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Tracing Modernity's Flows: Buddhist Currents in the Pacific World

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BEFORE I CONSIDER BIG QUESTIONS, including questions about “religion” and “modernity,” I want to introduce a small and obscure artifact, a three-page pamphlet I recently found in an archive.¹ A topic as grand as ours, “Buddhism and Modernity,” seems to require a more prominent and high-brow source as its starting point; but, as I hope to show, starting small—and with an obscure artifact linked with ritual practice—might help.

This modest source announces its title, *Rejoice*, on its cover. The place of publication—San Francisco—appears in very small font along the bottom. As for the author, a phrase in the lower left corner says it is “taken from the Gospel of Buddha by U. Dhammaloka.” So, it claims, someone named Dhammaloka (c. 1856–c. 1914) took what follows from a text called *The Gospel of Buddha*. Just below the pamphlet’s title, a phrase hints at the distributor’s intention: “To be used at the Service of the Buddhist Missions.” Presumably because it was highly valued or similar pamphlets already had been stolen, a prohibition appears at the top in capital letters for emphasis: “NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THE BUDDHIST MISSION.”

The pamphlet’s second page includes three metered stanzas of eight lines each. The opening lines reveal why the users of this text might “rejoice”: “He who the raveled knot unwinds, Buddha, our Lord, has rent the veil [*sic*].”

¹ *Rejoice* (Dhammaloka n.d.), is available in Series 2: Manuscripts: Publications, 1895–1915, Sub-series 3: Articles by Author, Box 68: Article Manuscripts: Folder 51: Dhammaloka, U., *Rejoice*, The Open Court Publishing Company Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois. See the frontispiece for an image of the cover. I advocated a similar approach in Tweed 2005, pp. 249–81.

A careful reader also will notice three editorial marks in pen on that page—revising a line, correcting a misspelling, and changing a word.

So someone altered the verse on page two, and we discover why on the pamphlet's third and final page. There the reader encounters Western-style musical notation. For those who cannot read sheet music, instructions below the title indicate that it is set to the tune, "Ye Banks and Braes." So even though the archival record gives no identifying information, we can conclude that this pamphlet probably was produced and used by a Japanese Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 institution, the Buddhist Mission of North America (hereafter abbreviated as BMNA), as that mainland organization affiliated with the Nishi Honganji 西本願寺 headquarters in Kyoto was called until 1944, and it was intended for use in San Francisco.² The text is a *gāthā* or hymn intended for performance in a worship service, though without further evidence we cannot say if it ever actually was sung.

We also cannot say for sure when it was published. As Keiko Wells and Ama Michihiro have noted, Meiji Shin Buddhists "enthusiastically sang songs" and started to "incorporate Western music," although a Buddhist priest in Hiroshima produced the first *Buddhist Song Book for People* only in 1903, the Kyoto headquarters issued its first service book, *The Sacred Text (Seiten)*, which included twenty-six songs with Western-style melodies, in 1912, and the "first full-scale ritual that included Western music" was held in 1917.³ Since the first Shin Buddhist service book in English did not appear until 1924, *The Buddhist's Vade Mecum* (Latin for "go with me") compiled by Ernest Hunt (1876–1967) and Dorothy Hunt (1886–1983), and *Rejoice* was not included there, it seems that this separately printed pamphlet almost certainly circulated during the first years of missionary activity in the continental United States.⁴ We can estimate the pamphlet's

² It was called the Buddhist Church of San Francisco by 1905. On that, see Buddhist Churches of America 1974, p. 144.

³ The quotations and information here are from, in order, Wells 2010, p. 164; Ama 2011, p. 26. I take other information about *gāthās* and rituals from Ama's volume (Ama 2011, pp. 88–97). See also Wells 2002, pp. 75–99.

⁴ Hunt and Hunt 1924. This volume is sometimes attributed only to Ernest, though that is misleading and unfair. I call the Hunts "editors" here, for want of a better term; but in the preface of the 1924 edition the two described "the labour of *compiling* this Hymnal" (Hunt and Hunt 1924, p. 2). They went on to clarify their role: "Many of the Hymns are original, the others, together with the Catechism, have been compiled and adapted from various sources" (Hunt and Hunt 1924, p. 2). Dorothy composed a number of those original hymns. For a helpful analysis of this volume, including Ernest's preference for Theravadin doctrine and Protestant forms, see Masumi Kikuchi's "The First Shin Buddhist English Service Book: Hunt's *The Buddhist's Vade Mecum* (1924)," which is available from the conference program page

date as falling sometime between 1899, with the founding of the Buddhist Mission to North America in San Francisco, and approximately 1912.⁵ Getting more precise, it was probably printed and used between 1900, when the first devotional and study group for non-Japanese sympathizers and converts formed in San Francisco, and 1907, just after the city's devastating earthquake and when the BMNA stopped publishing its English-language periodical, *The Light of Dharma*.

The discovery of this pamphlet might be welcomed by specialists who study Buddhism's history in the Americas, since we previously had believed, as Wells put it, "singing was not part of the religious activity of Shin Buddhists on the US mainland until the temples starting used *gāthās* (Buddhist hymns) composed by ministers in order to create Sunday services modeled after those of Christians."⁶ In other words, singing was not part of regular collective worship before the Hunts' 1924 service book, or least until after Nishi Honganji issued its first service book in 1912. If *Rejoice* was part of ritual practice in San Francisco, as it seems to have been, we might conclude that our earlier impression still stands, since this English-language song almost certainly would have been sung not by Issei immigrants raised in Shin temples in Japan but by cradle Christians who embraced Buddhism as adults in America. Some might dismiss them as—to use a phrase I coined—"nightstand Buddhists."⁷ However, if we take seriously the practice of those Caucasian sympathizers and adherents in San Francisco's Dharma Sangha of Buddha (hereafter abbreviated as DSB) at the turn of the century, then this evidence enriches our understanding of both the history of devotional *gāthās* and the practice of early converts. This pamphlet points to the ritual use of music in the continental United States earlier than we had thought and among those I—and others—had interpreted as focused on reading and not participating in ritual.⁸

for the Fifteenth Annual Conference of the International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies, accessed 9 November 2012, http://www.iasbs.net/pdf/2011_IASBS_conference/Kikuchi_Eng_2011_IASBS..pdf. For Dorothy Hunt's birth and death dates, I rely on information in Social Security Administration, *Social Security Death Index*, Master File.

