.

Next, there are at least three goals that Buddhist Studies in the undergraduate course of our university should aim for. First, we have liberated Buddhism to the academic community.⁵¹ Second, we must spread Buddhism to the people of the country through education. However, since it is impossible to achieve these two great objectives unless we have the right people, thirdly we must attend to the cultivation of [each person's] authentic religious character. So far, Buddhist Studies has been the study of dogmas limited to one or another particular sect. Although it was called an academic discipline, in actuality, it was not academic. It was nothing more than the maintenance of tradition and continuation of oral transmission limited to a particular sect or sub-sect. Previously, I said that our university was called Shinshū University, but in actuality, we could not even produce one person of Shinshū, let alone a "true disciple of the Buddha."

51 Although Sasaki is discussing the three things that need to be done, he uses the past tense here. It is most likely that Sasaki thought the first goal was already achieved, if only provisionally, with the creation of the new curriculum for Ōtani University.

Rather, we made people doubt whether we were a school for training Tendai monks, Kegon monks or Hossō monks, because, in the final analysis, we sought to transmit Buddhism [by dividing the curriculum] along sectarian lines and we failed to properly teach Buddhism as an academic discipline. Therefore, under the present system, Buddhist Studies is no longer taught along sectarian lines, but instead as an academic discipline. In other words, this frees Buddhism as a whole from sectarian barriers and, at the same time, will lead to the liberation of academics, both worldly and transworldly.

The Liberation of Buddhism

Inasmuch as Buddhism is not the exclusive property of monks, I believe that Buddhist Studies should also not remain the exclusive property of particular Buddhist denominations. That is to say, insofar as Buddhism is a religion for all humanity, it is necessary for Buddhist Studies to be an academic discipline open to everyone. This is the reason why our university strives to liberate Buddhism to the academic community, so that it will eventually spread, directly and indirectly, among the people. Among them, the only form of Buddhism which remains as a living religion is our Shin Buddhism. However, since Shin Buddhism is the ultimate teaching of Mahāyāna Buddhism, we can pursue it as the academic discipline [called Shin Buddhist Studies], deepening our investigation into it from here on. This is why we retain the name of the religious denomination [i.e., Shin Buddhism] in referring to the academic discipline.

Now, the expressions “Shin Buddhist Studies” (Shinshūgaku 真宗学) and “Humanities” are new terms we first used in 1918 (Taishō 7) to refer to departments and courses of study in our university.⁵² I am especially happy that this term “Shin Buddhist Studies” has become quickly accepted by

52 The study of Shin Buddhism was formerly called Shūjō 宗乗 (Sectarian Studies). Initially, there was considerable opposition to using the neologism “Shin Buddhist Studies” in the place of the traditional term “Shūjō.”

society at large in just a few years. I eagerly hope that the study of Shin Buddhism as an academic discipline will be deepened in the future, and that, at the same time, as a living religion, it will become the source for the cultivation of religious character among people at large.

In our university, Buddhism is studied first and foremost in this liberating sense. Moreover, this liberation of the “Dharma” also requires that it be liberated to the “person” in due course. Therefore, taking the decision to accept both priests and laymen as students, our university has confirmed for the first time in terms of education, the significance of the Shin Buddhist teaching of “neither monk nor layman” through the present system.⁵³ The reason why we have made it possible for the graduates to receive their respective religious and educational licenses, is none other than to make it easy for them to carry out the second goal of our university.⁵⁴ At any rate, the General Provisions for Universities established by the government states that attention must be paid to cultivating human character and the Shinshū Foundation governing our university stipulates that education is to be carried out “in the spirit of Shin Buddhism.”⁵⁵ Our university has made this one class, Shin Buddhist Studies, a requirement in all three departments, as a means to help cultivate the students’ religious character. Beyond that, it is up to the students to study and grow spiritually.

53 In 1207, when Hōnen’s 法然 (1133–1212) nenbutsu movement was outlawed, Shinran, as one of Hōnen’s prominent disciples, was defrocked, given the secular name Fujii Yoshizane 藤井善信 and exiled to Echigo 越後 province. Subsequently, Shinran came to refer to himself as being “neither monk nor layman.” Shin Buddhist priests have followed Shinran’s example ever since and have described their status as that of being “neither monk nor layman.”

