

# Uniting Buddhism: The Varieties of *Tsūbukkyō* in Meiji-Taishō Japan and the Case of Takada Dōken

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## I. Introduction

ACCORDING to Kashiwahara Yūsen, a pioneer in the academic study of modern Japanese Buddhism (*kindai bukkyō* 近代仏教), the most common characteristic of the numerous reform movements of the Meiji period was a “*tsūbukkyō* spirit” (通仏教精神). He describes this “*tsūbukkyō* spirit” as that which strives to manifest Śākyamuni’s true teachings, that is, to get rid of sectarian prejudice and to return to “the original spirit of Buddhism.”<sup>1</sup> In addition to Kashiwahara, Ikeda Eishun, a prolific and leading historian of modern Japanese Buddhism, and James Ketelaar, a prominent interpreter of Meiji-period (1868–1912) Buddhism, each view these attempts to transcend traditional denominational boundaries as the catalysts that enabled Japanese Buddhism to modernize and thereby engage the public in meaningful ways.<sup>2</sup> Ketelaar has referred to *tsūbukkyō* as “one of the driving forces behind the Meiji Buddhist restoration.”<sup>3</sup> That *tsūbukkyō* activities were widespread and significant is clear. However, Kashiwahara, Ikeda, and Ketelaar’s understandings of the term “*tsūbukkyō*” are sufficiently broad to include phenomena that sought to transcend denominational divisions in a variety of ways.

<sup>1</sup> Kashiwahara 1969, pp. 443–5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; Ikeda 1994, p. 32; Ketelaar 1990, pp. 177–91, 227–8.

<sup>3</sup> Ketelaar 1990, p. 228.

They include activities initiated both from within institutional frameworks and without, both by groups and by individuals, and having varying aims and audiences.<sup>4</sup> In light of this variety, it is necessary to refine our understanding of the phenomena that fall under the rubric of “*tsūbukkyō*.” Toward this end, I suggest in Section One a method for distinguishing and classifying the various forms of *tsūbukkyō*. I then offer a study of the career of Takada Dōken 高田道見 (1858–1923), a Sōtō Zen priest who promoted a non-denominational,<sup>5</sup> universal form of Buddhism. As Takada was engaged in a number of types of *tsūbukkyō* activity at different stages of his career, observing his trajectory provides significant insight into the rise and fall, and strengths and shortcomings, of the various Buddhist attempts to unify during the Meiji (1868–1912) and Taishō (1912–26) periods. In particular, the issues Takada wrestles with reveal fundamental fault-lines within Japanese Buddhism that continue to demarcate the boundaries of sectarian identity.

## II. Varieties of *Tsūbukkyō*

Ketelaar has translated the term *tsūbukkyō* both as “united Buddhism” and as “transdenominational Buddhism.”<sup>6</sup> I suggest that we follow his latter translation and employ the term “transdenominational Buddhism” to denote the genus “*tsūbukkyō*.” The multiple shades of meaning evoked by the prefix “trans-” (across, beyond; through; transcend, surpass) best capture the double sense of the character *tsū* 通 as pointing to something *common to* the various denominations, and thus providing a basis for *transcending* denominational difference. I would like to suggest further that we conceive this genus as being comprised of at least four species: pan-denominational Buddhism,

<sup>4</sup> See Kashiwahara 1969, pp. 443–4. He gives as examples Shinbukkyōto 新仏教徒 (the “New Buddhists”), Daidō Chōan 大道長安, Itō Shōshin 伊藤証信, Fukuda Gyōkai 福田行誠, Shaku Unshō 釈雲照, and Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 and his *Seishin-shugi* 精神主義, or “Spiritual Activism,” movement. See also Ketelaar 1990 and Ikeda 1994, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> I will in this essay avoid the use of “sect,” and its adjectival form “sectarian,” as a translation for *shū* 宗 due to the sociologically specific meaning of this term as an offshoot of an established, and major, religious organization as this does not neatly fit the history and context of Japanese Buddhism. I will instead use the neutral “denomination” and “denominational.” I will continue to use the adjective “sectarian” in instances where the sense of divisiveness is stressed.

<sup>6</sup> Ketelaar 1990, pp. 177–91, 227–8.

interdenominational Buddhism, intradenominational *tsūbukkyō*,<sup>7</sup> and non-denominational Buddhism.<sup>8</sup>

### *Pan-denominational Buddhism*

Members of this species are inclusive, strategic unions whose aims are practical and often political, and whose activities are directed toward the government or other large-scale organizations. The prefix “pan-,” meaning “all” or “the whole of,” indicates that such a union includes plurality; difference is accepted and maintained. In contemporary parlance, these are “umbrella organizations,” such as the United Nations or the European Union, in which the national identity of members is not abandoned (though their sovereignty may well be compromised) by joining. They are in principle all-inclusive and open to all Japanese Buddhist institutions, although the fragility of implementing this principle is illustrated by the near-exclusion of the Nichiren organization on at least one occasion due to its caustic denunciations of the other Buddhist denominations.<sup>9</sup>

Central to our understanding of this category is that these are in no way attempts to do away with denominational identity, but rather are distinct Buddhist traditions working together to achieve particular ends. Such “umbrella organizations” are not rejections of institutional Buddhism, but rather

<sup>7</sup> I do not call this species “intradominational Buddhism,” as this phrasing suggests sectarian exclusivity and gives no hint of an attempt to transcend denominational boundaries. The very notion of an *intradominational* “*tsūbukkyō*” group, however, appears to be an oxymoron. Indeed, if one were to translate “*tsūbukkyō*” as “transdenominational Buddhism,” as I have suggested, we would be left with the unwieldy and perplexing “intradominational transdenominational Buddhism.” Nevertheless, this awkward phrase precisely captures the unique quality of these groups (as I explain below). Out of kindness to the reader’s eyes and ears, though, I have decided not to translate the Japanese here and employ the term “intradominational *tsūbukkyō*.”

<sup>8</sup> Possible retranlations into Japanese would be, pan: *zenshūhateki bukkō* 全宗派の仏教; inter: *shūjūsōgo bukkō* 宗々相互仏教; intra: *shūnai tsūbukkyō* 宗内通仏教; and *mushūhateki bukkō* 無宗派の仏教.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. See p. 198 for the difficulties surrounding the submission of the Nichiren denomination’s essay to be included in the *Bukkyō kakushū kōyō* 佛教各宗綱要 (Essentials of the Buddhist Denominations). The Bukkyō Kakushū Kyōkai 佛教各宗協會, responsible for publishing the *Bukkyō kakushū kōyō* in 1896, may be viewed as another example of Meiji-period Buddhist pan-denominationalism. See Ketelaar 1990, pp. 197–207; p. 264, n. 80; p. 271, n. 58.

vehicles to express the concerns of *the institutions themselves* and are thus usually comprised of the highest ranking clerical members of the individual denominational hierarchies.

The most conspicuous example of this group would be the Shoshū Dōtoku Kaimei 諸宗道德会盟 founded in 1868 as a direct response to the attack upon Buddhism embodied in the edicts requiring the dissociation of *kami* and buddhas (*shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離) that were issued earlier in the same year.<sup>10</sup> Its primary objective was to stem the various assaults upon, and to reform the image of, Buddhism. It aimed to do so by demonstrating that Buddhism supported the state, was compatible with the Shinto and Confucian traditions and was willing to reform what was widely perceived as a corrupt clergy. It also sought to develop strategies to repel the encroachment of Christianity into Japan. Denominational rivalry was perceived as an obstacle to this objective, and individual denominations were urged to study their own doctrines and not to elevate their teachings or criticize those of other traditions.<sup>11</sup>

The formation of pan-denominational Buddhist organizations may be seen as a modern phenomenon. While it is possible that Buddhists of various denominations came together in order to achieve specific goals before the Shoshū Dōtoku Kaimei did so in 1868, social and political conditions, as well as inter-temple rivalries, in pre-Meiji Japan would have prevented such extensive and comprehensive unions. This legacy continues today with the Zen Nihon Bukkyōkai 全日本仏教会 (The Japan Buddhist Federation) which traces its origin to the Bukkyō Konwakai 仏教懇話会 formed in 1900 to oppose state control of religion. It is comprised of over one hundred groups including all of the traditional Japanese Buddhist denominations, and its members account for more than ninety percent of all temples in Japan.<sup>12</sup>

### *Interdenominational Buddhism*

I use this species, and the next, *intrad denominational tsūbukkyō*, to refer to the numerous *kyōkai* 教会 and *kessha* 結社 —associations of clergy and devout Buddhist laity— that began to arise in the mid-1870s when the government

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 9 and p. 233, n. 17. The first edict was dated the 17th, and the second edict the 28th, of the third month of Meiji 1 (1868). For incisive accounts of the events surrounding these edicts, see Grapard 1984, pp. 240–65 and Grapard 1992, pp. 248–56.

<sup>11</sup> See Tsuji 1949, pp. 83–166, especially pp. 96–97.

<sup>12</sup> See LoBreglio 2002, pp. 720–1, and the Zen Nihon Bukkyōkai website: <[www.jbf.ne.jp/index\\_e.html](http://www.jbf.ne.jp/index_e.html)> (15 February 2006).

eased restrictions on religious affiliation and permitted a modicum of religious freedom.<sup>13</sup> Those of the interdenominational type included members from a variety of the traditional denominations. The most influential of these was the Wakeikai 和敬会 founded in 1879 by Ōuchi Seiran 大内青巒 (1845–1918), a lay Buddhist affiliated with the Sōtō Zen denomination. It included among its members major figures from every Buddhist denomination and served as a model for hundreds of other such organizations over the next decade. With its headquarters in Tokyo, the Wakeikai maintained approximately 240 regional branches from Kyūshū to Hokkaidō.<sup>14</sup> Between 1882 and 1887 alone, 224 of these interdenominational associations were formed.<sup>15</sup> The Myōdō Kyōkai 明道協会 founded in 1884 was another such group that grew to similar national scale. Interdenominational Buddhism is thus similar to pan-denominational Buddhism in that its groups are comprised of representatives from various denominations engaged in common projects. Like pan-denominational Buddhism, these are unions that comprehend plurality and respect and maintain difference.