⁵ To make sure I was not overlooking anything as I established the date of *Rejoice*, I consulted Professor Ama Michihiro, who has written about the San Francisco mission and Buddhist *gāthās*; and he concurs that it is most likely in "the first decade of the twentieth century": Ama Michihiro to the author, electronic mail, 22 July 2011. I am grateful for his help.

⁶ Wells 2010, p. 164.

⁷ Tweed 1999, pp. 71–90.

⁸ Tweed 2000, pp. 26–34, 35–39, 39–47, 88–97. In that book I discuss Japanese American Shin Buddhists and the DSB (pp. 35–39), as well as texts that were important for American Buddhist sympathizers and converts (pp. 26–34, 39–47, 88–97).

However, I think this pamphlet also might have implications for other specialists, both scholars of Buddhism and interpreters of modernity. In this article, I want to ask whether this early twentieth-century *gāthā*—or, more precisely, its production, circulation, and use—offers clues about religious modernity. In answering that question—and allowing the focus to expand and contract as we go—I want to first clarify how I use the term “modernity”—and related terms—since there has been a great deal of discussion of it in the humanities, arts, and social sciences. Second, I continue by relying on this case study to illustrate three features of religious modernity—what I call *translocation*, *transtemporality*, and *transfluence*. I highlight Buddhism in the continental United States, especially turn-of-the-century San Francisco, but also note influences from and continuities with Japan between 1868 and 1912—the Meiji period in Japan and the late-Victorian and Progressive Era in the United States. During that time, I suggest, piety was propelled by accelerated flows across time and space. Observers at the turn of the century noticed the first signs of what would become after 1945 the “space-time compression” of late modernity. In turn, that moving across created plural practices, artifacts, and beliefs that were transmitted in entirely new or significantly transformed institutions, including but not only the Buddhist Mission of North America and, for those Euro-Americans in San Francisco, the Dharma Sangha of Buddha.

The Meaning of “Modernity”

Scholarly usage of the related terms has varied across time and disciplines, and debate has ensued about the meaning of the adjective *modern* as well as related nouns like *modernism* and *modernity*. As a recent “roundtable” among nine historians demonstrated, the terms continue to be contested, even within the same discipline.⁹ The introduction to that roundtable makes a helpful distinction, however, between “weak” and “strong” versions of the idea of modernity.¹⁰ In the weak version, modernity is only a chronological marker; in the strong version, it signals more than periodization. Both have their uses, though I prefer the latter.

⁹ This roundtable was published as “Historians and the Question of ‘Modernity’: AHR Roundtable,” in vol. 116, no. 3 (2011) of *The American Historical Review*, pp. 631–751.

¹⁰ “‘Introduction,’ Historians and the Question of ‘Modernity’: AHR Roundtable” 2011, p. 631. No author is cited for the roundtable’s introduction; presumably it was the responsibility of one or more members of the journal’s editorial staff.

In the simplest terms, the word *modern* means nothing more than “what is happening today.”¹¹ In that vernacular sense, to say that Buddhism is modern does not tell us much, unless we carefully analyze how historical actors or historic texts used that word or similar ones. And, as one historian of Japan has argued, Japanese in the Meiji period were “obsessed” with modernity and with how their age differed from what preceded it; the same was true in the United States, historians have suggested, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.¹² What is most important to notice in these cases is why and how historical actors appealed to terms like “modern” or “new.” What cultural work did it do?

Another use of the term modernity in the weak sense, as chronological marker, organizes the past into periods. Historians of Europe, the Americas, and Asia now talk about the early modern period, which is dated as starting anytime from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries.¹³ Using the adjective *modern* to divide periods and mark transitions is fine, though we should make some further distinctions. I would distinguish, for example, early modern, mid-modern, and late modern, with the periods' dates varying according to time and place. In terms of that typology, my previous research—and this article—focuses on the mid-modern period in the United States and Japan or, more broadly, the Pacific World.¹⁴

Moving toward stronger versions of the meaning of the modern, some interpreters appeal to a related term, *modernism*. As I would use it, that noun refers either to an intentional *rejection* of some earlier aesthetic precedent, as in the arts, or a self-conscious *accommodation* of a contemporary

¹¹ Doss 2002, pp. 11–16, 37.

¹² The quotation is from Gluck 2011, p. 679. On the United States and modernity, see “American Modernities, Past and Present,” Dorothy Ross’s contribution to the AHR roundtable (Ross 2011, pp. 702–14).

¹³ “‘Introduction,’ Historians and the Question of ‘Modernity’: AHR Roundtable” 2011, p. 632. For an example of a scholar of Japanese Buddhism who uses the phrase “early modern” to refer to the Tokugawa or Edo period (1603–1868) see Williams 2005, p. 2. For a subtle analysis of “the first flowering of modernity in America” between 1680 and 1770 that also traces its implications for religion, see Butler 2000, p. 1. Butler refers to the “modern,” “modernization,” and “modernity” in the introduction (pp. 1–7) and assesses the historical literature in the notes (e.g., p. 251).

