

# Murakami Senshō: In Search for the Fundamental Unity of Buddhism

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THIS article focuses on Murakami Senshō 村上專精 (1851–1929)<sup>1</sup> and on the place of his ideas within the intellectual and religious history of the early twentieth century. Looking at Murakami’s works written around the time of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5), which advocate the “fundamental unity” of Buddhism, naturally suggests questioning his motivations and examining whether or not these writings would prove useful for analyzing today’s Japanese religious landscape. The dearth of both fundamental and in-depth research on Murakami and his circle even in Japanese scholarship<sup>2</sup> also demands that something be done to clarify the role of this figure in one of the most crucial phases of modern Japanese religious history. My article aims at examining the idea of “unity” and “unification” within the wider context of Meiji religious thought, through the specific example of Murakami.

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<sup>1</sup> Murakami’s priestly name can also be read “Senjō,” but since we do not know which reading he himself used, it may provisionally be considered a matter of personal preference. The reading “Senshō” is given in *Nihon bukkyō jinmei jiten* 日本仏教人名事典 (hereafter NBJ), s.v. “Murakami Senshō.”

<sup>2</sup> For instance, nothing close to a collection of Murakami’s major works has been published, and the task of collecting his writings constitutes a challenge in itself. The chapter by Sueki (2004) translated in this issue, articles by Matsuoka (1991), and Tamura (2001) are among the only recent examples of Japanese publications on this topic. In English, the dissertation by Staggs (1979) represents the only significant exception.

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## I. Biographical Outline and Context

Since inaccurate details are circulating about Murakami's life, beginning with the day of his birth, let us examine first some of the main events that punctuate his biography, in particular his formative years.<sup>3</sup> This information is essentially based on three sources: Murakami's autobiographical writings *Rokujūichinen: Ichimei seki rara* 六十一年: 一名赤裸裸 (Sixty-one Years: The Naked [Profile of] One Man, 1914),<sup>4</sup> the Appendix to his *Jissenron: Shōnin Shinran to zenji Dōgen* 実践論: 聖人親鸞と禪師道元 (On Practice: Saint Shinran and Master Dōgen, 1927), and on a more succinct account provided by Serikawa (1982 and 1989).

Murakami<sup>5</sup> was born on May 1, 1851 (Kaei 嘉永 4, first day of the fourth month)<sup>6</sup> in a temple called Kyōkakuji 教覚寺, in the tiny village of Noyama 野山村 in the Hikami District 氷上郡 of Tanba (present-day Hyōgo prefecture).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In his autobiography, Murakami divides his life into three periods: before the age of 25; between 25 and 50; and after 50 (Murakami 1914, p. 7). Here, I will mostly mention the first two periods.

<sup>4</sup> This title most probably alludes to *Sekirara* 赤俣 by Hattori Ten'yū 服部天游 (also Hattori Somon 服部蘇門 1724–69), a publication emulating the *Shutsujō gogo* 出定後語 (Emerging from Meditation) of Tominaga Nakamoto 富永仲基 (1715–46) in denying the authenticity of Mahāyāna teachings. A modern edition of *Sekirara* is included in *Nihon shisō tōsō shiryō* 日本思想闘争史料 vol. 3, pp. 347–76. A brief description is found in the *Mochizuki bukkyō daijiten* 望月仏教大辞典, s.v. "Sekirara."

<sup>5</sup> As a young child, his name was Hirosaki Nobumaro 広崎信麿. NBJ, s.v. "Murakami Senshō."

<sup>6</sup> I follow Murakami 1914, p. 1. For some unknown reason, Serikawa and most dictionaries have Kaei 4, *second* day of the fourth month, which corresponds to May 2, 1851 (Serikawa 1982, p. 26).

<sup>7</sup> I follow Murakami 1914, pp. 1 and 5. A more explicit location is given in Serikawa, who adds Funakimura 船城村 Azanoyama 字野山 (Serikawa 1982, p. 26). Since 1955, Funaki has merged with other villages to become Kasugachō 春日町 in Hyōgo prefecture. According to

His father Hirosaki Shūgai 広崎宗鑑 (1829–1910)<sup>8</sup> was the head priest of this temple affiliated with the Ōtani branch of the Jōdo Shin denomination, and his mother came from the Matsubara 松原 family. At the age of eight the young Murakami, the eldest of six children, was entrusted to another temple, Gyōunji 行雲寺 in the adjacent town of Narimatsu 成松町. This was the beginning of a series of temples where he resided as a novice. “The poverty of my family was such that if there was another temple that would raise me, any place was fine.”<sup>9</sup> His early years were shared between working in the rice fields and learning the Classics. Here, I will skip most of the other episodes marking his youth, which tend to be anecdotic and can be found in the autobiography or in publications derived from it.<sup>10</sup>

Among the influences received in his thirties, the three years spent in Echigo (present-day Niigata prefecture) between 1871 and 1874 studying with the Shinshū scholar-priest Takeda Gyōchū 武田行忠 (1817–90) contributed in particular to Murakami’s deep interest in Yogācāra (Jp. Yuishiki 唯識).<sup>11</sup> It was in 1874 that Murakami first went to Kyoto, briefly staying at the Higashi Honganji Takakura Seminary (*Takakura gakuryō* 高倉学寮). However, his involvement in the seminary uprising forced him to leave Kyoto after three months. He finally took refuge at Nyūkakuji 入覚寺, in the village of Onma 御馬村 (present-day Mitochō 御津町 in Aichi prefecture),<sup>12</sup> and became the adopted child of the head priest, Murakami Kaiyū 村上界雄 (n.d.), by marrying his daughter. Murakami succeeded his new father and became head priest of this temple in 1876. However, this proved a source of “great dissatisfaction and great frustration” and he quickly became tired of having

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Murakami’s account, at the time of his birth it was a remote village with only about thirty houses (Murakami 1914, p. 19).