There are some crucial differences, however, that warrant us to consider interdenominational Buddhism as a class unto itself, and these differences are vital to our understanding of non-denominational Buddhism. While the latter has very little in common with pan-denominational Buddhism, many of

<sup>13</sup> The late Professor Ikeda Eishun has introduced the great significance of these associations for the modernization of institutional Buddhism in a number of his writings. See Ikeda 1994 and Ikeda 1996a. Ikeda 1998 is an English translation of this latter essay. In this translation, “teaching assemblies” is used to translate *kyōkai* and “lay societies” for *kessha*. While the former is acceptable as a literal translation of *kyōkai*, “lay societies” as a translation for *kessha*, which means simply an “association” or a “society,” could give rise to the mistaken impression that these were “lay-only” groups. In fact, both designations refer to groups that included both clergy and lay, and this is precisely one of the characteristics that distinguishes these groups as important Meiji-period developments. Both *kyōkai* and *kessha* were originally legal terms used in government orders calling for the regulation of religious groups, affiliated to the traditional denominations and in the rules established by the denominations in response. In fact, there is no clear distinction between entities known as *kyōkai* and those known as *kessha*. Ikeda almost always uses the terms in the compound form *kyōkai-kessha* to describe all of these quasi-independent, cleric-lay associations. The most important distinction among these associations is the one that I am emphasizing with the designations “intersectarian” and “intra-sectarian”—the former referring to groups with members belonging to various denominations (*shoshūha kyōdō no kyōkai-kessha* 諸宗派協同の教会・結社); the latter whose members belong to one denomination alone.

<sup>14</sup> Ikeda 1994, p. 105.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.104.

its identifying characteristics were influenced by, and may be seen in, these interdenominational *kessha*.

Where the *raison d'être* of pan-denominational Buddhist organizations is to accomplish specific, often political, aims, the central focus of interdenominational groups was to teach the masses about Buddhism. Thus, they directed their activities toward these masses and not toward the government and other societal or cultural groups. This necessarily entailed the need to determine the specific content of the “Buddhism” they were to teach. By this process, interdenominational Buddhism moved beyond the inclusion of plurality that characterizes pan-denominational Buddhist organizations, and while continuing to respect and maintain the differences between denominations, sought also to establish a *common doctrinal basis upon which to found their teachings*. Non-denominational Buddhism shares this focus upon locating doctrinal commonality.

As all of the denominations shared the Buddhist precepts, the interdenominational *kessha* viewed these as just such an appropriate common basis. Following the lead of the Wakeikai and the Myōdō Kyōkai, every interdenominational group throughout the country<sup>16</sup> taught the “Ten Good Precepts” (*jūzenkai* 十善戒) as interpreted by the Shingon cleric and scholar Jiun Onkō [Sonja] 慈雲飲光 [尊者] (1718–1804). Jiun viewed the *jūzenkai* as a harmonious fusion of the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna precepts, and thus as a means to avoid the divisions in the teachings of the various denominations. Besides the fact that the precepts were seen as a “common denominator” of all Buddhist groups, they also had the appeal of providing a basis for religious practice founded directly upon what was perceived to be the words of the Buddha. A common “Buddhism” was completed with the addition of the teaching of the “Four Debts of Gratitude” (*shion* 四恩) to one’s parents, the emperor, all living beings and the Three Treasures of Buddhism.<sup>17</sup>

To be sure, these groups were also engaged in socially and politically-oriented praxis, and as with the pan-Buddhist groups, the protection of the Buddhist Dharma and patriotism (*gohō aikoku* 護法愛國) were central concerns. The primary concern of the founders of such groups, however, was to

<sup>16</sup> Ikeda makes this claim in *ibid.*, p.126.

<sup>17</sup> Ikeda has discussed this in a number of places. See, for example, Ikeda 1994, pp. 48–76; Ikeda 1976, pp. 7–17; as well as Ikeda 1996b, pp. 8–16. For a treatment of Jiun and his role in propagating the “Ten Good Precepts” in English, see Watt 1989, pp. 188–214, especially pp. 200 ff.

instill the spiritual peace (*anjin* 安心) found in the Buddhist teachings. Indeed, the discussion of political issues was often expressly forbidden as in the rules of the Kyūshū branch of the Wakeikai and the Sagami-based Wakōkai 和光会.<sup>18</sup>

Another crucial difference is that interdenominational groups were often founded by lay Buddhist teachers (*koji* 居士) with the express intention of overcoming the widely perceived “feudal” relationship between temples and their lay supporters.<sup>19</sup> Toward this end, they included both clergy and laity, men and women, and members of various classes. Thus, unlike pan-denominational Buddhism that spoke with the voice of the established institutions, these groups maintained a conscious distance and independence from the centers of authority even while including high-ranking clergy among their members.

Finally, unlike pan-denominational Buddhism, which began in early Meiji and continues to this day, “interdenominational Buddhism” refers to a phenomenon with fixed temporal parameters. Ikeda has set these parameters as approximately 1875–90, with the highest number of groups forming in 1883.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Intradenominational Tsūbukkyō*

This term points to an important phenomenon that deserves inclusion within the genus of “*tsūbukkyō*,” namely, those *kyōkai* and *kessha* associations committed to a particular denomination that employed as the basis of their educational activities the “common denominator” ethical teachings of the “Ten Good Precepts” and “Four Debts of Gratitude” described above. This juxtaposition of a “universal,” common Buddhist teaching with the unique, particular teachings of an individual tradition inevitably gave rise to conflict. On the doctrinal level, hermeneutical efforts, sometimes strained, had to be made in order to show the compatibility of the “common denominator” ethical

<sup>18</sup> See Ikeda 1994, p. 94 for a discussion of the Kyūshū Wakeikai and p.126 for one concerning the Wakōkai. Sagami is the former name for what is now Kanagawa prefecture.

<sup>19</sup> This refers to the *danka seido* 檀家制度—the “temple parishoner system” in place during the Tokugawa period. For a treatment of this in English, see Tamamuro 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Ikeda 1998, p. 35. The rise of *kyōkai* and *kessha* during this period is related to the progressive increase in autonomy allowed the Buddhist institutions with the dissolution of the Great Teaching Academy (Daikyōin 大教院) in 1875, the Ministry of Doctrine (Kyōbushō 教部省) in 1877, and the system of national teachers (Kyōdōshoku 教導職) in 1884. See Ikeda 1994, pp. 98–101.

teachings with those of the denomination's founder. The *Shushōgi*,<sup>21</sup> compiled for use by the Sōtōshū Fushūkai 曹洞宗扶宗会, is an important example of such an attempt. As these quasi-independent associations grew in numbers and influence, conflict with the traditional centers of institutional authority was likewise inevitable, and led ultimately to either their incorporation by the denominational headquarters, as in the case of the Sōtōshū Fushūkai just mentioned, in 1889, or in their dissolution, as happened to the Shinshū Kyōkai Shūonsha 真宗教会酬恩社 in 1883. The reason for the demise of these types of intradenominational associations is clearly related to the tension between attempts to create a transdenominational Buddhism on the one hand, and the conservative inclination to preserve the unique identities of the individual traditions on the other.

### *Non-denominational Buddhism*

As the negative prefix “non-” imparts, “non-denominational Buddhism” is a species of *tsūbukkyō* comprised of attempts to unite Buddhism by doing away with denominational divisions.

Non-denominational Buddhism refers to *intellectual* campaigns, and to those groups established upon such campaigns, that claim to be inclusive of all Buddhist traditions and thereby seek to unite them. Their rationale is founded upon a reduction of the particularities of the various individual traditions to a common set of teachings that they are said to share. This “true essence” of Buddhism, heretofore latent, was now considered ripe for its evolutionary fulfillment. These campaigns were, for the most part, responses to the increasingly vocal charge that Mahāyāna Buddhism was not taught directly by the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni. This challenge, labeled *Daijō hibutsuron* 大乘非仏論 or *Daijō hibussetsu* 大乘非仏説 in Japanese, was first raised within Japan by the scholar Tominaga Nakamoto 富永仲基 (1715–46). It intensified during the Meiji period as Japanese clergy and scholars came into increasing contact with Western historical scholarship on the Pāli and Sanskrit Buddhist canon, and became a cynosure of concern in the mid-1890s. *Bukkyō katsuron joron* 仏教活論序論 (An Introduction to the Vitalization of Buddhism) by Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919) published in 1887 may be considered a forerunner of, and inspiration for, many of these non-denominational Buddhist projects. In addition to Takada Dōken, I would include in

<sup>21</sup> See Sōtōshū Sensho Kankōkai 1982.



this category the work of Murakami Senshō 村上專精 (1851–1929), the projects that have come to be called “New Buddhism” (*shin bukkyō* 新仏教), namely those of Furukawa Rōsen 古河老川 (1871–99) and the Keiikai 経緯会 that he founded with others in 1894, and of Sakaino Kōyō 境野黄洋 (1871–1933) and Takashima Beihō 高島米峯 (1875–1949) who founded the Bukkyō Seito Dōshikai 仏教清徒同志会 in 1899.<sup>22</sup> I would also include Nakanishi Ushio’s 中西牛郎 (1859–1930) blend of Buddhism and Unitarianism, as well as the *konpon bukkyō* 根本仏教 of Anesaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 (1873–1949).<sup>23</sup> This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to point out a significant trend in the intellectual history of this period and perhaps to stimulate further inquiry in this area.

Non-denominational Buddhism entailed the trenchant criticism or outright rejection of institutional Buddhism. Its initiators tended to be on the margins, or completely outside of, the traditional denominations. Often, their movement was from the margins to “beyond the pale,” and they either left or were expelled from their denominations. Exponents of non-denominational Buddhism were, for the most part, intellectual priests, the overwhelming number of whom had Jōdo Shin (True Pure Land) associations. Thus, for the sake of contrast, it should be of interest to examine the version put forth by Takada, a Sōtō Zen priest. The respective non-denominational Buddhist attacks upon institutional Buddhism focused upon the latter’s “superstitious” tendencies and thus advocated the use of reason and a critical approach to Buddhist history and doctrine. They also charged institutional Buddhism with being otherworldly and neglectful of the imminent spiritual needs of its followers, and thus advocated a this-worldly soteriology.

In their attempts to unite Buddhism, non-denominational Buddhist programs were confronted with two major fault-lines that they attempted to bridge in significantly consistent ways. The first, that between the Mahāyāna and the pejoratively labeled “Hīnayāna,” was overcome by affirming the Mahāyāna as the culmination and fulfillment of the historical Śākyamuni’s teachings. This required the difficult task of reconciling aspects of Mahāyāna doctrine that seemed to conflict with teachings of Śākyamuni found in the collection of the Āgama sutras. As we will examine closely in the case of

<sup>22</sup> Its name was changed in 1903 to Shin Bukkyōto Dōshikai 新仏教徒同志会 (Association of New Buddhists).