¹⁴ As a chronological marker, I would say *late modernity* starts in the United States and Japan with post-World War II technological innovations, the introduction of jet planes and computers, which increase the time-space compression even more. For one proposed summary of late-modernity’s chief features—globalization, mediatization, and post-secularism—see Woodhead 2009, pp. 9–11.

intellectual trend.¹⁵ So we can talk about religious modernism, although in my 1992 study I primarily used that noun—and the related adjective—to name a period and analyze a subculture: to describe beliefs and practices that emerged after 1912 in the United States (*modernist culture*) and to contrast it with the cultural context for Americans' initial encounter with Buddhism (*Victorian culture*).¹⁶

For some historians, modernism refers to the diverse, even contradictory, cultural *responses* to modernity.¹⁷ It refers, in other words, to cultural forms that celebrate or condemn a historically specific set of social conditions that emerged in Europe in the sixteenth century and has predominated since the nineteenth century, including capitalist economy, mass production, accelerated travel, improved communication, urbanization, migration, and nationalism. Religious practice that responded to those conditions would be called *modernist*, in this approach. Its implied opposite would be *countermodernist*. Stated that way, however, this approach is too inclusive. To refine usage, I reserve the label *modernist* for those who self-consciously accommodated cultural trends in religion or repudiated past patterns in the arts and, thereby, restrict its referent to only some of those living at a particular time and place, say turn-of-the-century Kyoto or San Francisco.

Further, I prefer to focus on the other related term, *modernity*. Historians can categorize Buddhists in Victorian America and Meiji Japan as *modern* or *modernist*—especially those who used words like “modern” or “new,” or phrases like *shin bukkuyō* 新仏教 (new Buddhism). However, it is most useful to consider how Buddhism's advocates responded to the social conditions of “modernity.”¹⁸

¹⁵ One classic formulation of religious modernism that helpfully frames it as accommodation is Hutchison 1976. Another interesting perspective, which focuses on what modernists shared in their thinking about method, is Lofton 2006, pp. 374–402. For a brief discussion of the meaning of modernism in art, see Doss 2002, pp. 11–17. On Buddhist “modernism” and “modern” Buddhism, see Lopez 2002, pp. ix–x; McMahan 2008, pp. 6–8.

¹⁶ Tweed 2000, pp. xxxiv–xxxvi, 8–13, 134–40, 157–62. Framing events in terms of Victorian culture, I now realize, might lead some readers to think that culture is a shared static *thing* instead of a contested ongoing *process*, though that terminology can provide the historian with clear chronological boundaries and allow wide-ranging cultural analysis.

¹⁷ Smith 1996a, pp. 775–79. See also in the same volume his entry on “Modernity” (Smith 1996b).

¹⁸ On *shin bukkuyō* and Buddhist modernists in Japan, see Ketelaar 1990; Snodgrass 2003, pp. 115–36, 273–77; and the special issue of *Japanese Religions* (vol. 34, no. 2) under the guest editorship of Yoshinaga Shin'ichi with the theme “The *New Buddhism* of the Meiji Period: Modernization through Internationalization.” On US Buddhist converts and sympathizers as “anti-modernists,” see Lears 1981, pp. 225–41.

Building on the theoretical framework I outlined in *Crossing and Dwelling*, which uses aquatic metaphors to imagine religion and culture as a “confluence of flows,” let me elaborate by offering a few observations about the nature and sources of “modernity.”¹⁹ As many scholars now agree, there have been multiple simultaneous and converging “modernities,” some more secularizing and some more sacralizing—and each secularizing or sacralizing in slightly different ways.²⁰ So Buddhists in Meiji Kyoto and Victorian San Francisco were just being modern in different ways. Despite these differences, the time-space compression of modernity had common sources. On both sides of the Pacific, improvements in communication and transportation accelerated the pace and closed the distance. Telegraphs and telephones had an impact later, but initially printing got easier and cheaper, just as new railroads and steamships could effectively transport tracts, magazines, and books. People and practices also could move less expensively and more quickly. So in the Meiji-Victorian Pacific World, a vast transoceanic cultural space, modernity emerged from the crossing of cultural currents, including mass communication, transnational migration, and accelerated travel. *Modernity* in the circum-Pacific region should be understood as the converging of plural ways of being human, cultural currents propelled along by “modern” transport (like steamships, streetcars, and trains) and channeled by “modern” media (like print, telegrams, and photographs). Culture—including art and religion—was always mediated by communication and travel technology; and those technological mediations constrained but did not determine “modern” cultural expressions. Finally, as some sociologists have argued, a defining feature of modernity was not secularity but pluralism.²¹ To be shaped by modernity in the Pacific—and in the Atlantic World too—was to be carried along by a stream of multiple, often competing, cultural practices, some of which were secularist and some of which appealed to “suprahuman forces” and imagined an “ultimate horizon” of human life—and, so, were religious by my definition.²²

¹⁹ Tweed 2006, pp. 54–79. I reflected on the implications of that theory for the study of Buddhism in Tweed 2011c. I also have discussed “modernity” and distinguished types of modernism and countermodernism in Tweed 2011a, pp. 6–7, 13–14, 24–25, 41–43, 230, 232, 237.

²⁰ Smith 2008, pp. 1569–75.

²¹ Berger, Davie, and Fokas 2008, p. 12.

²² Tweed 2006, pp. 54, 73–76. For a refinement of my view of the relation between the religious and the secular that suggests we classify practices along a continuum, see my article “Space,” which appeared in a special issue on “Key Words in Material Religion” in *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art, and Belief* (Tweed 2011b).

The Gāthā and Translocative Flows: Multidirectionality

As Richard Jaffe has noted in a discussion of Meiji Japan, we can trace “the emergence of a plurality of intertwined modernities that have diverse origins and many directions.”²³ That is true of the United States, too. It is that multidirectionality, or *translocation* to use my word, that is a first feature of religious modernity. Buddhist flows in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries circulated throughout the Pacific World, the Atlantic World, and the Western Hemisphere. Many texts, institutions, and practices could illustrate this feature; but the pamphlet *Rejoice*, a text produced amidst translocative flows, is an especially illuminating example. Tracing the converging influences on that pamphlet takes us—among other places—from the Japanese Buddhist Mission in San Francisco to Ireland, Germany, England, India, Burma, Japan, and Singapore.