<sup>8</sup> According to Murakami 1914, p. 5, he died on August 16, 1910, at the age of 82. Since his birth is calculated by subtracting 81 years it may have been 1830 if he was born after August. The age mentioned by Murakami obviously follows the traditional count, with one year at birth. The name Shōgai might also be read Sōgai.

<sup>9</sup> Murakami 1914, p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 20–88 and Serikawa 1982, p. 26. Staggs includes a lengthy account, but the proportion of misspelled proper names makes it generally unreliable (1979, pp. 274–83). Many of the people Murakami met before his thirties remain unidentified, except for the names of their temples.

<sup>11</sup> Concerning Takeda Gyōchū, see NBJ, s.v. “Takeda Gyōchū.”

<sup>12</sup> At that time, the location was Mikawakuni 三河国 Hoigun 宝飯郡 Onmamura (Murakami 1914, p. 159). Since 1930, the village of Onma has merged with neighboring villages to become the town of Mito 御津.

“to court the parishioners and having lost the right to freedom by being tied to this temple.”<sup>13</sup>

Around 1876 or 1877, Murakami made the acquaintance of another learned Shinshū teacher, Kira Kōyō 雲英晃耀 (1831–1910), a specialist in the Nyāya school of Indian logic (*inmyōgaku* 因明学).<sup>14</sup> Kira emphasized the importance of logic applied to rhetoric in the quickly transforming Japanese society, and asked Murakami to help him revive this ancient science.<sup>15</sup> Absorbed in the study of these texts, Murakami was completely indifferent to what happened at his temple, Nyūkakuji, so much so that he was eventually rejected by his adopted father and parishioners in November 1879. After complicated negotiations, they finally agreed to send him to study in Kyoto for three years, and he left his young son Ryūei 龍英 with his wife at the temple.<sup>16</sup>

Murakami thus returned to Kyoto in 1880, entering the Honganji Kyōshi Kyōkō 本願寺教師教校 (Honganji Normal School). After gaining the necessary qualifications, in 1884 he became president of Etchū Kyōkō 越中教学 (Etchū Academy) in Toyama prefecture for one year, but in the following year he accepted the invitation to reside at Myōgenji 妙嚴寺, a Sōtō temple in the village of Toyokawa 豊川村 (Aichi prefecture), where he taught Yogācāra texts for two years. This apparently became the stepping-stone to his crucial appointment in 1887 as lecturer at the Sōtōshū Daigakurin 曹洞宗大学林 (founded in 1882, present-day Komazawa University).

This coincides with the year Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919) opened his Tetsugakkan 哲学館 within the precincts of Rinshōin 麟祥院 shortly after publishing his *Bukkyō katsuron joron* 仏教活論序論 (An Introduction to the Vitalization of Buddhism, 1887). Murakami, who knew Inoue and had studied in the same Shinshū institutions, was immediately asked to teach at Tetsugakkan. The relationship between both thinkers had decisive consequences for Murakami’s career, and most of his early works are issued by Tetsugaku Shoin, the publishing organ of Tetsugakkan. It is striking to see that both men often dealt with common themes almost at the same time. For instance, in 1893, Inoue published his *Chūkō katsuron* 忠孝活論 (On the Vitalization of Loyalty and Filial Piety) in the same year as Murakami’s *Bukkyō*

<sup>13</sup> Murakami 1914, p. 163.

<sup>14</sup> Nyāya, which means “analysis,” is one of the six classical schools (Skt. *śaddarśana*) in Indian thought. Basham succinctly describes it as “a school of logic and epistemology” (1967, p. 323). The history and development of this type of non-Buddhist scholarship in Japan deserves further study. Concerning Kira Kōyō, see NBJ, s.v. “Kira Kōyō.”

<sup>15</sup> Murakami 1914, pp. 169–79.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 183–94.

*chūkō hen* 仏教忠孝編 (Volume on Loyalty and Filial Piety in Buddhism). Similarly, Inoue published his *Chūtō joshi shūshinkun* 中等女子修身訓 (Principles for the Moral Training of Women in Middle School) in 1906 while Murakami had published in 1905 his *Joshi kyōiku kanken* 女子教育管見 (Personal Views on the Education of Women), followed by *Joseikun* 女性訓 (Principles for Women) in 1908.