<sup>23</sup> For a concise treatment of these groups in English, see Thelle 1987, pp.194–213. The literature on them in Japanese is extensive.

Takada, this involved addressing the important question of Śākyamuni's ontological status.

The second fault-line separates the so-called *shōdōmon* 聖道門 and *jōdomon* 淨土門 denominations,<sup>24</sup> especially their respective soteriological understandings of the nature of the Absolute (usually understood in Buddhist terms as *shinnyo* 真如, Suchness) and its relationship to the relative and finite. The identification of the Absolute, or infinite, with the relative and finite is a Mahāyāna doctrine common to both *shōdōmon* and *jōdomon* denominations. This identity is often described with the term *hongaku* 本覺, or “intrinsic awakening,” and refers to the notion that all finite beings possess infinite Buddha nature.<sup>25</sup> Within this identity, however, the *jōdomon* denominations stress the “otherness” of the Absolute. That is, they do not deny the identity of the finite and the infinite, but rather maintain difference within this identity, and identity within this difference. The criticism of the *shōdōmon* denominations from this perspective is that while they recognize the identity of relative and Absolute, they fail to recognize that the Absolute is “Other” as well. Moreover, the Absolute, conceived of as a powerful “Other,” has *personal* reality upon whom finite individuals can rely for salvation. It is faith in this “Other Power” that brings salvation. Non-denominational Buddhist attempts to bridge this fault-line emphasize such a *jōdomon* understanding of the Absolute. As most proponents of non-denominational Buddhism had backgrounds in the Jōdo Shin tradition, this is not surprising. Of course, the various non-denominational Buddhist projects differ in the details and nuances of their responses to the fault-lines mentioned above, and an in-depth comparison of these would be of great interest. It is hoped that the study of Takada that is to follow will be a contribution toward this end.

The claims of inclusiveness by non-denominational Buddhism turn out inevitably to be rhetorical. What constitutes the “true essence” of Buddhism is a highly contentious matter, and the delimiting of it invariably marginalizes some Buddhist groups. Unlike pan-denominational and interdenominational Buddhism, difference cannot be maintained as difference, but is subsumed —

<sup>24</sup> The *shōdōmon* are also referred to as the *jiriki* 自力, or “self-power,” denominations (Tendai, Shingon, Zen) and the *jōdomon* as the *tariki* 他力, or “Other-Power” denominations (Jōdo, Jōdo Shin, Ji, Yūzū Nembutsu).

<sup>25</sup> See Stone 1999 for a detailed account of the historical development of this notion in medieval Japan. See, too, Hubbard and Swanson 1997 for recent criticisms of *hongaku* thought, especially in the Sōtō denomination.

or *aufgehoben*<sup>26</sup>— if not outright rejected. The “Other” tends to be characterized as an immature, provisional or less evolved form of Buddhism to be either abandoned or reserved for those of inferior capabilities. This co-optation of the Other is nothing new in Buddhist history and is reminiscent of the *p’an-chiao* 判教 “doctrinal classification” schemes that were central to medieval Chinese Buddhist scholasticism and the traditions, both Chinese and Japanese, that derived from them.<sup>27</sup> Importantly, and ironically, non-denominational Buddhism heightens the tension between the universal and the particular, whereas this is ignored in pan- and interdenominational Buddhism. In intradenominational *tsūbukkyō* we saw that it was precisely this tension, and the inability to resolve it successfully, that led ultimately to the decline of these groups.

Like interdenominational *kyōkai* and *kessha*, I understand “non-denominational Buddhism” as a discrete historical phenomenon, occurring within a delimitable time-frame: I would suggest that the phenomenon of non-denominational Buddhism began approximately in the late 1880s, intensified after the Sino-Japanese War (1894–5), reached its zenith in the first decade of the twentieth century, and ended with the death of Takada in 1923. Here, it is possible only to provide a sketch of the complex forces within which non-denominational Buddhism arose and disappeared.

The proposed unification of Buddhism must be viewed as an instance of the programs of centralization and standardization that were occurring at most levels of Japanese society from the early Meiji period. Geopolitically, regional feudal domains were abolished and a system of modern prefectures under the control of a central government was established (*haihan chiken* 廃藩置県) in 1871. National unity was also pursued via various programs aimed at strengthening social cohesion, and the Constitution, which came into effect

<sup>26</sup> Those who have “got” the pun may skip this footnote. I find myself in the uncomfortable position of a comedian having to explain his joke. I have imposed the long-vowel diacritic “ō” upon the German “*aufgehoben*” both to smile and to point out the similar process by which ideas and groups may be co-opted both in Hegelian dialectic and in Buddhism. “*Höben*” 方便 is the Japanese translation of the Sanskrit *upāya*—a central Buddhist concept that refers to the notion that the Buddha used relative and provisional teachings to teach those with limited understanding.

<sup>27</sup> Ch. *p’an-chiao*, Jp. *hangyō*. An excellent and comprehensive introduction to the context and practice of *p’an-chiao* doctrinal classification may be found in Gregory 1991, pp. 93–114. The most celebrated inheritor of this practice in Japanese Buddhism is Kūkai 空海 (779–835), whose graded classification of pre-Buddhist and Buddhist teachings culminates in the superiority of his own Shingon tradition.

in 1890, established a unified political system. Such programs of centralization and standardization were undertaken in an atmosphere of crisis due to a sense of weakness *vis-à-vis* Western nations. The attempts at unification within the Buddhist world likewise grew out of this atmosphere of crisis. The Constitution of 1890 allowed for the freedom of religious belief, and there was widespread and profound concern over the threat that Christian missionary efforts posed to the Buddhist institutions. Compared with the socially active Christian organizations, the Buddhist clergy was seen, both by outside critics and by many Buddhists themselves, as corrupt and inadequate to the task of meeting the spiritual needs of the general public. It is for this very practical reason, one of survival, that attempts were made to centralize authority within the traditional denominations, one result of which was the dissolution of the intradenominational *kyōkai* and *kessha* discussed above.

Non-denominational Buddhist visions of reform went beyond the traditional institutional boundaries and called not for centralization *within* the denominational structures, but for a unity over and above them. These visions reflect the Enlightenment ideal of social progress and the notion of historical evolution that had attracted Japanese thinkers since the early 1870s. Such visions applied these ideas to the cultural sphere of religion.<sup>28</sup> In this regard, non-denominational Buddhism should be seen in the wider context of attempts at this time to unite all world religions. In Japan, this most often took the form of trying to unite Buddhism and Christianity, especially in the form of Unitarianism. Nakanishi's work is especially noteworthy in this regard, though Unitarianism also had a profound influence on the work of Furukawa and Sakaino. Anesaki's Kiitsu Kyōkai 歸一協会, the Dōkai 道会 of Matsumura Kaiseki 松村介石 (1859–1939), and the work of Kishimoto Nobuta 岸本能武太 (1866–1928), Takayama Chogyū 高山樗牛 (1871–1902) and Tsunashima Ryōsen 綱島梁川 (1873–1907) are also important examples of this trend toward a universal religious synthesis. Indeed, the work of the noted philosopher Nishida Kitarō 西田幾太郎 (1870–1945) also dealt with themes central to the overcoming of differences between Buddhism and Christianity.

The reasons that non-denominational Buddhist projects, and attempts at a grander religious synthesis, ceased appearing as the Taishō period progressed are found in a complex of doctrinal impasses, the marginality of their proponents, and the social and historical realities of the time. The tendency to over-

<sup>28</sup> See Thelle 1987, pp. 238–46 for an overview of various Buddhist and Christian attempts to realize “the final stage in the evolution toward the ideal future religion.”

come doctrinal fault-lines, especially that described above between a personal and impersonal understanding of the Absolute, by means of a rhetorical inclusion but *de facto* subsuming of the position of the other could not ultimately produce a satisfactory synthesis. That the proponents of such projects were on the margins of, or completely excluded from, the centers of denominational authority and resources also proved to be an insurmountable disadvantage. Progressive individuals were pitted against powerful and conservative institutions that were unwilling to divorce themselves from their traditional identities and privileges. Lastly, increasing social pressures, due mainly to the negative side-effects of modern capitalism, revealed deep-seated divisions and conflicts within Japanese society. The optimism required for grand projects of unification, especially after the end of the First World War, seems to have petered out. That Takada persisted in advocating the unification of Buddhism until his death in 1923 is a testament both to his tenacity and to the fact, as we shall see, that his conception of a united Buddhism was intricately connected to the nationalist and expansionist agenda being pursued in Taishō Japan.

*On the term “tsūbukkyō”*

As has been pointed out, the leading historians of modern Japanese Buddhism —Ikeda, Kashiwahara and Ketelaar— all identify “*tsūbukkyō*” as a major force in the Buddhist regeneration of the Meiji period. The definitions that the latter two put forth describe a move toward uniting Buddhism on the *doctrinal* level. Kashiwahara refers to a “return” to the “true teachings” of Śākyamuni, and Ketelaar to “the attempt to unify Buddhism in terms of its history, doctrine, texts, and to a certain extent organization.”<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the only definition of “*tsūbukkyō*” that I have been able to locate in a lexical work, Nakamura Hajime’s *Bukkyōgo daijiten* 佛教語大辞典 (A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms), likewise focuses on doctrine: “Doctrines that permeate and are held in common by all of Buddhism impartial to any one denomination.”<sup>30</sup> If, however, we accepted as the criterion for inclusion within the genus of “*tsūbukkyō*” only those activities that sought some measure of doctrinal unification, we would have to exclude some of the very examples that Kashiwahara and Ketelaar do in fact consider to be part of the transdenominational Buddhist movement—namely those groups that I have classified as

<sup>29</sup> Kashiwahara 1969, pp. 443–5 and Ketelaar 1990, pp. 227–8.

<sup>30</sup> *Bukkyōgo daijiten*, s.v. “*tsūbukkyō*.”

“pan-denominational Buddhism.”<sup>31</sup> We are thus left with a choice: do we accept the definition that Nakamura, Kashiwahara and Ketelaar employ, or, do we accept the range of phenomena that the latter two perceive as being operative? I have proposed that we accept the latter, and thus have included “umbrella”-type unions, such as the Shoshū Dōtoku Kaimei and the Bukkyō Kakushū Kyōkai as species of “*tsūbukkyō*.” The doctrine-centered definitions given above more aptly fit the species of “*tsūbukkyō*” that I have called inter-, intra-, and especially, non-denominational Buddhism.