Let us start with two hints about the song’s origin included on the pamphlet’s cover. It says, first, Dhammaloka took it from another text. But who is Dhammaloka? To answer that question I have joined with collaborators in Ireland and Canada (Brian Bocking, Laurence Cox, and Alicia Turner). They are now working on a co-authored study, and the four of us also contributed essays on Dhammaloka to a special issue of a journal, *Contemporary Buddhism*.²⁴ Many biographical details still elude us, but we know that he was an Irish-born, working-class Buddhist convert who took the robes of a novice Theravadin monk in Burma before 1900. We think he was born in the 1850s and died in the 1910s, and before and after his public career as a Buddhist spokesperson between 1900 and 1911 he traveled widely in Asia. He also emigrated to New York and spent time in California as an itiner-

²³ Jaffe 2001, p. 7.

²⁴ Alicia Turner, Laurence Cox, and Brian Bocking served as guest editors of a special issue with the theme “U Dhammaloka, ‘The Irish Buddhist’: Rewriting the History of Early Western Buddhism” in the November 2010 issue of *Contemporary Buddhism: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (vol. 11, no 2), pp. 125–286. My contribution to that issue was a response to my colleagues’ three papers, though I also reported some new biographical research on the Irish convert, including on his migration to the United States (Tweed 2010, pp. 281–86). In preparation for a presentation in Cork, Ireland, I did more research on Dhammaloka and discovered the pamphlet *Rejoice*. I found its ultimate origin in a text by Paul Carus. I also explored the connections between Dhammaloka and the Japanese Buddhists in San Francisco and located a copy of his piece in *The Light of Dharma*. I am indebted to my three collaborators, however, as they helped me to track down the plagiarized source for that magazine article and the person who put Carus’s prose into verse. As we noted when we gathered in Ireland in 2011, the give and take of collaborative research sometimes makes it difficult to recall who suggested what. I want to signal clearly, however, my debt and gratitude to my colleagues.

ant and worked on ships traversing the Sacramento River and crossing the Pacific before the turn of the century.

More important for understanding the pamphlet, Dhammaloka's travels as a public advocate for Buddhism took him to Singapore between August 1903 and January 1905, as Bocking has shown; and with the support of a Chinese lay Buddhist merchant and the help of "Reverend Ocha," the leader of the local Japanese Buddhist mission, in the fall of 1903 Dhammaloka opened a "Buddhist Mission," sometimes called the "English" mission.²⁵ A school for boys followed in January 1904. That same month, the barefoot Irish monk in the yellow robes also "instituted a Buddhist Sunday school with a Buddhist hymn book in English [with] 'the Buddhist principles in metre being set to known English tunes.'"²⁶ So it is likely that someone in Dhammaloka's circle in Singapore set that text to music for devotional use at his mission.

We do not know how the pamphlet ended up at San Francisco's BMNA, though the Japanese priest in Singapore might have been the link. Dhammaloka also had his own Japanese connections. He had traveled to the country earlier as a sailor, and in 1902 he was the only non-Japanese speaker at the launch of the Bankoku Bukkyō Seinen Rengōkai 万国仏教青年連合会 (International Young Men's Buddhist Association) at Takanawa Bukkyō Daigaku 高輪仏教大学 (Takanawa Buddhist University), the Jōdo Shinshū college.²⁷ Dhammaloka also was familiar with *The Light of Dharma*, the San Francisco organization's English-language periodical; and in 1902 an article attributed to him even appeared there.²⁸ So whether Dhammaloka

²⁵ Here and below the information and quotations about Dhammaloka's Singapore connection are taken from "'A Man of Work and Few Words'?: Dhammaloka Beyond Burma" (Bocking 2010, pp. 255–66). Bocking, Turner, and Cox also further clarified some details about Dhammaloka as I prepared this article. I am grateful for their help.

²⁶ Bocking 2010, p. 258.

²⁷ Here and below the information and quotations about Dhammaloka's Japanese connections are taken from Bocking 2010, pp. 236–45.

²⁸ Dhammaloka's "Buddhism and Christianity" appeared in the June 1902 issue of *The Light of Dharma* (Dhammaloka 1902). I searched the subscription list of *The Light of Dharma*, the English-language magazine published by the Japanese Buddhist priests in San Francisco, to see if I could learn more about Dhammaloka's transnational networks. There were several subscribers living in and around Rangoon, where he lived for much of that period. Dhammaloka's name does not appear, though we know a copy of *The Light of Dharma* was sent to his Burmese monastery. I originally discovered this subscription list in the late 1980s in a box in the basement of the Buddhist Churches of America headquarters in San Francisco. That source now can be found in the following archive: *List of Subscription, Contribution, and Exchange: The Light of Dharma*, 19 May 1904, Buddhist Churches of America Collection, Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, California.

mailed the text that became the pamphlet—or one of his fellow Buddhists in Singapore, Japan, or America did—that composition set to Western style music in Singapore somehow found its way to San Francisco.

But where did the versified lyrics come from? The prose text that someone in Dhammaloka's circle adapted as a song was attributed to *The Gospel of Buddha*, a popular book by the German-born Buddhist sympathizer living in the United States, Paul Carus (1852–1919). The first introductory section of Carus's book was entitled "Rejoice." Those two pages began, "Rejoice at the glad tidings! Buddha, our Lord, has found the root of all evil. He has shown us the way of salvation."²⁹ The link between the published hymn and Carus's text explains why I discovered the redacted pamphlet in an Illinois archive associated with Carus; and it raises interesting questions about who made those editorial marks on the archived pamphlet. It might have been Carus or—and this is an intriguing possibility—his assistant there from 1897 to 1908, Suzuki Daisetsu Teitarō 鈴木大拙貞太郎 (1870–1966; also known as D. T. Suzuki).