*The World's Parliament of Religions and Its Repercussions in Japan*

The Japanese participation in the First World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893 is receiving renewed attention nowadays.<sup>17</sup> What is less known is that although Yatsubuchi Banryū 八淵蟠龍 (1848-1926) represented the Honganji Branch of Shinshū, liberal members had rather hoped to send Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838-1911). The ensuing frustration heightened the willingness of some Shinshū reformers to take the interreligious dialogue into their own hands. One concrete result of this endeavor was the proposal to organize meetings between representatives of the various religious traditions present in Japan, including in particular Christian and Buddhist leaders. This controversial project was defended in the periodical *Hansei zasshi* 反省雜誌 published by Shinshū circles in Kyoto and in *Nihon shūkyō* 日本宗教, a liberal journal dominated by Christians. Despite strong opposition, the first Shūkyōka Kondankai 宗教家懇談会 (Round Table Conference of Religious Leaders) was convened on September 26, 1896.<sup>18</sup> Togawa Yasuie 戸川安宅 (1855–1924),<sup>19</sup> a strong advocate of this project, gave the opening address.

What is of special interest for our purpose is that this gathering saw the participation of leading figures, such as Ōuchi Seiran 大内青巒 (1845–1918) and Shaku Sōen 釈宗演 (1860–1919), while Murakami appears among the forty-two participants as president of the Shinshū Tōkyō Daini Chūgakkō 真宗東京

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, Snodgrass 2003 and Masuzawa 2005, pp. 265–75.

<sup>18</sup> Suzuki 1979, p. 239.

<sup>19</sup> Togawa (surname Zanka 殘花) is an interesting figure. He was the thirteenth lord of the Hayashima 早島 domain (southern part of present-day Okayama prefecture), and took part in the 1864 Chōshū Punitive Expedition (Chōshū Seibatsu 長州征伐). After the Restoration, he converted to Christianity in 1874 and became a Protestant minister engaged in literary activities and interreligious dialogue. He founded the periodical *Nihon shūkyō* (Suzuki 1979, p. 235). Information about him is provided on the websites of the Togawa Memorial Museum <<http://www.town.hayashima.okayama.jp/townoffice/kyoiku/togawa/togawa.html>> (4 November 2005) and his hometown <<http://www.town.hayashima.okayama.jp/portal/outline.shtml>> (4 November 2005). In English, several passages about Togawa are included in Thelle 1987 (see Index).

第二中学校 (Second Shinshū Tokyo Middle School).<sup>20</sup> The impetus given by this conference contributed to the increase of mutual trust between Christians and representatives of relatively “progressive factions” of Buddhist denominations.<sup>21</sup>

Such mention of “progressive factions” may require some justification. Thanks to the work of Janine Sawada, we are becoming increasingly aware of the relative character of labels such as “progressive” or “conservative,” especially in the Meiji context.<sup>22</sup> Here, I use this adjective without political connotation, to indicate first the readiness to establish a dialogue with other religions, something that was far from being obvious at that time. The example of Shaku Sōen is eloquent. His agreement to the idea of discussing with Christians was at that time qualified of being “the most idiotic thing” (*mottomo bakarashiki wa* 最も馬鹿らしきは) in the columns of the journal *Mitsugonkyōhō* 密厳教報.<sup>23</sup>

This adjective also indicates the “reformist faction” (*kaikakuha* 改革派) among Shinshū adepts, including Murakami. One of its leaders was Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863–1903), but Murakami’s evaluation of Kiyozawa’s movement is mitigated. They were both punished by Higashi Honganji at the same time (1897) and shared some common ideals, but Murakami recalls that after the appointment of Ishikawa Shuntai 石川舜台 (1842–1931) by Higashi Honganji to resolve the crisis, this clever politician managed to manipulate Kiyozawa and, as a result “Kiyozawa immediately changed his mind, becoming an advocate of spiritualism,<sup>24</sup> in other words defeatism (*akirame shugi* 了

<sup>20</sup> The complete list of participants is found in Suzuki 1979, pp. 239–42.

<sup>21</sup> In the context of modern Japanese Buddhism, I chose to use the word “denomination” to indicate the various institutions that were recognized after the Meiji Restoration. It corresponds therefore to the Japanese *shū* 宗. However, in the context of pre-Meiji Buddhism or in areas outside Japan, I kept using “school,” which reflects the original meaning of *shū* indicating a “lineage” or a “tradition.” This distinction reflects the distortion of Japanese Buddhist traditions after the Restoration, when their primary meaning shifted to that of legal entities.

<sup>22</sup> Sawada 2004. See, in particular, the passage where she refers to Karl Manheim’s definition distinguishing this concept from traditionalism. The important point here is that “conservatism is a creative synthesis that is necessarily influenced by the ideas of the opposing (“progressive”) movement” (p. 212).

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Suzuki 1979, p. 236.

<sup>24</sup> Here, *Seishin shugi* 精神主義 has been translated literally as “spiritualism,” but the rendering “Spiritual Activism” has been preferred in the Kiyozawa Manshi special issue of *The Eastern Buddhist*. On this movement, see in particular Hashimoto 2003, pp. 25–26 and Yasutomi 2003.

キラメ主義).”<sup>25</sup> This passage seems to indicate that Murakami considered himself more radical than Kiyozawa.