We must also distinguish between first-order and second-order uses of this term. The first use of the term that I am aware of is in the title of Takada’s *Tsūbukkyō isseki banashi* 通仏教一席話 of 1902.<sup>32</sup> Here it is used to refer to his particular vision of what form a united Buddhism should take. He continued to use this phrase until 1912 when he renamed his campaign “Hōōkyō” 法王教, the reasons for which we will examine below.<sup>33</sup> “*Tsūbukkyō*” is used by the scholars mentioned above as a second-order term to describe the variety of attempts to transcend denominational boundaries in the Meiji period. In fact, the parameters of its use on the Internet database INBUDS<sup>34</sup> appear wider still. It is treated there as a “field” (*bunya* 分野) that appears to encompass trans-Buddhist activities regardless of geographical or temporal limits. It is clear that I too am using it as a comprehensive second-order term. In order to avoid confusion, let me restate the three usages of the term “*tsūbukkyō*” that the reader must keep in mind: (1) Takada’s use of it as the name for his campaign; (2) The definition given by modern historians referring to inter-Buddhist activity aimed at achieving doctrinal unity; and, (3) As a comprehensive genus, comprised of four species in my account of Meiji-Taishō Japan, and even more inclusive in the case of the INBUDS database. It is hoped that the classification system I have proposed will lend clarity and precision to the study of the variety of trans-Buddhist activities, and that it will also be applicable to an expanded geographical and historical horizon. This may well expand the number of species of “*tsūbukkyō*” beyond the four I perceive as operative in Japan in modern times.

<sup>31</sup> Ketelaar includes the Bukkyō Kakushū Kyōkai, the committee that put together the *Bukkyō kakushū kōyō*. See Ketelaar 1990, p. 159 and p. 264, n. 80.

<sup>32</sup> He also used the term in the title of *Tsūbukkyō anjin* 通仏教安心 (1904).

<sup>33</sup> Inoue Masatomo 井上政共 also used the term in the titles of at least two works *Tsūbukkyō* 通仏教 (1905) and *Tsūbukkyō kōenroku* 通仏教講演録 (1911).

<sup>34</sup> The INBUDS website, found at <[www.inbuds.net/jpn/index.html](http://www.inbuds.net/jpn/index.html)> (15 February 2006), is the Database Center of the Japanese Association for Indian and Buddhist Studies (JAIBS).

LOBREGLIO: UNITING BUDDHISM

	Pan-denominational Buddhism	Interdenominational Buddhism	Intradenominational <i>tsūbukkyō</i>	Non-denominational Buddhism
The One and the Many: Relationship to the “Other”	“umbrella organizations”: unions that include plurality; difference is accepted and maintained	unions that include plurality; difference is accepted and maintained. In addition, they sought to establish a common basis for teaching	employs teachings in common with other Buddhist groups, but reconciles these with the teachings of their own denomination’s founder	rhetorical inclusivity: difference is not maintained as difference, but tends to be subsumed or rejected
Aims	practical, often political	education about Buddhism; proselytization	education about Buddhism; proselytization	locates a “true essence” of Buddhism and seeks unification based on this
Target Audience	the government and/or other religious and social organizations	the general population	members of its own denomination	all Japanese, or world, Buddhists; occasionally all humanity
Proponents /Members	high(est) ranking clergy	often founded by lay Buddhist teachers ( <i>koji</i> 居士); includes both clergy and laity	often founded by lay Buddhist teachers ( <i>koji</i> ); includes both clergy and laity	usually intellectual priests
Relationship to Institutional Buddhism ( <i>kisei bukkvō</i> )	vehicles to express the concerns of the institutions themselves	a conscious distance and independence from the centers of denominational authority	a conscious distance and independence from the centers of denominational authority	rejection of institutional Buddhism ( <i>kisei bukkvō</i> )
Time-frame	1868-present	approximately 1875–89; peaked around 1883	approximately 1875–89; peaked around 1883	approximately late 1880s–1923
Examples	Shoshū Dōtoku Kaimei, Bukkyō Kakushū Kyōkai, Zen Nihon Bukkyōkai	<i>kyōkai</i> and <i>kessha</i> such as Wakeikai and Myōdōkai	<i>kyōkai</i> and <i>kessha</i> such as Sōtō Fushūkai and Shinshū Kyōkai Shūonsha	(Inoue Enryō), Takada Dōken, Murakami Senshō, Furukawa Rōsen, Sakaino Kōyō, Takashima Beihō Nakanishi Ushio,

Fig. 1. Varieties of Transdenominational Buddhism (*Tsūbukkyō*).

## III. Takada Dōken

Takada was an outspoken advocate for the unification of Japanese (and eventually world) Buddhism for some three decades from the mid-1890s until his death in 1923. Takada's project falls within our "non-denominational Buddhism" paradigm, and an examination of his teachings and strategies gives insight into the central issues dealt with by other such projects.

Judging from the dearth of scholarly treatment of Takada, he would appear to have been a marginal figure in the world of Meiji-period Buddhism. There are only a handful of scattered references to him in the major surveys of modern Japanese Buddhism, and there are only a few, very brief essays dealing with his career. Evidence from within Takada's own work testifies that his extensive writings were not recognized to the extent he had hoped for, and were even ridiculed in some quarters.<sup>35</sup>

His marginality within his own Sōtō denomination is certain, and was to a large extent self-ordained. Although abbot of a number of Sōtō temples, he was rarely present at these, but chose to spend his time at his publishing house in Tokyo. His often caustic criticisms of institutional Buddhism and of traditional Zen teachings further marginalized his position within Sōtō. Sakurai Shūyū, a leading Sōtō scholar and cleric, refers to the fact that Takada was not excommunicated, despite promoting "heretical" teachings, as evidence of Sōtō's benign and lenient approach to "heresy."<sup>36</sup>

Despite the lack of scholarly treatment, however, it is difficult to imagine that Takada was not well known in Meiji Buddhist circles. He was a highly prolific author, and approximately sixty of his works may be found in the National Diet Library.<sup>37</sup> He was the founder, publisher and chief contributor to the *Tsūzoku bukkyō shinbun* 通俗仏教新聞 (Popular Buddhist Newspaper), a weekly newspaper published from 1894 until 1916.<sup>38</sup> While we can only roughly surmise the extent of this newspaper's readership,<sup>39</sup> its consistent

<sup>35</sup> Takada 1982, p. 333.

<sup>36</sup> See Sakurai 1992, pp. 249–52.

<sup>37</sup> These may be read on-line at the National Diet Library's (Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan 国会図書館) website, <[www.ndl.go.jp/](http://www.ndl.go.jp/)> (15 February 2006). One must then go to the Kindai Dejitaru Raiburari 近代デジタルライブラリ.

<sup>38</sup> The name then changed to *Bukkyō shinbun* 仏教新聞. I have been unable to ascertain how long it persisted under this title.

<sup>39</sup> For its first eight years, it averaged roughly 1300 copies per issue. Whether this figure is



publication for over twenty years does indicate both a loyal readership and Takada's determined commitment to the propagation of Buddhism.

He also founded the influential Bukkyō Seinenkai 仏教青年会 (Buddhist Youth Organization) in which many of the leading Meiji Buddhists, including Murakami Senshō, participated.

*Takada's Early Career: Intra- and Interdenominational Tsūbukkyō*

Takada's version of non-denominational Buddhism took shape slowly and continued to evolve over the course of his career. In order to set Takada's conception of non-denominational Buddhism in distinct relief, it is instructive to examine briefly the background against which it emerged. In 1886, at the age of twenty-eight, he went to live at Seishōji in Tokyo where he trained under Kitano Genpō 北野元峰 (1842–1933) for the next eight years. It was here that both Kitano as well as Ōuchi Seiran, arguably the single most influential Buddhist figure in the Meiji period, were engaged in promoting Buddhist enlightenment. The influence of these encounters had enormous significance for the direction that his thinking and activities would take for the rest of his life.<sup>40</sup> It was during this period that he founded the Bukkyō Seinenkai (which included lay and clergy on an equal basis), and lectured widely both to lay followers, notably even doing so in their homes, as well as to clergy in the priest's hall (*sōdō* 僧堂) when Kitano was unable to do so.

The important point here is that we can see clear continuities between his activities of this period and those of the interdenominational *kyōkai* and *kessha* that we examined earlier. Given the influence of his encounter with Ōuchi, this should come as no surprise. Most significantly, his activities take place within the overall structure of institutional Buddhism, mostly, though not limited to, the instruction of Sōtō Zen followers. His founding of the above-mentioned Bukkyō Seinenkai is an early instance of active *interdenominational* involvement. His teaching and writings were most concerned with providing a means to attain spiritual peace (*anjin*) for those of *all* abilities. Not only this, but he rejected the supposed superiority of the clergy, and

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great or small is open to debate, but Ajiki Bun'yu considers it a significant quantity considering that the well-known *Chūgai nippō* once produced as few as 200 copies per issue. See Ajiki 2002, pp. 153–54. Kiyozawa Manshi's journal *Seishinkai* 精神界 (Spiritual World), founded in 1901, had a circulation of approximately 3000 copies per issue. See Kashiwahara and Sonoda 1994, p. 237.

<sup>40</sup> Fukase 1990, p. 29.

argued instead that within the ranks of both clergy and laity there are those having superior, average and inferior abilities (*jōchūge* 上中下). Fukase, a contemporary Sōtō scholar and priest, has conjectured that this leveling of the traditional hierarchical arrangement between clergy and laity was most likely a response to the *de facto* situation of a clergy that was rapidly becoming a predominantly married one, thus eroding the social differences between clergy and laity.<sup>41</sup>

The content of Takada's teaching in this early period does differ from that of most interdenominational *kessha* in at least one important respect. He did not place any special emphasis upon the taking of the precepts, but rather emphasized wisdom, meditation and *satori* not only for the clergy, but for the laity as well. Here he differed from Ōuchi and others who viewed *zazen* as too difficult for most common people. Takada's inclusion of a practice distinctive to his own school is characteristic of the intradenominational *kessha*, which sought to reconcile the elements common to all Buddhist denominations with the teachings of their respective founders, in Takada's case with the *zazen*-oriented teachings of Dōgen.<sup>42</sup>

From the mid-1880s, Takada's educational activities and calls for the reform of institutional Buddhism were very much in line with the inter- and intradenominational *kessha* and *kyōkai* activities that were still active at this time. At approximately the time when the Sōtō Fushūkai was absorbed into the Sōtō Kyōkai, the educational and missionary organ of the Sōtō institution itself, in 1889, Doken's *kessha*-like activities began to cross over the line into what I have called "non-denominational Buddhism." Indeed, it is tempting to speculate that other non-denominational Buddhist phenomena were born *as reactions against* the consolidation of institutional authority that was both the cause and effect of the demise of the *kessha*. The conscious distance that such *kessha* maintained from the traditional institutional hierarchies was now lost, and it would seem that the only options open to reform-minded priests were to either acquiesce to institutional authority, or become even more radicalized in their opposition to it. It is precisely this latter path that Takada pursued.