The other dangling question is, who transformed Carus's prose into the verse found on the pamphlet's second and third pages? We do not know who set the verse to music in Singapore; but my collaborators and I have found the source for the versified lyric. Our attempt to follow the flows that converged in this pamphlet takes us to England and India. It was Dawsonne M. Strong, a British-born former soldier in India, who presented Buddhism sympathetically in his 1899 book, *The Metaphysic of Christianity and Buddhism*, and in the appendix he presented "metrical adaptations" of Buddhist texts, including the section from Carus's book entitled "Rejoice."³⁰ Strong offered a loose adaptation, although there can be no question of his source, since that British sympathizer explicitly cites *The Gospel of Buddha*. In turn, whoever finalized the song reproduced in the San Francisco pamphlet took some liberties with Strong's metered version, shortening and editing those six stanzas to make them easier to sing. However, the opening stanza that appears on the pamphlet's third page reprints Strong's metrical adaptation exactly (see figure 1):

Let the whole earth with joy resound Buddha, our Lord, the Blessed
One, The hidden cause of Ill hath found, And for the world salva-
tion won.³¹

²⁹ Carus 1917, pp. 1–2.

³⁰ Strong 1899, p. 118.

³¹ Dhammaloka n.d., p. [3].

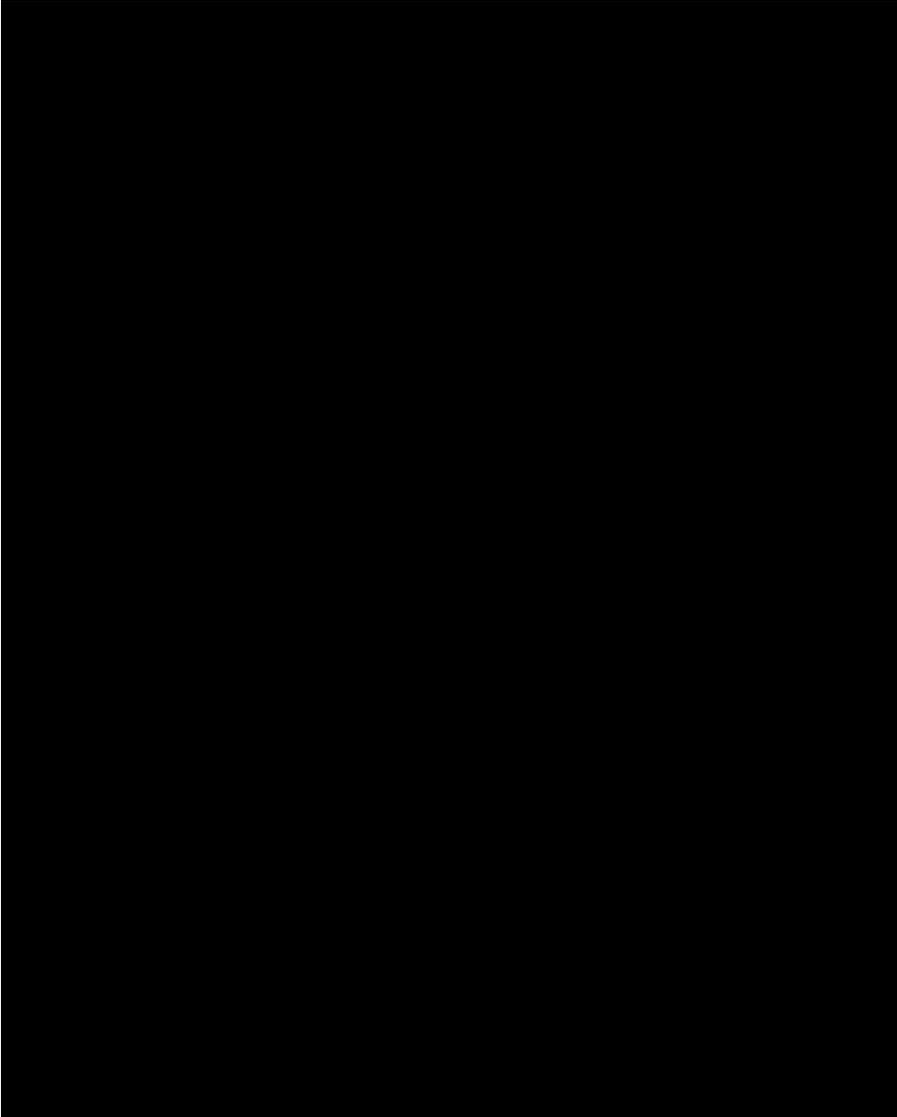


Figure 1. Page three of the pamphlet *Rejoice*

The Gāthā and the Transtemporal Gaze: Circumspective, Retrospective, and Prospective Modernities

Following those converging influences reminds us that flows cross spatial boundaries—in this case, from Asia to Europe to the United States—but

those responding to modernity also strove to move back and forth in time. Modernity's flows were also transtemporal. This temporal dimension of modernity is often underemphasized in scholarly interpretations. That is understandable since the gaze of those responding to modernity often was *circumspective*, looking around at the present day. Yet many in Japan and America also suggested that the best way to be "modern" was to look back, *retrospectively*, or look forward, *prospectively*. In this period, it meant, for those who tended toward *restorationist modernism*, returning to an imagined primitive past that lurked behind the intervening corruptions of history or, for those inclined toward *progressivist modernism*, imagining the next stages and future "development" in humanity's spiritual evolution.³² Many of the religious around the turn of the century figured religion using these sorts of temporal referents. Advocates for Shinto, Hinduism, and Confucianism did. In very different ways, the defenders of Theosophy, Unitarianism, and Mormonism looked to the past or future in that way. Many Buddhist sympathizers and adherents did too. Immediately preceding the section called "Rejoice," Carus explained his aim in *The Gospel of Buddha*: "The present book has been written to set the reader thinking on the religious problems of to-day. It sketches the picture of a religious leader of the remote past with the view of making it bear upon the living present and become a factor in the formation of the future."³³