Moreover, the apparently simplistic idea of “progressive factions” is not uniquely the projection of a modern concept and constituted a crucial matter in the 1890s. One example appears in the July 1894 issue of the Christian journal *Rikugō zasshi* 六合雜誌, with its article entitled *Waga shūkyōkai no shinpoha* 我が宗教界の進歩派 (The Progressive Factions in the Japanese Religious World).<sup>26</sup> This anonymous piece discusses the increasing contrast between conservative and progressive factions within Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity. Incidentally, it mentions with some irony Murakami’s endeavor.

Recently some Buddhists have published a journal called *Bukkyō shirin* 仏教史林. Although they stress the importance of historical research on Buddhism, they also say that such research requires *the special eye of a Buddhist* to examine the Buddhist written tradition, obviously giving it an orientation that differs from the research and critical methodologies of those usually considered as historians. Concerning this claim, another Buddhist journal has criticized it, saying it fails to take a decisive step and it is absurd to pretend one needs a special eye to apprehend [history].<sup>27</sup>

We know that Murakami was one of the two redactors of the journal *Bukkyō shirin* (Compendium of Buddhist History) with Washio Junkyō 鷲尾順敬 (1868–1941). Regardless of occasional caustic remarks, articles such as this one demonstrate that Christian and Buddhist intellectuals were acutely aware of each other. They read their respective contributions, and discussed ways to build standards for scholarship that would take precedence over religious affiliation.

Concerning the 1896 Shūkyōka Kondankai, since it is the object of the chapter “The Adventure of Dialogue” in Thelle’s book (1987), there is little need for expanding this topic further. Nevertheless, this event suggests two remarks. First, one of the central themes on which Christian and Buddhist participants agreed was the importance of “revering the emperor” (*sonnō* 尊皇), as Ōuchi Seiran candidly reminded all the participants in his speech:

<sup>25</sup> Murakami 1914, pp. 340–1.

<sup>26</sup> Anonymous 1894b. Article in the “Miscellaneous section” (*Zakki* 雜記), without signature.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45. Emphasis added.

Should any individual, for instance Christians, run counter to the great idea of revering the emperor, especially you members of the Christian churches who are attending this meeting, I request that you join forces with us, the Buddhists, in attacking and punishing them!<sup>28</sup>

Second, in November 1896, the Hikaku Shūkyō Gakkai 比較宗教学会 (Society for the Study of Comparative Religion) saw the light of day through the initiative of Kishimoto Nobuta 岸本能武太 (1865–1928) and Anesaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 (1873–1949), both participants to the same Shūkyōka Kondankai. Kishimoto, a former student of Dōshisha University, had returned in 1894 from a four-year stay as a student at Harvard University.<sup>29</sup> The joint efforts of Kishimoto and Anesaki to found this new academic society mark the beginning of “religious studies” in Japan.<sup>30</sup> Another important consequence of Kishimoto’s pioneering work for our understanding of Murakami is the fact that Murakami’s methodology for studying Buddhism<sup>31</sup> seems to be an expansion of the three aspects of religious studies proposed by Kishimoto: “Analytical, historical, and comparative.”<sup>32</sup> Incidentally, Kishimoto

<sup>28</sup> “Butsuya ryōto kaigō kiji” 仏耶両徒会合記事 (An Article on the Meeting between Buddhist and Christian Representatives), *Hansei zasshi*, September 1896, p. 71. Quoted in Suzuki 1979, p. 242.

<sup>29</sup> In 1893, Kishimoto obtained a “Bachelor of Divinity” and then spent a further year as a graduate student studying philosophy of religions. He returned to Japan in July 1894 after having passed the oral examination for the Ph.D. at Harvard, but never submitted the dissertation (Shigeru 1984, pp. 280–1; Suzuki 1970, pp. 163–4). This explains why the title appended to Kishimoto’s name in *Rikugō zasshi* is “Master of Arts.”

<sup>30</sup> For further details on Kishimoto, see in English Suzuki 1970 and Thelle 1987, pp. 223–4, and in Japanese Suzuki 1979, pp. 253–78 and Shigeru 1984.

<sup>31</sup> (1) Research based on [textual] interpretation, (2) Research based on the intelligence of [doctrinal] meanings, (3) Critical research, (4) Historical research, (5) Comparative research (Murakami 1997, p. 15).

<sup>32</sup> Suzuki 1970, pp. 160–6; Suzuki 1979, p. 262; Thelle 1987, p. 223. The lectures on comparative religion given by Kishimoto at Tōkyō Senmon Gakkō (present-day Waseda University) were first gathered in 1895 in a volume entitled *Tōkyō Senmon Gakkō hōgo bungaku dai ikkai daininenkyū kōgiroku* 東京専門学校邦語文学第一回第二年级講義録, then reprinted in 1902 under the new title *Hikaku shūkyō ippan* 比較宗教一斑. Murakami certainly read these theories in one of the articles published by Kishimoto in the periodicals *Rikugō zasshi* and *Shūkyō*. Murakami, himself, published two of his lectures in *Rikugō zasshi*: *Bukkyō no ni daiganmoku* 仏教の二大眼目 (The Two Main Points of Buddhism, no. 135, March 1892, pp. 40–45) and *Jinrui no shikaku* 人類の資格 (“Qualifications of Man” in the original English Table of Contents, no. 280, April 1904, pp. 27–37). We will return to Murakami’s relationship with this journal in this article (see below pp. 97–99).



remained a strong advocate of Unitarianism throughout his life, as he explains in his 1914 article “Mada Yunitarian o yamenuka まだユニテリアンをやめぬか” (Won’t you stop being a Unitarian?).<sup>33</sup>

Let us now have a closer look at Murakami’s publications, in particular those focusing on Buddhism “being one.”