As one would expect over a thirty-year period, the content of Takada's non-

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32; see also Jaffe 2001. Jaffe's work is a comprehensive study of the factors behind the decriminalization of clerical marriage in 1872 and traces the effects of this radical departure from traditional norms through to the present.

<sup>42</sup> Dōgen Kigen 道元希玄 (1200–1253), founder of the Sōtō Zen denomination in Japan.

denominational Buddhism underwent important changes. I would like to outline broadly this evolution by dividing his non-denominational Buddhist efforts into two distinct phases: an early phase, from approximately 1894–1911, and a later one from 1912 until his death in 1923, the period in which he gave the new name “Hōōkyō,” or, “The Teaching of the Dharma King” to his campaign.<sup>43</sup> While there is significant continuity to the content of Takada’s writings that transcends this division, there is clearly an intensification of central themes signaled by the new name. An examination of these themes will provide, I believe, a platform from which to view the interactions of the various competing versions of non-denominational Buddhism at the turn of the twentieth century.

*Takada’s Early Non-denominational Buddhism: 1894–1911*

It may be recalled that one of the ways in which non-denominational Buddhism goes beyond interdenominational Buddhism is in its rejection of the traditional Buddhist organizations. Takada’s rejection of institutional Buddhism begins approximately around the time of his founding the *Tsūzoku bukkyō shinbun* in 1894. He lays out his criticisms of institutional Buddhism in his contributions to this newspaper, as well as in other writings from this period.

The main reason for rejecting institutional Buddhism was its very sectarianism. Doctrinal divisions in Japan, especially those between the *shōdōmon* and *jōdomon* traditions, gave rise to an inter- and intradenominational fighting that Takada abhorred. Takada criticized interdenominational fighting as being a meaningless academic debate over the superiority or inferiority of the *jiriki* or *tariki* positions. Also, precisely at this time in the 1890s, Takada’s Sōtō denomination was embroiled in the so-called “Sōjiji secession and independence movement” (Nōhonzan Bunri Dokuritusu Undō 能本山分離獨立運動)—an attempt by one of its head temples, Sōjiji, to secede along with all of its branch temples from its union with the other head temple, Eiheiji. This was a bitter and protracted battle, primarily over the control of the organization’s financial resources, that one Sōtō historian has described as the most disgraceful episode in Sōtō’s seven-hundred-year history.<sup>44</sup> Takada was disgusted with such inter- and intradenominational fighting because it consumed

<sup>43</sup> Fukase 1990, p. 30, sees the initiation of the Hōōkyō teachings in 1912 as the starting-point for a new direction in Takada’s thought.

<sup>44</sup> Takeuchi 1971, p. 212.

the energies of priests who then ignored the concrete problems of ignorance, suffering and anxiety, and thus failed to offer a means of religious liberation (*shūkyōteki gedatsu* 宗教の解脱) from these.<sup>45</sup> Such liberation was for Takada the *raison d'être* of Śākyamuni's teaching and the true essence of Buddhism to which Buddhists must return. As an extension of this belief, Takada went beyond his earlier rejection of clerical superiority, and its concomitant recognition of the equality of lay and cleric, to call for the eventual abolition of the clergy altogether.

Takada also rejected such usual institutional structures as patriarchs, a main temple, denominational regulations (*shūsei* 宗制) and denominational rules (*shūki* 宗規). His "*tsū-busshū*" 通仏宗 or "transbuddhist denomination," was to be a spiritual organization freed from such repressive structures which inhibited the teaching of *anjin*.<sup>46</sup> Concerning those who were already clergy (*shukke* 出家) and wished to be part of this spiritual organization, Takada wrote that although in the end there would be no clergy or teachers (教師 *kyōshi*), for the time being there was no choice but to employ clergy from the various denominations and to use the old rites. However, in time the use of these clergy, teachers and rites, too, would have to change.<sup>47</sup> He clearly sought the actual unification of Buddhism on the institutional level and used the phrase *issū ippa* 一宗一派, "one denomination, one branch," to describe this unity. He referred to those forms of "*tsūbukkyō*" that did not advocate such actual unification as "*futsū bukkyō*" 普通仏教, a dismissive pun meaning "commonplace Buddhism."

### *Takada's Hōōkyō*

From 1912, Takada began using "Hōōkyō" as the new name of his teaching. In his *Hōōkyō gairon* 法王教概論 (Introduction to the Teaching of the Dharma King) of 1916, he explains his reasons for making this change: "For over twenty years now I have been persevering in the name of "*tsūbukkyō*," however, this is such a generic name that its distinguishing features can in no way be discerned . . . Because of the pain of these past twenty years, I have finally expressed this distinguishing feature."<sup>48</sup> Two things should strike us about this passage. First, there is the acknowledgement that Takada's efforts at cre-

<sup>45</sup> Fukase 1992, p. 248.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Takada 1982, p. 279.

ating a non-denominational Buddhism (what he calls “*tsūbukkyō*”) to this point have been painful, have not met with success, and require a different approach for future proselytization. Second, it points us directly to what Takada now considers the focus of his teaching. *Hōōkyō* is the short form of “*Hōō Shakason-kyō*” 法王釈尊教 (The Teaching of the Revered Śākyamuni, [the] Dharma King) and the distinguishing feature to which Takada refers is the absolute centrality that Śākyamuni now has within his revised conception of non-denominational Buddhism. In his earlier version of non-denominational Buddhism, Śākyamuni also played a pivotal role: the central aim was the implementation of the true essence of Śākyamuni’s teachings as expressed in the *Ta-ch’eng chi’i-hsin lun* 大乘起信論 (Awakening of the Mahāyāna Faith),<sup>49</sup> and Śākyamuni was, as in the Zen schools, taken as the *honzon* 本尊, or main object of devotion, of a new, united Buddhism. The heightening of Śākyamuni’s role within *Hōōkyō*, however, surpasses this and goes hand-in-hand with an increased denigration and denunciation of other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and ultimately reveals the presence of sectarian antagonism at the very heart of Takada’s non-denominational project.

Takada’s above-mentioned *Hōōkyō gairon* is written in question and answer format, and will serve as the basis of my discussion. It is interesting that, in the section following the one I have just quoted, when asked by his “interlocutor” to expound upon just how the new name reveals the characteristic feature of the teaching, Takada responds by defining *Hōōkyō* *negatively*: it is not based upon Buddhas who have names and no reality (*yūmei mujitsu* 有名無実) like the Buddhas Dainichi 大日 (Skt. Mahāvairocana), Hōshō 宝生 (Skt. Ratnasambhava), Ashuku 阿闍 (Skt. Akṣobhya), or Amida 阿彌陀 (Skt. Amitābha). In contrast to these, Śākyamuni Buddha has not only a name, but a real existence as well (*yūmei yūjitsu* 有名有実). The former Buddhas do not exist, and to teach that they do is to practice deception.<sup>50</sup> Such Buddhas he considers *kebutsu* 化仏, or “transformation Buddhas,” and states his valuation of these in stark terms: “I will do away with all transformation Buddhas and will reveal that this very world of the true Buddha and Dharma King is one and the same as the Pure Land of Tranquil Light (*jakkōdo* 寂光土).”<sup>51</sup> When “asked” if this does not subvert the very basis of the Jōdo,

<sup>49</sup> For an English translation of this work, see Hakeda 1967.

<sup>50</sup> Takada 1982, p. 280.

<sup>51</sup> *Kebutsu* and *kebosatsu* 化菩薩 refer to the various forms in which a Buddha or Bodhisattva appears in order to help sentient beings.

Shingon and Jōdo Shin traditions, he unabashedly affirms this to be the case. These are castles built upon sand and must collapse.<sup>52</sup> He then goes on to state that in fact all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions lack real existence and must be swept away to allow for Śākyamuni's light to shine in this world. It has been this belief in *kebutsu* and *kebosatsu* that has kept Japanese Buddhism enveloped in dark clouds and mist for so long.<sup>53</sup> In contrast to these illusory beings, Śākyamuni Buddha is the only one to actually appear in our world and who genuinely and historically exists (*chanto rekishiteki ni genzai shimashimasu* チャンと歴史的に現在します).<sup>54</sup> (The reason for his use of the present tense "exists" will soon become apparent.)

The polemical nature of Takada's Hōōkyō is patent, and is a marked departure from his earlier attempts merely to point out the "ambiguity" present in the teachings of the Pure Land schools.<sup>55</sup> His criticism not only becomes more confrontational, but also widens its scope to include virtually the entire landscape of Japanese Buddhism populated as it is by a myriad number of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, not to mention kami. The irony of such a thorough rejection of so much of Japanese Buddhism in the name of a non-denominational inclusiveness was not entirely lost upon Takada, though he rejected the accusation that Hōōkyō was one sectarian perspective among others.<sup>56</sup> His rejection of these types of beings, he argued, was not based upon a particular denominational perspective, but rather upon the criteria of truth demanded by modern science and historical studies. Takada was determined that his project be in line with the rejection of "superstition" (*meishin* 迷信) prevalent in Meiji scholarly circles<sup>57</sup> and supported by the Meiji government. Indeed, a vignette such as the following has a directness that captures a modern skepticism toward religious beliefs:

What use is the Amida nenbutsu and the teaching of a Western Paradise for the real-life situation of our society? Must not texts like the Three [Pure Land] Sutras be considered as nothing but a novel or an illustrated story book? Are not the likes of Yakushi, Dainichi, Jizō and Kannon characters in a Buddhist novel who are not really

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 280–1.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 281.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>55</sup> Fukase 1993, p. 798.

<sup>56</sup> Takada 1982, pp. 362–3.