Others who played a direct or indirect role in producing, circulating, or using the San Francisco pamphlet also enacted this transtemporal gaze. It is difficult to find a public advocate for Buddhism in Meiji Japan or Victorian America who did *not* suggest that Buddhism was appropriate for the present age and its distinctive intellectual, political, and social problems.³⁴ Yet it was also common to celebrate Buddhism's ancient origins and to proclaim its future widening influence. Strong did that in the conclusion of

³² The terms for the types of modernism I introduce here are mine; but other scholars have noticed that the religious in America and Japan sometimes referred to the remote past—and "restoration" of that past—or to the future—framed either in Victorian organic metaphors about "development" or in Enlightenment terms as "progress." For example, see *The American Quest for the Primitive Church* (Hughes 1988). As the contributors to that volume observe, Christian theological views of history—including ideas about millennialism and dispensationalism—shaped practice in the United States; similarly, Buddhist conceptions of time, including Japanese interpretations of the Last Age of the Teaching (*mappō* 末法), continued to influence Meiji Buddhism, as scholars have noted. See Jaffe 2001, pp. 128–32.

³³ Carus 1917, p. xi.

³⁴ To substantiate this claim you might glance at the contributions by Buddhist sympathizers and converts reprinted in Tweed 2004.

The Metaphysic of Christianity and Buddhism. He lamented “the turmoil of modern civilization” but praised Buddhism’s ancient intellectual resources, including the founder’s ethical teachings about karma, as a way for Eastern and Western civilizations to achieve “the ideal life” in the future.³⁵ Dhammaloka, who also distributed a tract by Strong, made similar points, turning his glance from the present to the past and future. In one message to fellow Buddhists in Singapore, that Irish monk not only focused on early Buddhist texts and monastic practices but also emphasized the needs of the present and the hope for the future. “Intelligent people of all the world [who] are weary of the evils of material civilization,” he observed, “are turning their eyes upon Buddhism as the most rational, philosophical and cosmopolitan religion of the Twentieth Century.” And he invited Buddhists in Asia, America, and Europe to join him as they “march hand in hand towards the realization of the glorious hope.”³⁶

In San Francisco, those associated with the BMNA and the DSB also worked out their reaction to modernity not only by musing about the present but also by championing a restoration of the past and/or foreshadowing a glorious future. In an 1899 letter the BMNA’s first director, Sonoda Shūe 蘭田宗惠 (1862–1922), expressed “indebtedness” to Carus, whose *The Gospel of Buddha* he had assigned to students in Kyoto; and Sonoda recounted his first San Francisco lecture, which told his American audience that long ago the Buddha came to be “the bodily incarnation of truth” and, glancing forward, that Buddhism was “destined to be the universal religion.”³⁷ The constitution of the DSB, the Caucasian group Sonoda helped to institute, was similarly future-oriented, even using Christian metaphors to describe its ultimate goal: “The establishment of the Kingdom of Righteousness by the fusion into one of all forms of religion.”³⁸ In a similar way, the editorial notice in *The Light of Dharma*’s first volume in 1901 aligned the periodical with the task of recovering the “Great Truth” that was “first proclaimed in India by Buddha Śākyamuni, about six hundred years before Christ” and announced the magazine’s ultimate purpose, “to found the Kingdom of

³⁵ Strong 1899, p. 111.

³⁶ Quoted in Bocking 2010, pp. 258–59.

³⁷ Shūe Sonoda to Paul Carus, 14 September 1899, Open Court Publishing Company Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois. That letter was reprinted in Tweed and Prothero 1999, pp. 78–82.

³⁸ The DSB’s constitution was quoted in Mabel Clare Craft’s “Buddha’s First Outpost in America Established,” *Los Angeles Times*, 14 July 1901, p. C5. It also appears in a more accessible source: Ama 2011, pp. 38–39.

Righteousness on Earth, the highest ideal of all religions.”³⁹ Mizuki Tetsuei 水月哲英 (1868–1948), Sonoda’s successor as BMNA director, used similar language in oral and written messages, and so did the DSB’s secretary, Kathleen Melvena McIntire (1850–1923). With her eyes firmly fixed on the future, in a 1901 report that fifty-one-year-old convert and founding board member confidently predicted that “in time the Dharma Sangha of Buddha will become a permanent and influential factor for peace and good will to men in all parts of America.”⁴⁰

The Gāthā and Transfluvial Currents: Crossings

Modernity’s flows in America and throughout the Pacific World were also *transfluvial*. As cultural flows converged, traditions of practice mixed. Scholars have used different terms to describe the products of this contact—including *syncretism*, *mestiizaje*, *bricolage*, *hybridity*, *transculturation*, *creolization*, and *blending*.⁴¹ In my theoretical idiom, they are *transfluences* or *crossings*, terms that emphasize the process of reciprocal exchange that negotiates meaning and power. However we label it, it is important to note that this mixing is another feature of modernity. It is not that cultural mixing did not occur earlier. It did. It is just that modern communication and travel technologies intensified and accelerated contact and exchange. In modernity, transfluence produced new ways of being human that were different than each of the converging currents, which were propelled, in turn, by the crossing of other streams. Mixing was the norm, not the exception.

³⁹ [Nishijima] 1901, p. ii.

⁴⁰ McIntire 1901, pp. 27–28. I found biographical details in “Kathleen M. McIntire,” Thirtieth Census of the United States: 1910 (National Archives Microfilm Publication T624), Records of the US Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC. I found her date of death in the San Francisco Area Funeral Home Records, 1895–1985, Microfilm publication, 1129 rolls (San Francisco: Researchity). Other accounts of the DSB and its incorporation and goals were included in the following: “Buddhist Church Incorporated,” *San Francisco Call*, 30 May 1900, p. 7; “Editorials” in *The Light of Dharma*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 20 (1901); Fryer 1901, pp. 251–52, 258. The editorial notice in the first issue noted that the group aimed at the “spreading of this religion of science,” and later the group honored the sympathizer most often associated with that phrase, Carus. In 1905, the DSB also voted to name both Carus and Suzuki as “honorary members of this Association” (“New Activity Shown by the American Branch of Association” 1905, pp. 131–32).