## II. In Need of Systematicity

In his search for the fundamental unity of Buddhism, Murakami first tried to identify the “single thread” binding all Buddhist denominations despite their diversity. Responding to the latest fascination for philosophy, one of his first books, *Bukkyō ikkan ron* 仏教一貫論 (The Consistency of Buddhism, 1890), begins with a discussion concerning the compatibility of philosophical and religious perspectives. Murakami claims that both approaches are found within Buddhism:

If someone were to ask “Is Buddhism a religion or a philosophy?” I would tentatively reply that “Buddhism is a philosophy but also a religion.” I would say that it is a philosophy because Buddhism [goes] to the top [in investigating] the fundamental principle of the principles of all phenomena and thoroughly explaining it.<sup>34</sup>

I would say that it is a religion because Buddhism views the teachings of Śākyamuni as its standard, and because its essential characteristic consists in putting into practice the Buddhist path and reaching the stage where one’s life is established in spiritual peace.<sup>35</sup>

Here, it is interesting to note that Murakami expresses the fruit of practice as “the establishment of one’s life in spiritual peace” (*anjin ritsumei* 安心立命), a term that rings a special bell for Shinshū practitioners because “spiritual peace” is considered as “liberation.”<sup>36</sup>

In the following section of this book, Murakami admits that if he were further pressed to choose between the philosophical and the religious dimension of Buddhism, he would consider the religious aspect more essential.<sup>37</sup> He then

<sup>33</sup> *Rikugō zasshi* nos. 400 and 401, May and June 1914.

<sup>34</sup> Murakami 1890, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>36</sup> See Blum 2003, pp. 78–79. The concept of *anjin ritsumei* is also central to Kiyozawa in a broader sense, since he explains it as “the goal of religion” in Kiyozawa 2002, p. 41.

<sup>37</sup> Murakami 1890, p. 10.

proceeds to explain the ten cardinal features he regards as pervading all Buddhist teachings, to illustrate the “consistency” of Buddhism as a whole.

*The Ten Features Pervading Buddhist Teachings*

Let us remember that this represents the first expression of Murakami’s ambitious project, who articulates his purpose as follows.

For now, I will not look at the differences between each school and will deal with everything comprising the two words “Buddhist teachings” (*bukkyō* 仏教)<sup>38</sup> regardless of school or branch; to make this consistent (*ikken* 一貫) and uniform (*ittei* 一定) I will try to explain it as simply as possible by listing ten cardinal features (*yōken* 要件). These features<sup>39</sup> are as follows:

1. The totality of existing entities (*ban’yū* 万有) is boundless and limitless, both horizontally (the [warp or] spatial dimension) and vertically (the [woof or] temporal dimension).
2. The totality of phenomena (*banshō* 万象) includes three major laws: causality, impermanence, and egolessness.
3. The essence (*hontai* 本体) of the totality of existing entities is unborn, undying, it does not increase nor decrease, it is equal (*byōdō* 平等) and without differentiation.
4. There are two major approaches in Buddhist philosophy: the model of dependent origination (*engiron* 緣起論) and that of the real state (*jissōron* 実相論).
5. The model of dependent origination [found] in the Buddhist teachings is spatial and not temporal.
6. The model of dependent origination [found] in the Buddhist teachings is subjective and not objective.
7. Buddhist teachings consider the three aspects of ethical conduct, contemplation, and wisdom as the basis for engaging in practice.

<sup>38</sup> Here, we should beware of the English translation, which tends to reify the two Chinese characters 仏教. Literally, they indicate “teachings [of the] Buddha,” or “Buddhist teachings,” with a further step being their identification with “Buddhism.” Like the concept of “religion” that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century to translate a Western concept, there is a subtle shift between the idea of “Buddhist teachings” and the further use of the same term to indicate “Buddhism.”

<sup>39</sup> Here, Murakami uses the word *jōken* 条件, which usually means “condition” in modern Japanese, but the context makes it clear that it rather refers to the preceding “features.”

8. Buddhist teachings require that one abandons all deluding attachments and breaks away from all defilements.
9. Buddhist teachings consider leaving the deluded state and reaching the awakened state as the goal [of practice].
10. There are two major approaches for reaching the awakened state, arduous practice (*nangyō* 難行) and easy practice (*igyō* 易行).<sup>40</sup>

These ten features are further expanded in the chapters forming the backbone of Murakami's book (Chapters 2 to 11). What strikes our attention in this list is that Murakami, consciously or not, appears to emphasize the timeless and universal dimension of the Japanese Buddhist teachings by placing them in a wider framework. Not surprisingly, the "easy practice" including Shinshū is ultimately posited as one of the two choices. This list reflects an intended progression, although some of its general statements tend to dilute it. From today's perspective, the only features that could correspond to ancient formulations in the Buddhist teachings are items 2, 7, 8, and 9. Feature 3 is typical of the teachings found in Prajñāpāramitā literature; feature 4 mentions the real state, which is a Tendai doctrine, and feature 10 indicates the distinction between Zen and Pure Land approaches.