<sup>57</sup> Inoue Enryō was the most active and notable Buddhist intellectual in this regard.

thought to exist? For this reason, are not those who believe in these Buddhas and Bodhisattvas looked down upon as superstitious people? If by chance someone mentions hell or paradise, the current of the times is to laugh it off as a joke or as a wild fancy.<sup>58</sup>

To be credible, religious teachings must be “real” (*genjitsuteki* 現実的) and verifiable (*kakushōteki* 確証的). The notions of various Buddhas and Pure Lands are seen by Takada as superstitions and delusions (*meishin mōshin* 迷信妄信) and are completely rejected.<sup>59</sup>

The historical verifiability of Śākyamuni, on the other hand, provides the sound basis for a modern religion according to Takada. In this regard, he is in accord with a large number of Meiji Buddhists, Murakami Senshō included, who likewise sought to establish the historical Śākyamuni and his teachings as the source and basis of Japanese Buddhism in order to respond to the *Daijō hibussetsu* criticism, mentioned above, that Mahāyāna, and thus Japanese, Buddhism was not taught by Śākyamuni himself. While largely agreeing on the centrality of Śākyamuni, Meiji Buddhists (as indeed Buddhists throughout the ages) tended to differ in the answers they gave to the related and thorny questions of how to understand the ontological status of Śākyamuni, and how to determine which of the vast number of teachings preserved in the Buddhist canon are “authentic.” A broad and in-depth survey of such answers is desirable, though beyond the scope of this paper. An outline of Takada’s responses to these questions, though, should shed some light on the issues and tensions involved in the field of Meiji buddhological discourse.

As mentioned, the reason for Takada’s earlier appreciation of Śākyamuni was based upon his teaching of religious liberation as found in the *Ta-ch’eng chi’i-hsin lun*. Very simply put, Takada understood this liberation as the dispelling of deluded consciousness, best brought about by Zen meditation, and the subsequent emergence of one’s inherently awakened consciousness. However, with his heightened emphasis upon the centrality of Śākyamuni, Takada comes to criticize this notion of *hongaku*, or “original enlightenment.” The reason he gives is the one long leveled against the notion of an inherently pure, immanent substance: it simply fails to do justice to the realities of suffering and evil as endured in actual experience.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 332–3.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 361.

This is part of his broader rejection of the teachings of divine immanence, which included for Takada “pantheism” (*ban'yū shinkyō* 万有神教),<sup>60</sup> and his contention that true religion is dependent upon that which is radically transcendent. However, as halting the spread of Christianity in Japan was one of Takada’s central motivations throughout his career, his emphasis upon the radically transcendent excluded the notion of a pure transcendent Other that was the source of the universe as found in Christianity and other monotheistic religions. The reasons he gives for rejecting such a conception of the transcendent are, in the end, the same as his reasons for rejecting the notion of the immanence of the Absolute as found in the *hongaku* teachings, namely, its inability to explain cogently the existence of evil.

With the Scylla of pure immanence and the Charybdis of a pure and omnipotent transcendent Other through which Takada had to navigate in view, we can now appreciate the unique course that Takada chose to steer. “Religion” (*rerijon* レリジョン), Takada writes, “is in essence based on *tariki*. ‘Religion’ means ‘submission.’ Human beings have to rely on the power of beings greater than themselves.”<sup>61</sup> As we have seen, however, Takada has accepted the Kantian limits placed upon our ability to know anything about the noumenal realm.<sup>62</sup> Except for Śākyamuni, the existence of such “greater” beings is highly ambiguous at best. Because Śākyamuni actually appeared in our world, however, he alone qualifies as such a “superhuman” (*ningen ijō* 人間以上) being. “Superhuman” does not mean “not human” (*hi-ningen* 非人間),<sup>63</sup> but rather, a human being endowed with mysterious power (*fukashigi naru chikara* 不可思議なる力) and the capacity to go beyond human [limitations] (*chōjin no shikaku* 超人の資格).<sup>64</sup>

Takada was convinced that his understanding of Buddhism was both modern and scientific, and was intent on convincing his audience of the same. The above account of a “superhuman” Śākyamuni, however, must surely have raised for his audience the very question of verifiability that Takada accept-

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 316.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 354.

<sup>62</sup> It is important to recall that such Kantian limits reigned in Meiji intellectual circles. A symbol of Kant’s standing among Meiji intellectuals may be seen in Inoue Enryō’s enshrining of Kant in the “Hall of the Four Sages” (Shiseidō 四聖堂) alongside Śākyamuni, Confucius and Socrates on the grounds of his “Hall of Philosophy” Tetsugakudō 哲学堂. See Staggs 1983, pp. 278–9.

<sup>63</sup> Takada 1982, p. 355.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 356.



ed as the standard for scientific truth. How do we know that a “superhuman” Śākyamuni exists (in the present tense!)? How do we know anything about his ontological status? And, how do we know how to interact with him in order to benefit from his power? Takada’s answer is, simply, “Śākyamuni tells us so!”<sup>65</sup>—that is, in certain canonical texts. Takada was well aware of the critical historical research being conducted on the Buddhist canon at this time, and he himself “deconstructs” a significant number of Buddhist scriptures in his *Hōōkyō gairon*. He employs a strikingly modern hermeneutic strategy that does not acknowledge the integrity of any *single* text, but sees Buddhist scriptures as later, polemical, and often random compilations. Śākyamuni’s true teachings need to be sifted from the false, and Takada does so by choosing passages eclectically from *within* various texts. For example, he judges that Chapter 16 of the *Saddharmapundarikasūtra*<sup>66</sup> embodies the true understanding of Śākyamuni’s ontological status and soteriological strategy, though other passages of the same *Saddharmapundarikasūtra* he views as “unnecessary” and “hindrances.”<sup>67</sup> Likewise, the teaching of karmic causation as found in Aśvaghōṣa’s *Ta-ch’eng chi’i-hsin lun* is central to Takada’s conception of true Buddhism, though he rejects what is most fundamental to this text—Aśvaghōṣa’s understanding of *tathāgata-garbha*.<sup>68</sup> It must be mentioned that Takada nowhere justifies his selection of these passages according to historical or philological criteria, and the reader is thus left with the disquieting feeling that the ultimate authority for these interpretative decisions is Takada’s subjective “certitude.” In other words, we see an ideological co-optation of the “rational.”

Why then does Takada emphasize these particular passages, and what do they tell us about Śākyamuni and his teachings? As mentioned, Chapter 16 of the *Saddharmapundarikasūtra*, is of the utmost centrality for Takada for

<sup>65</sup> Takada considers this “proof” (*shōko* 証拠): “*sono shōko wa hōō nyorai ga mizukara ooseraretaja naika*” その証拠は、法王如来が自から仰せられたぢゃないか (ibid., p. 293).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>67</sup> For an English translation of this work, see Watson 1993.

<sup>68</sup> Hakeda has written that “From the point of view of the history of Buddhist thought, the *Ta-ch’eng chi’i-hsin lun* may be regarded as representing the highest point in the development of the *tathāgata-garbha* concept in Mahāyāna Buddhism.” While Takada praises Aśvaghōṣa in numerous places in the *Hōōkyō gairon*, he criticizes his understanding of *tathāgata-garbha* as suggesting dangerously that a pure substratum of consciousness may exist independently of its defiled aspects and that this pure substratum may be seen as the matrix of all things. See Hakeda 1967, p. 15 and Sōtōshū Sensho Kankōkai 1982, p. 321.

two reasons. The first concerns Śākyamuni's dramatic revelation that "since I attained Buddhahood, an extremely long period of time has passed. My life span is an immeasurable number of *asamkhya kalpas*, and during that time I have constantly abided here without ever entering into extinction."<sup>69</sup> This reveals that he is, ontologically speaking, much more than a mere human being who walked upon this earth three thousand years ago. This is the aforementioned "proof" that Śākyamuni is a "superhuman being." Takada does not interpret this revelation, as has most of the East Asian Buddhist tradition, as Śākyamuni's equating himself with the eternal *dharmakāya*, or Buddha nature, and announcing the soteriological possibility for the identification of this eternal Buddha nature with the individual's originally enlightened nature or *hongaku*. Rather, Takada takes Śākyamuni's words literally, and sees him as an eminently powerful Other committed to the salvation of all beings. While Śākyamuni is powerful, however, he is neither omnipotent nor omnipresent, and certainly not the source or creator of a universe that has neither beginning nor end. It is via this understanding of "Buddha" that he is able to steer clear of the aforementioned Scylla and Charybdis, that is, between the immanentist positions of *hongaku* proponents and of "pantheism" on the one shore, and of a transcendent monotheism on the other.

The second reason for the centrality of Chapter 16 is Śākyamuni's statements that "for more than forty years I did not reveal the full truth (*shijūyonen miken shinjitsu* 四十余年未顯真実)," but that now (i.e., in the *Saddharmapūṇḍarikasūtra*) he has done so for the first time, abandoning all provisional means (*shōjiki sha hōben* 正直捨方便).<sup>70</sup> That Takada's discussion of these statements is found in a section of his work entitled "Why Reject Transformation Buddhas (*kebutsu*)" makes clear his polemical ends: these scriptural passages serve as the authority according to which Takada can reject the reality of *kebutsu* and *kebosatsu*, and thus dismiss the traditions—the greater part of Japanese Buddhism!—which take these as their foundation.

Takada values the *Ta-ch'eng chi'i-hsin lun* for its explanation of how the superhuman Śākyamuni is able to effect the religious liberation of human

<sup>69</sup> Chapter 16, entitled "Tathāgatāyuspramāṇaparivarta" (Life Span of the Thus Come One). Takada 1982, pp. 292–3 and p. 358. I use Burton Watson's translation here, Watson 1993, p. 227.

<sup>70</sup> In fact, these phrases are not to be found in Chapter 16 of *Saddharmapūṇḍarikasūtra*, but rather in *Wu-liang-i ching* 無量義經 (T 267) considered a sort of "Introduction" to the *Saddharmapūṇḍarikasūtra*. Takada 1982, p. 357.

beings by means of his “Other Power.” He contrasts this “true Other Power” (*shinjitsu tariki* 真実他力) of Śākyamuni with the “provisional Other Power” (*hōben tariki* 方便他力) of the various other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Such intervention in the lives of human beings does not contravene the ultimate law of the universe, the law of cause and effect, but rather, as explained in the *Ta-ch’eng chi’i-hsin lun*, works perfectly in tandem with it. “*Innen*” 因縁 is comprised of both “*in*,” or the innate causes that an individual possesses from birth (presumably from previous existences), while “*en*” refers to the environmental factors impacting upon the individual. (Though simplistic, in contemporary terms, the interaction of “nature” and “nurture” may not be an unhelpful way of envisioning this interaction of “*in*” and “*en*.”) Śākyamuni’s “externally related power” (*nyorai gaien no chikara* 如来外縁の力) has impacted upon this world via his physical appearance and his providing of teachings, and continues to influence it by his ongoing transfer of merit. It is these actions that have created the “Buddhist” environment wherein the attainment of *anjin*, or spiritual peace, has become a possibility.<sup>71</sup>

What, then, according to Takada, is the appropriate human response within this environment? How is the potential for spiritual peace to be actualized, and just what does salvation consist of? The true other power practice of Hōōkyō, he writes, is this: “To have faith in the person of Buddha, receive his divine protection, follow his teachings and practice in accordance with them.”<sup>72</sup> Given the *embarras du choix* of teachings and practices purported to derive from Śākyamuni, though, which ones are Hōōkyō followers to follow and engage in? We have already seen Takada’s eclectic hermeneutic approach to the Buddhist scriptures, sifting “true” passages from those he deems misleading or false. In terms of practice, he acknowledges that *all* Buddhist practices have entered human history because of the intervention of Śākyamuni. Thus, with one notable set of exceptions, all practices that have been passed down through Buddhist history are acceptable for Hōōkyō followers to engage in, provided that one understands that they are all *tariki*, or “Other Power,” practices:

Relying on Amida is not the only form of *tariki*. Is not praying to Jizō and Kannon for benefits *tariki* as well? Chanting the name of

<sup>71</sup> This discussion is found in Takada 1982, pp. 350–4. He is here explicating the section of the *Ta-ch’eng chi’i-hsin lun* that may be found in Hakeda 1967, pp. 60–64.