⁴¹ Most of these terms are familiar to scholars of modernity and postmodernity; but a scholar of Meiji Japan has proposed that we talk instead about “blended modernities” and “conceptual blends” to signal that what is produced includes features not present before: Gluck 2011, pp. 685–86.

That sort of mixing is evident in the music, lyrics, and use of the hymn *Rejoice*. The musical form used by those Japanese-born priests as they reached out to American-born sympathizers was undeniably European, with the lyrics set to a traditional British tune. The lyrics' style and content also clearly marked its author and redactors as under the influence of Western understandings of metered verse and Protestant understandings of devotional language. As with the DSB's references to the future "Kingdom," some of the song's metaphors, like "Lord," evoke traditional Christian images of Jesus as king, although anyone who has seen Tōdaiji 東大寺 in Nara, the former capital, knows that the Japanese also have figuratively linked ruler and religion. Still, the phrasing of *Rejoice*—"He who the raveled knot unwinds, Buddha, our Lord, has rent the vail [*sic*]"—more closely recalls the language of the King James Bible or a Victorian Romantic poem than a classical Japanese Buddhist text.⁴²

The pamphlet's complex origin also illustrates the blending of Buddhist sects and global religions that characterized modernity in the Pacific World. That three-page text was attributed to Dhammaloka, a Theravadin monk ordained in Burma; and Mahayana Buddhists of both Chinese and Japanese heritage supported that cradle Catholic's missionary efforts in Singapore, where someone set the lyrics to music. The hymn's prose source was authored by the fiercely rationalist son of a German Lutheran minister who refused to commit to Buddhism or any tradition and called himself "a religious parliament incarnate."⁴³ The lyrics then were versified by a former British colonel who had served in colonial India and rejected the Protestantism of his youth for the sort of occult Theosophy that Carus—and sometimes Dhammaloka—publicly denounced, although the article attributed to Dhammaloka in *The Light of Dharma* actually was plagiarized from the pages of a Theosophical journal. The only alterations were in passages in which the Irish monk replaced "Theosophy" with "Buddhism."⁴⁴ In other words, through the transnational influence of occult sympathizers like Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907) who lauded Theosophy's "ancient wisdom" and monist philosophers like Carus who championed a rational and syncretic "religion of the future," two of the three primary types of Victorian American Buddhism—rationalist and esoteric—found clear expression in San

⁴² Dhammaloka n.d., p. [3].

⁴³ Paul Carus to Anagarika H. Dharmapala, 26 February 1896, Open Court Papers, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois. Quoted in Tweed 2000, p. 101.

⁴⁴ Compare pages 50–53 of Dhammaloka 1902 with pages 8–10 of Jerome A. Anderson's "From Orient to Occident: The Message and Its Reason" (1891).

Francisco among the Shin Buddhist leaders and American-born converts.⁴⁵ Those ways of understanding Buddhism were inscribed in the Caucasian group's constitution and reports, in the pages of *The Light of Dharma*, as well as in journalists' accounts about the San Francisco temple.

One newspaper story published in 1901 offers an especially revealing glimpse of the multiple influences and the mixed practices.⁴⁶ That piece was by Mabel Clare Craft [Deering] (1872–1953), a religion and society writer for San Francisco periodicals who had been described a few years earlier as “a good specimen of the *fin-de-siècle* girl—healthy, happy, alert, and cultured.”⁴⁷ I suppose it is nice that Craft's contemporaries thought so highly of her, but we historians are grateful because that lawyer-turned-journalist also was an attentive observer. In that piece, she not only traced the history of San Francisco's temple and its Japanese leaders but also chronicled the founding of the Dharma Sangha of Buddha and described one of their services. Even if we apply the usual caution as we rely on an outsider's account, that story, “Buddha's First Outpost in America Established,” offers especially rich details about material culture, institutional membership, and ritual practice—and the mixing evident in each. As Craft notes—and the journals (*nisshi* 日誌) of the Japanese priests in San Francisco vividly confirm—people mixed, including migrant Japanese priests and Caucasian lay sympathizers.⁴⁸ At the DSB's founding in 1900, Sonoda lived with another Japanese priest, Reverend Nishijima Kakuryō 西島覺了 (1873–1942), and their block on Polk Street teemed with diversity.⁴⁹ Their immediate neighbors included migrants who had been born in eight different countries (including Russia, Sweden,

⁴⁵ I discussed Olcott, Carus, and the three types of Victorian Buddhists—esoteric, rationalist, and romantic—in Tweed 2000, pp. 48–77.

⁴⁶ Craft's “Buddha's First Outpost in America Established,” *Los Angeles Times*, 14 July 1901, p. C5. All the quotations below about the material culture and ritual practice of the DSB are from this 1901 newspaper article.

⁴⁷ This quotation about Craft, the author of the piece about DSB, is from Brown 1895, pp. 393–410.

⁴⁸ I discovered these “journals” in the 1980s in the basement of the BCA's San Francisco headquarters, but these sources, like *The Light of Dharma* subscription list, now are in Los Angeles: *Nisshi* [journals], four notebooks in Japanese, variously titled, 1902, 1903, 1908, 1909, Buddhist Churches of America Collection, Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, California. I discussed them in Tweed 2000, p. 38.

⁴⁹ I reconstruct this social profile of the neighborhood from the federal census record for Sonoda, which erroneously records his given name: “Soe Sonoda,” *Twelfth Census of the United States: 1900* (National Archives Microfilm Publication T623), Records of the US Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

England, Ireland, and Germany) as well Americans transplanted from seven different US states. And Euro-American members of the DSB interacted regularly and lived within walking distance, as with McIntire and Jennie Ward Hayes (1865–n.d.), founding board members who lived less than a mile away from Sonoda and the mission.⁵⁰ The Mission's material culture also mirrored the divergent cultural contexts. The temple was "a sober, old fashioned two-story house" that had been a roomy Victorian residence on an ordinary American street. Only a simple exterior sign, "Buddhist Mission," marked the interior's purpose. The devotional space, Craft tells us, was the "double parlor." In that "dimly lighted" room brass candle sticks, an incense burner, and an image of the Buddha—a reminder of the ritual space's Japanese roots—adorned an altar that was "simple though thoroughly Oriental." High above the altar hung a motto in Japanese for immigrant members and which the presiding priest, Mizuki, translated as "Endeavor to Achieve All the Virtues." Watercolors on the parlor wall narrated the history of the Buddha's life and reinforced the transnational character of the organization's service that day.