However, the author acknowledges that this sketchy list of the Buddhist essentials is mainly aimed at "explaining as simply as possible" the consistency of Buddhist teaching, in contrast with received ideas about the incompatibility between the understanding of the various schools. As we can surmise from Murakami's saying "I will try to explain it" (*benmei sen to hossu* 弁明せんと欲す) this is a rhetoric device, the same verb is also used for "defending a thesis." It is true that by expressing such ideas in 1890 he must have been expecting strong reactions of disagreement. This list can also be seen mostly as having a pedagogical significance, with all the simplifications it may involve.

### *Emphasis on Education Including Women*

Obviously, Murakami's hunt for "essential principles" or "cardinal features" that would be compatible with a philosophical approach was not only a trend of the time; it was also a pedagogical necessity for those involved in educational tasks. We have seen that Murakami served as presidents of Etchū Kyōkō, and of the Shinshū Tōkyō Daini Chūgakkō. Later, in 1890, he was also appointed president of the Ōtani Kyōkō 大谷教校 (Ōtani Normal School)

<sup>40</sup> Murakami 1890, pp. 13–15. Compare with the translation by Staggs 1979, pp. 488–9.

in Tokyo,<sup>41</sup> and in the same year was recruited as lecturer of Indian philosophy at the Imperial University in Tokyo.<sup>42</sup>

This commitment to education is also illustrated by Murakami's founding of the Tōyō Kōtō Jogakkō 東洋高等女学校 (Tōyō Women's High School) in 1905. However, his views on the necessity for educating women, which probably were representative of the opinion of many males in the establishment, are so eloquent that they obviate the need for comments:

Compared with men, women have a nature more inclined to get caught by superstition or vicious cults (*inshi meishin* 淫祠迷信).<sup>43</sup> Speaking of men, if some of them have a tendency to fall into superstition or vicious cults it is a weakness of ordinary people, but women generally lack intellectual discernment (*chiryokuteki handanryoku ni toboshii* 智力的判断力に乏しい) and have limited reasoning faculties (*suiriteki risō ga sukunai* 推理的理想が少ない). This is why there seems to be a greater number of women getting caught by superstition or vicious cults than men.<sup>44</sup>

To be fair to Murakami, let us also acknowledge that one of his motivations was also to balance the overwhelming presence of newly-created Christian schools for women. He was probably thinking in particular of Japan Women's University, founded in 1901 by Naruse Jinzō 成瀬仁蔵 (1858–1919).<sup>45</sup> Confessing that founding such a university in the midst of the Russo-Japanese War may seem odd, he explains:

In the first place, since the early years of Meiji, Christians have paid attention to the education of women, and have already founded several schools for women. Yet, I thought that it was deplorable to see

<sup>41</sup> Founded in 1876 when the Ōtani Branch of Jōdo Shinshū was officially recognized. It was located at Asakusa ward, Kojima-chō 小島町 19 (Murakami 1914, p. 273).

<sup>42</sup> Between 1886 and 1897, the official name of the university was "Imperial University" (Teikoku Daigaku). It was only in 1897 that the name was changed to "Tokyo Imperial University" until 1945.

<sup>43</sup> This expression constitutes a catch-phrase often used by contemporary authors. One example is found in *Shumon no ishin* 宗門之維新 (The Restoration of Our Denomination, 1897) by Tanaka Chigaku 田中智学 (1861–1939), the founder of Nichirenism. Tanaka uses it in a context where he justifies the role of the Nichiren tradition as a solution to avoid the disintegration of Japanese society (Yoshida 1965, p. 181). On this figure, see Chapter 8 in Jaffe 2001.

<sup>44</sup> Murakami 1905, p. 176.

<sup>45</sup> Concerning this, see Mohr 2006.

that on the side of Buddhists at that time almost nobody would engage in such tasks. [I felt that] it was a cause for great concern and that it had implications for the future of Buddhism. My thoughts were of feeling sorry not only towards the nation and towards society, but also as a Buddhist.<sup>46</sup>

To close this brief review of Murakami's educational activities, one should add that when the first chair of Indian philosophy was created at Tokyo Imperial University in 1917, Murakami was chosen as the first full professor chairing the department (*shunin kyōju* 主任教授).<sup>47</sup> He kept teaching there until his retirement in 1923, thus leaving his imprint on a whole generation of students and scholars. Finally, he received the last honorary appointment when he became president of the newly-created Otani University in May 1926, a post from which he resigned in March 1928 for health reasons.<sup>48</sup>

### *The Sino-Japanese Concept of "Consistency"*

We have already seen the title of Murakami's first significant publication, *Bukkyō ikkan ron* (1890), translated as "The Consistency of Buddhism." To understand the concept of "consistency" in its own context, we need to examine the Sino-Japanese compound *ikkan* 一貫 (Ch. *yíguàn*) used to express it. This word, originally indicating the thread used to hold pierced coins together (*zenisashi* 錢差), derives from two famous passages in the *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects) attributed to Confucius. Recent research suggests that the first passage in *Lunyu* 4: 15 is actually an interpolation based on *Lunyu* 15: 3. It would have been aimed at underlining the value of Zengzi 曾子, since this passage depicts him as the one who explains the meaning of the words uttered by Confucius. These two dialogues run as follows:

The Master said, "Shen! As for my Way, with one thing it binds it together."