<sup>72</sup> Takada 1982, p. 356.

Śākyamuni, revering him, holding services and strengthening one's faith in him—these alone are not *tarikī*. In addition, are not the reading and studying of Zen texts, and doing *zazen* all Shaka's teachings and part of his path as well? From my perspective, there is not the slightest trace of *jiriki* [in these]; they are *tarikī* through and through.<sup>73</sup>

The exceptions, not surprisingly, are any practices involving faith in Buddhas and Bodhisattvas other than Śākyamuni. Given Śākyamuni's revelation in Chapter 16 of the *Saddharmapundarikasūtra*, these must be seen as provisional teachings (*hōben*) that are now to be abandoned. To have faith in entities such as Amida or Dainichi, *et al.* is misguided, as their existence cannot be verified. Śākyamuni alone has entered human history, and he alone can offer salvation to mankind. Traditional *tarikī* practices such as chanting the name of a Buddha, praying for benefits and performing services are affirmed; it is only the traditional objects of these devotions that are rejected and to be replaced by Śākyamuni.

When Takada's imaginary interlocutor does not understand how engaging in ascetic practices and making the vow to manifest the thought of awakening (*hotsubodaishin* 発菩提心), usually associated with the *shōdōmon* denominations and *jiriki* practice, can possibly be construed as *tarikī*, Takada reiterates in the strongest of terms that there is nothing in Buddhist history that did not originate as a result of Śākyamuni's "Other Power." Accordingly, he argues that *all practices are tarikī practices; there is no such thing as jiriki!*<sup>74</sup> To be sure, effort is required on the part of the Buddhist practitioner, but this is not to be considered *jiriki*, something attainable solely by one's own power. Rather, all Buddhist practice is "*tarikī jitoku*" 他力自得, or, self-motivated effort within the environment conducive to practice created by the Other Power of Śākyamuni.<sup>75</sup> *Tariki* practices are active, not passive, endeavors. Takada describes the inherent poverty of the human situation and the need for salvation from beyond in terms that relate to the nature of the salvation he envisages:

Like fish who forget that they live in water, and human beings who forget the air they breathe, you [his "interlocutor"] are forgetting

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 346.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., pp. 349–50.

<sup>75</sup> The literal meaning of *jitoku* is "self-acquired."

that you are bathed in the light of Buddha. . . . The very fact that *beings do not know that they have true Buddha nature* [emphasis added] (*busshō* 佛性) means that this knowledge had to come through the efforts of an external power. Because one cannot see one's own face, if one wishes to do so, one must depend upon the external power of a mirror . . . Sentient beings do not realize that they have Buddha nature on their own, but rather because of Śākyamuni's Other Power, wisdom and virtue. All sentient beings . . . are orphans wandering around at the crossroads of the three worlds and six realms. However, having eyes of compassion, Shaka noticed this and devised various means to help us realize that, ultimately, we are in origin like the children of a wealthy man. This is discussed in great detail in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*. If Śākyamuni did not appear in this world and let nature run its course, we orphans would have been condemned to reincarnate eternally, leading impoverished lives.<sup>76</sup>

Salvation thus lies in the thoroughly Mahāyāna recognition by the individual of one's own inherent Buddha nature. It is precisely for this reason that Śākyamuni appeared in our world.<sup>77</sup> The careful reader should be somewhat puzzled at this point. While it was mentioned earlier that Takada rejected the notion of *hongaku* or original enlightenment, he seems here to be affirming it.

In fact, herein lies the crux of Takada's attempt to resolve the quintessential and perennial dilemma faced by East Asian Buddhist thinkers: to resolve the contradiction between the two Mahāyāna concepts of *tathāgata-garbha* and *ālaya-vijñāna*.<sup>78</sup> The former teaches that the mind is by nature inherently enlightened<sup>79</sup> and that any defilements are extrinsic to it. The Yogācāra doctrine of *ālaya-vijñāna*, on the other hand, posits the mind as a repository that stores the seeds (Skt. *bīja*) of all past experiences both pure and defiled. Where *tathāgata-garbha* thought denies the ultimate reality of ignorance, the notion of *ālaya-vijñāna* challenges the innate purity of the mind. As mentioned

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp. 351–2.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 356.

<sup>78</sup> See Buswell 1989, Chapter 3, for a lucid account of this philosophical dilemma in the context of sixth-century Chinese Buddhist scholarship.

<sup>79</sup> The term *tathāgata-garbha* means literally womb or matrix (Skt. *garbha*) of Buddhahood (Skt. *tathāgata* is an honorific term for the Buddha meaning literally “the thus come one”).

earlier, while praising the *Ta-ch'eng chi'i-hsin lun* on many counts, Takada rejects its affirmation of *tathāgata-garbha*. What Takada most objects to is the extraction of a pure “Buddha” aspect (*nyorai*) from the complexity of pure and defiled aspects in which it is embedded, and then positing this as having existed eternally and independently. Worse still, some scholars go so far as to posit that this true “Buddha” suffuses the entirety of the universe and is the underlying principle of it. According to Takada, the enlightened aspects of one’s Buddha nature are always inextricably intertwined with unenlightened aspects.<sup>80</sup> This recognition places him clearly on the Yogācāra side of the debate. The strength of this position is that it can account for the palpable reality of the suffering and evil that human beings constantly encounter—a central concern of Takada’s. However, unlike the Indian Yogācāra understanding that the removal of the defiled “seeds” entails a lengthy process sometimes requiring many lifetimes, Takada takes a distinctively East Asian approach: ultimate spiritual peace may be attained in this lifetime, on this earth. Followers of Hōōkyō do not worry about becoming a Buddha sometime in the future. Rather, they “are able to see the true Dharma-nature of things (*shinnyo hosshō* 真如法性) and to understand just what ignorance and defilements are according to the insights and ideals of Śākyamuni.”<sup>81</sup> This is the key to Buddhist salvation in Takada’s eyes: insight into the nature of the ignorant passions in order rise above them.

There is only one passage in the *Hōōkyō gairon*, a text of ninety pages, that attempts to explain just how this process works:

If the true Dharma-nature of things (*shinnyo hosshō*) in its natural state is to be considered sacred and noble, then the ignorance and defilements (*mumyō bonnō* 無明煩惱) that it has given birth to should of course be embraced and there is no reason to hate them. So, why do we abandon our hatred of these [ignorant passions] and endeavor to embrace them? This is because ignorance should be hated and the true state of things (*shinnyo*) should be loved. Even if within the undiscriminating first principle (*ritai* 理体) truth and illusion are said to be non-dual, one must understand that within this non-duality there is discrimination.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Takada 1982, pp. 326–7.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 313–4.

The notion that the ignorant passions should be embraced in order to overcome ignorance is a celebrated Mahāyāna theme encapsulated in the phrase *bonnō soku bodai* 煩惱即菩提—the passions do not differ from enlightenment. While Takada's affirmation of this is, thus, not novel, he departs from this tradition in a crucial way. The notion of the identity of the passions and enlightenment is informed by the premise that in order to be “non-dual,” one of the pair, namely the passions, must ultimately be “illusion.” Takada's insistence that “within this non-duality there is discrimination” is his affirmation of the ultimate reality of the passions, suffering and evil. The enlightened and unenlightened aspects of reality are “non-dual” in the sense of being inseparable, but both are very real.

In order to resolve successfully the contradiction between the concepts of *tathāgata-garbha* and *ālaya-vijñāna*, one would have to explain *how* something could be pure and still encompass something that is genuinely impure. While Takada states *that* this is the way things are, in the end, this can in no way be taken as an intellectually satisfying explication. Takada, however, would be undaunted by such criticism. For him, the phenomenal world was clearly a “lump” of pure and defiled elements, and while he had philosophical “interest” in questions concerning its ultimate provenance, from his “religious perspective, such [speculation] has no value whatsoever.”<sup>83</sup> For Takada, the Japanese masses were in desperate need of salvation, Buddhism itself was faced with extinction due to internal and external threats, and Japan was involved in international competition for colonial acquisition as the First World War raged. It was for these reasons that Takada felt that Buddhism must be unified, and it was toward these real and pressing ends that his Hōōkyō was directed.

A central feature of non-denominational Buddhism, I suggested, was the isolation from within the various individual traditions of a common essence. For Takada, this lay first of all in the indisputable fact that all institutions, teachings, practices and clergy throughout Buddhist history are derived ultimately from the appearance of Śākyamuni in this world. He thus employs a monophyletic evolutionary classification—the origination of all members of a group from a single ancestral stock<sup>84</sup>—as the basis for the actual institutional unification of Buddhism in his time. “What I am advocating is not at

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., pp. 321–2.

<sup>84</sup> See *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Macropedia, 13th edition, s.v. “taxonomy” in “Biological Sciences.”

all like those feudal, factional and narrow teachings. It is one large Buddhism summarized by the name “Hōō Shakason-kyō (The Teaching of the Revered Śākyamuni, [the] Dharma King). . . . All denominations and branches are tolerated within it.”<sup>85</sup> If Takada would have been content with this metaphor of biological consanguinity, his Hōōkyō would have resembled one of the pan-denominational “umbrella organizations” discussed in Section One. However, as we have seen, his “toleration” of other denominations and branches extends only in so far as they renounce the teaching of, and practices related to, *kebutsu* and *kebosatsu*, which would for most Japanese Buddhist traditions be tantamount to renouncing the very traits that define their identity. Takada’s inclusivity is clearly rhetorical as he presses beyond this metaphor in order to determine the “true essence” of Buddhism not only in a historical sense, but in the *teachings* of Śākyamuni as well.