Yet some elements of the material culture and the ritual practice would have seemed even more familiar to the American worshippers. That was not an accident. As the priest told the reporter, BMNA leaders feared that, as with Christian missionaries in Japan, Americans might dismiss their faith as a "heathen" religion devoted to "idolatry," so they minimized the material ornamentation and omitted "most of the solemn and elaborate rituals of the Shin-Shu." Like many middle-class Victorian parlors, the worship space in 1901 had traditional American furnishings, and "an upright piano" stood incongruously in the corner. Although more local residents officially belonged or casually attended at times during the group's history, fourteen Caucasians—three of them men—attended that worship service. It began with an explication of "the lofty precepts of Buddhism" by the Japanese priest. That was followed by practices that would have been uncommon in Kyoto: Mizuki then "called upon a tall Caucasian with silvery hair," who

⁵⁰ "Jennie W. Hayes," *Twelfth Census of the United States: 1900* (National Archives Microfilm Publication T623), Records of the US Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC. Hayes was still living in San Francisco in 1905, when she published advertisements for the school she directed (The American School for Opera and Drama) in the local newspaper: *San Francisco Call*, vol. 98, no. 61, p. 8 (31 July 1905); but I have been unable to find more biographical information, including the date of her death. "Kathleen M. McIntire," *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910* (National Archives Microfilm Publication T624), Records of the US Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

offered an account of “Buddhism’s basic principles” with “ease and unstudied eloquence,” although the priest later confided to the reporter that “he is not true Buddhist, not yet.” Nonetheless, that sympathizer’s “simple” discourse was greeted by “a brisk clapping of hands.” Then the music began. One of the DSB’s female members—almost certainly Hayes, the widowed musician whom Sonoda described as an “earnest Buddhist” who composed Buddhist hymns—moved “unbidden” to the piano and sounded “gently the opening chords of a hymn,” which all the female devotees (and none of the men) sang as the make-shift ritual came to a close.⁵¹ That hymn was not *Rejoice*, but that journalistic account offers clues about how European American sympathizers and converts probably used the *gāthā* printed in that pamphlet in turn-of-the-century San Francisco.

That 1901 story also vividly describes the mixing of things and practices and points to the need to revise our vocabulary for analyzing this sort of process. The first sociological scholarship on Japanese American Buddhism emphasized “Americanization” and “Protestantization.” More recently scholars have provided a more textured account by noting, as Ama does, that “the acculturation of Shin rituals included a process of Japanization.”⁵² Wells, another fine scholar who has written about Buddhist songs, makes a similar point about *gāthās* used in Hawai’i and the continental United States. While their scholarship is extraordinarily helpful for placing songs in historical context, the continued reliance on the notion of “acculturation” does not fully acknowledge the dynamism of modernity’s constant flows and blended forms.⁵³ It might be better, I suggest, if we instead talked about transfluence or crossings or, if you do not like those terms, then we might borrow the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz’s term, *transculturation*, to attend to the two-way process of mutual transformation.⁵⁴ In modernity, religious things and practices do not stay in place long enough to adapt to the surrounding cultural landscape. That terminology implies a static model

⁵¹ Tweed 2000, pp. 38, 181, n. 27. Shūe Sonoda to Paul Carus, 14 September 1899. I recently found the federal census record for Hayes, and that indicated that in 1900 she was a thirty-five-year-old widowed musician born in Indiana and living with her parents and her ten-year-old son, Raymond, in San Francisco. “Jennie W. Hayes,” *Twelfth Census of the United States: 1900* (National Archives Microfilm Publication T623), Records of the US Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

⁵² Ama 2011, p. 107.

⁵³ Wells 2010.

⁵⁴ Ortiz 1995, p. 102.

of culture and religion that simply does not fit the historical evidence. To describe the process as “acculturation” obscures a great deal about the multidirectionality of modernity’s flows.

Conclusion

That is one of the three main points I have tried to make. By using that small pamphlet to illustrate my larger point, I have argued that religious modernity was characterized by translocation, transtemporality, and transfluence. First, modernity involved multidirectional movements across borders—including but not only flows to and from Singapore, England, Germany, Japan, and the United States. In turn, we need to adapt our language and revise our models to more adequately attend to the spatial dynamics of religion in modernity. That will mean using different temporal and geographical referents, as I have done by talking about the *Meiji-Victorian Pacific World*, and relying on theoretical frameworks that allow us to notice the dynamics of the circulating currents. As the religious in the Pacific World confronted the social conditions of modernity, they did not focus only on the present age, as some scholarship might lead us to think; and that was my second main point. We should check our understandable tendency to be distracted by historical actors’ anxious or giddy talk about the modernizing present and notice how some also strove to be modern by looking back or looking forward. Finally, practices mix in the swirl of modernity’s currents. Attending to those crossing currents reveals the limits of the usual categories and models. Modernity’s flows were not unidirectional—or even bidirectional—and to adequately trace their trajectory we should talk instead about the process of *transculturation* or, better, *transfluence*. Those crossing currents washed ashore in the Dharma Sangha of Buddha’s service in 1901 and, as I have tried to suggest, the transfluence of modernity’s flows also was vividly illustrated by the complex history and converging influences that produced that small pamphlet, which probably was used in an improvised ritual for American sympathizers conducted by Japanese priests who were knee-deep in the circulating cultural currents in that port city in the Meiji-Victorian Pacific World.

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