Zengzi said, "Yes."

The Master left, and the disciples asked, "What did he mean?"

Zengzi said, "The Way of the Master is *zhōng* (忠) and *shù* (恕), and that is all."<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Murakami 1914, pp. 416–7.

<sup>47</sup> Sueki 2004, p. 91.

<sup>48</sup> See Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Henshū Inkaikai 2001, pp. 337–8. Suzuki Daisetsu became a professor at Otani from 1921.

<sup>49</sup> *Lunyu* 4: 15; Van Norden 2002, p. 218.

The Master said, “Si, do you take me to be one who [simply] studies a lot and remembers it?”

He responded, “That is so. Is that not the case?”

He said, “It is not. I bind it together with one thing.”<sup>50</sup>

I leave the detailed discussion of these passages, including the linguistic issues, to the well-documented study by Van Norden. However, one of his remarks bears important consequences for our study of Murakami:

Why have scholars been so fascinated with 4:15, and so determined to read the rest of the *Analects* in the light of it? One of the paradigmatic features of philosophy is systematicity. *Analects* 4:15 suggests that there is some systematicity to Confucius’ discussion of human virtue. Students of comparative thought, wanting (out of generous motives) to understand Confucius as a philosopher, have therefore pounced on 4:15 as the key to that systematicity.<sup>51</sup>

Other translators have used “I have a single thread binding it all together” for the difficult expression *yīyī guànzhi* 一以貫之.<sup>52</sup> At any rate, the tendency to project philosophical concerns across tradition may be related to the needs faced by Murakami when he composed his books. Here, we should also pause to reflect on factors that could influence our own perception of Meiji religions. Postmodernist approaches have contributed to increasing our awareness of dangers associated with claims of universality, in particular their potential threat as tools for political manipulation. As a result, scholarly approaches at the beginning of the twenty-first century have tended to underline diversity and to regard as suspicious the quest for a homogeneous entity that could be labeled “Buddhism.”<sup>53</sup> Recognizing our own prejudices and suspicion towards unifying approaches may be a prerequisite for understanding Murakami’s quest for the unity of Buddhism in the Meiji context.

<sup>50</sup> *Lunyu* 15:3; Van Norden 2002, p. 221.

<sup>51</sup> Van Norden, 2002, p. 230.

<sup>52</sup> Lau 1979, pp. 74 and 132. The Japanese reading given by Yoshikawa is *itsu motte kore wo tsuranuku* 一以って之れを貫く (Yoshikawa 1978, vol. 1, p. 118 and vol. 2, p. 199).

<sup>53</sup> Let me confess that I have adopted such a suspicious approach in challenging the homogeneity of “Zen” in my article in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd. edition, s. v. “Chan and Zen.” In Japanese, see also Mohr 2001 and Mohr 2002.

## III. From Consistency to Unity

The leap from the idea of “consistency” to that of “unity” seems a natural development in the thought of Murakami.<sup>54</sup> However, his first aim was to promote a “unified research” of Buddhism (we could call it a synthetic approach) rather than a utopian unification of Buddhism itself. In the first volume of his *Bukkyō tōitsuron* 仏教統一論 (On the Unification of Buddhism, 1901) he underlines:

To begin with, the modern European trend of studying comparative religion has already reached Japan. However, looking at the Buddhist world in today’s Japan, although doctrines are broken up into pieces nobody would try to *unite them*, and despite the state of brotherly quarrels between each of the different denominations, nobody would try to harmonize them . . .<sup>55</sup>

Murakami further emphasizes the necessity of envisioning the developments of Buddhism with a “historical eye” (*rekishigen* 歴史眼):<sup>56</sup>

If one considers the systems [visible in] doctrinal developments with a historical eye, the doctrines resulting from all sorts of splits among different schools<sup>57</sup> appear as developments coming from just one single ideal; one will necessarily realize that all schools primarily share one single founder (Śākyamuni) and also one single doctrine (Suchness; Skt. *tathatā*, Jp. *shinnyo* 真如).<sup>58</sup>

He also explains his perspective as a thesis in favor of the union or merging (*gōdōron* 合同論) of the different Buddhist schools.<sup>59</sup> But what kind of union did he envision?

<sup>54</sup> Murakami says “after 1898 I considerably changed the course of my research” (Murakami 1997, pp. 3–4). This is probably linked with his eviction from the Ōtani branch in 1897.

<sup>55</sup> Murakami 1997, p. 3; emphasis added.