54 In 1924, it became possible to grant teacher’s licenses to the graduates of the university.

55 Under the University Law of 1918, private universities were to be chartered by their respective juridical foundations (*zaidan hōjin* 財団法人).

Academic Tradition

Among western universities, those of Germany place high value on academic freedom, those of France emphasize getting licenses, those of England foster gentlemen and those of America stress practical skills. From 1921 to 1922, I made an inspection tour of the universities in Europe and America. Not only did I personally observe the specific character [of the universities of the respective countries] but I also saw that the famous universities in all these countries have a common feature that could not be found at all among the public and private universities of our country. What is this common feature? It is the religious atmosphere found inside the universities. In terms of the facilities [contributing to this atmosphere], they all have imposing chapels or churches on their campuses. On Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings, the students gather there to praise the glories of God. Moreover, I also saw the names of the deceased graduates carved beautifully on their walls. This, in fact, is nothing special, since many of these famous universities are private schools, originally established and opened by a religious institution or the church. Wasn't [it the case with] King's School in Canterbury where Augustine preached?⁵⁶ Didn't Sorbonne University start out as the dormitory of Sainte-Genevieve Abbey that even now stands behind it?⁵⁷

For this reason, if a university which is distinctly Japanese or genuinely based on Oriental culture is to come into existence in our country, [centers

56 Augustine of Canterbury led a mission to convert England to Christianity and became the first archbishop of Canterbury in 597. He is credited with establishing a school in Canterbury which later became King's College.

57 In the Japanese text, the name of the university is given as "Soromon daigaku ソロモン大学" but it clearly refers to the Sorbonne. In the journal of his travel to Europe and America, Sasaki refers to the Sorbonne as Solomon University. See Sasaki 2007b, 2. Sainte-Genevieve Abbey was one of the institutions that later developed in the University of Paris, also known as the Sorbonne.

of Buddhist learning must be liberated to the people]. If perhaps the halls of Hōryūji 法隆寺, Kōfukuji 興福寺, Mt. Hiei 比叡山 and Mt. Kōya 高野山 had rapidly evolved and been opened up to the people at large, becoming centers of culture, I think that a distinctively Japanese university would have been created. After the transmission of Buddhism, in the famous temples at least, the Golden Halls for enshrining the Buddha and Lecture Halls for scholastic study were constructed. Of the two, the Golden Halls, which are the religious centers [of the temples], were liberated to the people at large from early on but the Lecture Halls, the centers for academic learning, have been closed off to them forever. However, in recent years, the various Buddhist schools have raced to liberate the Lecture Halls of the past—this is to say, the academies (*gakuryō* 学寮)—[to the people], and the growing trend is to remake them into ordinary universities no different from secular schools. However, is it really possible to create universities like those in the Occident in this way? In my opinion, the main purpose of liberating Buddhism is not only to liberate it to the world. Its true liberation must be accomplished by liberating it as a scholarly discipline to the academic world and disseminating it to the people at large. If we forget this absolute truth (*paramārtha satya*) and, even worse, forget [that our task is] to cultivate [each person's] authentic religious character and vainly follow the currents of society, this would lead to the destruction, not only of our religious school, but of Buddhism as well.

The Three Mottos

Hence, from now on, you should further reflect on and examine yourselves, keeping in mind our university's three mottos for molding authentic religious character: carry out your duties, respect one another and be true to yourselves. In this way, I hope each of you will become a genuinely

58 Halls enshrining the main image of the temple.

human being. When you have completed your studies and self-cultivation, the goal of our university is fulfilled. Shin Buddhism is the school of Buddhism that takes the truth (*shin* 真) as its fundamental principle. Not only is the truth the object [pursued] in ordinary academic studies, but it is also the most important watchword for the cultivation of an authentic religious character in our university.

Starting this year, all the grades of the undergraduate and preparatory courses conform to the new academic system. Hence, along with all of you, the university itself is making a new start today. Thus today's matriculation ceremony is, in itself, the matriculation ceremony of our young university. Be aware that you are in the same entering class with the university itself. I sincerely hope that you will keep this in mind and act appropriately.

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