Within the family of Buddhism, Takada could not brook the presence of the two principal fault-lines discussed in Section One. The first, between the Mahāyāna and the “Hīnayāna,” could be bridged if the former purged itself of all notions of *kebutsu* and *kebosatsu*, while the latter relinquished its understanding of Śākyamuni as being a mere mortal, albeit a great, teacher. The “Hīnayāna” traditions teach the important lesson of having a single object of devotion: “Even today the Hīnayāna countries to the south know only of one Buddha — Śākyamuni — and though they do not know of any other Buddhas, their faith is truly strong.”<sup>86</sup> The strength of the Mahāyāna traditions lies in their recognition of Śākyamuni’s “superhuman” nature. It is precisely the mistaken understandings of this “superhuman” ontological status that give rise to the second imposing fault-line—that between the *shōdōmon* denominations that practice *jiriki*, and the *jōdomon* denominations that practice *tarikī*. Takada sought to overcome this fault-line by emphasizing the *shōdōmon*, in particular Zen, rejection of the ultimate reality of *kebutsu* and *kebosatsu*. Whereas these are unverifiable objects of superstitious belief, Śākyamuni’s “superhuman” ontological status is, somehow, real and verifiable. While he excoriates the *jōdomon* denominations for promoting the reality of Amida, these nonetheless rightly point out human dependence upon a superhuman Other. There need not be a division between *jiriki* and *tarikī* practice because, as we saw, there is no such thing as *jiriki*.

Takada viewed the bridging of these fundamental fault-lines as necessary

<sup>85</sup> Takada 1982, p. 362.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 361.



for the practical task of unifying the variety of existing Buddhist groups. The various and conflicting Buddhist teachings prevented the unification of Buddhism, and this lack of unification left it weak. Takada hoped “to create a Buddhism that wields great influence,”<sup>87</sup> and he saw its unification and standardization as a natural elaboration of the administrative and political processes already set in motion by the abolition of feudal domains and the establishing of modern prefectures (*haihan chiken*) and in the restoration of imperial rule (*ōsei fukkō* 王政復興). He had not only the unification of Japanese Buddhism in mind, but considered that Hōōkyō would be instrumental in uniting all of world Buddhism, which for him was found in China, Korea, Tibet and South Asia. In other words, the territorial sphere of Buddhism was distinctly Asian and to be set in opposition to “the West.” The contest of religions was one aspect of a worldwide contest for imperialist acquisition, and Hōōkyō’s role as a “weapon” used “to topple the very foundations of monotheism”<sup>88</sup> was consonant with Japan’s expansionist designs. For Takada, a united Buddhism would not only provide religious liberation, but would help in the struggle to liberate Asia from Western imperialism. Although a solitary figure waging an intellectual campaign that was received with a mixture of “vitriol and ridicule,”<sup>89</sup> Takada was determined to have his exposition of Buddhism not merely debated, but implemented. “If this does not happen,” he declared, “all of my writings may well be considered to have been in vain.”<sup>90</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion

Historians of Meiji- and Taishō-period Buddhism have called attention to the importance of *tsūbukkyō*—transdenominational movements aimed at reforming and regenerating a Buddhism that had suffered numerous setbacks during the early years of Meiji. I have argued that *tsūbukkyō* is best conceived not as a singular phenomenon, but rather as a classificatory genus whose species seek to transcend traditional denominational divisions in ways that variously overlap, exist in tension with each other, or outright conflict. I have identified four such species. The first, “pan-denominational Buddhism,” was

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 362.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 333.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 334.

the earliest to arise in the form of the Shoshū Dōtoku Kaimei in 1868, and some such organization inclusive of all Japanese Buddhist denominations has existed ever since. The other three species, “interdenominational Buddhism,” “intrad denominational *tsūbukkyō*” and “non-denominational Buddhism” entail types of projects that arose during the Meiji period, had significant influence, but nonetheless disappeared. The members of these types each sought a union that went beyond a simple inclusion of plurality. Projects of “interdenominational Buddhism” and “intrad denominational *tsūbukkyō*” continued to respect the separate identities of the traditional denominations, yet established as a common basis the ethical teachings of Śākyamuni as found in the “Ten Good Precepts.” It was in this “common denominator” that they perceived, and professed, their unity to lie. “Non-denominational” Buddhist campaigns went further still toward establishing the unity of Buddhism. They sought to erase both the doctrinal and institutional lines separating the traditional denominations, and attempted to create a new form of Buddhism that would either be a return to, or a fulfillment of, the “true essence” of the Buddha’s teachings.

Takada’s career as a proponent of *tsūbukkyō* mirrors in significant ways the historical progression of, and the factors responsible for, the rise and fall of these last three species. He began as a proponent of interdenominational and intradenominational forms of *tsūbukkyō*, but as these types of groups disappeared, Takada began to espouse progressively extreme versions of non-denominational Buddhism. The challenge faced by the interdenominational and intradenominational *kyōkai* and *kessha* was to reconcile their “common denominator” ethical teachings with those unique to the founders of their individual denominations. This tension between the universal and the particular was ultimately too much to maintain, and as we saw, these groups were dissolved or incorporated within the existing institutional structures. In the case of Takada’s Sōtō Zen, this occurred in 1889 with the absorption of the Sōtō Fushūkai. It was at this time that Takada’s *kessha*-like activities began to cross the line into what I have called “non-denominational Buddhism.” I have suggested that, as in the case of Takada, it was precisely this consolidation of authority within the traditional institutional hierarchies that was responsible for the birth of non-denominational Buddhist projects. With the disappearance of the *kyōkai* and *kessha*, there were no longer independent platforms to criticize the established institutions. Any reform now had to take place either with the approval of a centralized and conservative administrative structure

or in radical opposition to it. Non-denominational Buddhist projects are embodiments of this radical option.

Takada's non-denominational Buddhist campaign culminated in his Hōōkyō, or "Teaching of the Dharma King." The buddhological issues he wrestled with reveal the two fundamental fault-lines that all non-denominational Buddhist projects had to attempt to bridge: that between the Mahāyāna and the so-called "Hīnayāna," and that which separates the *shōdōmon* and *jōdomon* denominations. The solutions he advanced were structurally consistent with those of other non-denominational Buddhist campaigns, namely, the affirmation of the Mahāyāna as the culmination of the historical Śākyamuni's teachings and the conviction that the *jōdomon* understanding of the Absolute as a personal Other was the most rational, modern and true.

It is precisely in this subsumption of other Buddhist teachings that we can observe the rhetorical nature of non-denominational Buddhist claims of inclusiveness and see their visions of unity begin to deconstruct. Takada's Hōōkyō was open to all branches of Buddhism, provided they abandon the worship of the very Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and the very teachings, that historically defined their identities. While other non-denominational Buddhist campaigns may not have been as martial in their denunciations of the teachings on the other side of the fault-lines, the unity they all envision was dependent upon the sublimation of "the other," with all of the violence that entailed. Takada employs the putatively "modern" and rational criteria of objectivity and verifiability to persuade his readers of the cogency of his interpretation of Buddhist history and teachings; yet, in the end, these criteria themselves are co-opted to support his idiosyncratic synthesis of "Buddhism." Embedded in Takada's Hōōkyō, as in the fabrics of Meiji- and Taishō-period "non-denominational" Buddhism generally, we find that there "are already traces of an alterity which refuses to be totally domesticated."<sup>91</sup>

That the many Buddhist "others" *did* refuse to be domesticated is a historical fact. The grandiose visions to unite all of Buddhism, and even all world religions, that were numerous in the first decade of the twentieth century began to peter out a mere decade later. Not only did Japanese Buddhism not come together in a grand union, but massive splintering *within* the traditional denominations has continued. A recent survey of contemporary Buddhism lists twenty Tendai, forty-six Shingon, twenty-three Pure Land, twenty-two

<sup>91</sup> Jacques Derrida in Kearney 1984, p. 117.

Zen, thirty-eight Nichiren, six Nara and two “other” “legal persons” (*hōjin* 法人), the term by which these individual corporate entities are today known.<sup>92</sup> While this essay has focused mostly upon intellectual history, and has attempted to point out some of the seemingly intractable philosophical obstacles in the way of uniting Buddhism, such intradenominational splintering, i.e., among groups espousing the same set of doctrines, clearly indicates that it is not only divergent ideas that are at the root of sectarianism. Charges of a “corrupt” Buddhist clergy, both in the Meiji period and today, have at least as much to do with access to, and deployment of, denominational power and resources as with questions of fidelity to doctrine. There seems also to be historical and cultural reasons for the persistence of Buddhist sectarianism.<sup>93</sup> Carl Bielefeldt has noted that in the cases of the Zen, Pure Land and Nichiren denominations (the three having by far the largest number of followers in contemporary Japan), it is often precisely their breaks with tradition, i.e., their consciousness of being different, that defines their identities.<sup>94</sup>

In light of the profound philosophical, cultural, and practical obstacles entailed in the creation of a truly united Buddhism, it is not surprising that of the varieties of *tsūbukkyō* that arose in the Meiji and Taishō periods, the only species to survive is that of pan-denominational Buddhism—unions that embrace a plurality in which difference is accepted and maintained. The common thread that binds such unions — “the least common denominator” — is that of their historical descent from Śākyamuni. Takada, as well as other non-denominational Buddhist proponents, clearly intuited the necessity of founding a united Buddhism upon this basis. The unravelling of their visions of unity, however, begins with the urge to move beyond this common historical basis and to locate a common doctrinal essence. It is precisely this urge that pan-denominational “umbrella organizations” resist.

<sup>92</sup> Bunkachō 1999, pp. 64–77.

<sup>93</sup> The noted biologist Richard Dawkins has suggested in a recent essay that our human ancestors may have been culturally predisposed to distinguish between in-groups and out-groups, and that, strikingly, it was this predisposition that gave rise to the genetic variation that we refer to as “race.” That is, cultural creations such as language, religion and social customs could have served, like mountain ranges, “as barriers to gene flow” by restricting the selection of sexual partners. It seems that Buddhist, and other religious, sectarianisms are instances of this sort of attachment to traditional identity. Dawkins 2004, pp. 30–35.

<sup>94</sup> See Bielefeldt 1990, pp. 8–9.

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