<sup>56</sup> The ordinary reading for the compound 歴史眼 would be *rekishigan*, but Buddhist texts usually prefer the reading *gen* for 眼 (e.g., *tengen* 天眼), and Murakami provides *yomigana* for this character (Murakami 1997, p. 9). Another way to render this expression would be “historical perspective,” taking it as a synonym for *rekishikan* 歴史観. I prefer to keep the literal connotation.

<sup>57</sup> “School” is used here in the sense of “school of thought” or “tradition.” See above, n. 18.

<sup>58</sup> Murakami 1997, p. 5; Sanskrit added.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

It is true that merging at the formal level cannot be realized. But even if this formal merging is impossible, I believe that to a certain extent merging at the ideal level must be feasible. The claim that to a certain extent merging at the ideal level must be feasible has already been demonstrated in history.<sup>60</sup>

He then proceeds to explain that this merging at the ideal level has been realized in Japan through Saichō 最澄 (767–822) and his exposition of the Tendai teachings, intended to provide a synthesis of previous schools, and adds:

I am not advocating such merging only from the historical perspective, I also argue for it from the doctrinal perspective.<sup>61</sup>

In other words, besides emphasizing the fundamental unity of Buddhism based on its founder, Murakami made his case for a “common ground” that could at least be shared by all *Japanese* Buddhist denominations (he carefully abstains from mentioning Buddhist schools in other countries), although he did not propose a fusion at the institutional level (he calls it the formal level). The fact that he was aware of the limits of his own project seems to have been often overlooked. It might be more accurate to present his position as, first a method for overcoming sectarian divergences in the scholarly study of Buddhism, and second as a new kind of Buddhist doctrinal agreement intended to create a united front to withstand the spread of Christianity and Western philosophy. Masutani Fumio 増谷文雄 (1902–87) remarked that, although Murakami was a vehement defender of the unification of Buddhism:

To use an extreme expression, all Buddhist scholars of the Meiji era were proponents of the unification of Buddhism. The main theme these scholars were addressing was without exception the transdenominational study of Buddhism.<sup>62</sup>

The equation Masutani establishes between the transdenominational study of Buddhism and the unity or unification of Buddhism fails, however, to be entirely convincing. It is because arguing for the unification of Buddhism clearly goes one step further than the gentle affirmation of a form of ecumenical Buddhism that could be understood by everyone.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>62</sup> Masutani 1941, p. 38.



*The Ideological Background*

This leads us to one of the most delicate issues in this article, which implies examining to what extent Murakami's theory may involve an understanding of Buddhism akin to fundamentalism or to the uncritical claims of so-called "Critical Buddhism," and his stance on Meiji politics. Indirect evidence first suggests reasons for examining Murakami's claims with a grain of salt. For this, we need a flashback to the year 1893, when he wrote the above-mentioned *Bukkyō chūkō hen* (Volume on Loyalty and Filial Piety in Buddhism). Putting emphasis on loyalty and filial piety had become a priority since the issuance of the *Kyōiku chokugo* 教育勅語 (Imperial Rescript on Education) in 1890, which specified:

Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein also lies the source of Our education.<sup>63</sup>

Since the two concepts of loyalty and filial piety had been defined as the "fine flower of the national essence" (*kokutai no seika* 国体の精華, corresponding to the official translation "the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire"), most religious leaders and intellectuals were eager to show that their vision of education responded to the imperial injunction and to demonstrate their own loyalty. Murakami was no exception:

Our imperial family is unparalleled among all nations; its unique lineage has continued in an uninterrupted succession for more than two thousand five hundred years. Our ancestors, we simple citizens, have all similarly benefited from its blessings (*ontoku* 恩徳). Should we provisionally borrow words [to describe it], it may be called "a historical blessing." Citizens of foreign countries, where revolutions have been so common, do not feel such historical blessings. But for us, Japanese citizens, we should not fail to think about the great importance of this truly historical blessing.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> The official English translation is reproduced in Tsunoda 1964, pp. 139–40. The following website also provides the full text:

<[http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Imperial\\_Rescript\\_on\\_Education](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Imperial_Rescript_on_Education)> (4 November 2005).

<sup>64</sup> Murakami 1893, p. 38.

In a way, there was nothing extraordinary about making such a statement in the 1890s—statements of the same vein are not so uncommon even today. This work as a whole can even be considered rather “moderate,” especially in its rejection of the view that Christianity was incompatible with loyalty to the emperor.<sup>65</sup> In his introduction, Murakami explicitly mentions the book *Kyōiku to shūkyō no shōtotsuron* 教育と宗教の衝突 (The Conflict between Education and Religion) published the same year by Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1855–1944), and identifies the issue at stake as “the conflict between the Christian religion and Japanese moral education.”<sup>66</sup> At first sight, Murakami goes on, this debate may seem unrelated to Buddhism, but actually should be of great concern to all politicians, educators, and religious persons.

The relation of this publication with my interrogation of fundamentalism results from the discovery of several agendas in Murakami’s project. *Bukkyō chūkō hen* is far from being extremist in tone, but is pervaded with the obvious intention to demonstrate that Buddhism is a patriotic religion useful for the Meiji State, and the whole textual apparatus Murakami displays is aimed at proving that the teachings of Śākyamuni are in perfect harmony with the modernization project of the Meiji emperor. It implicitly endorses the slogan “defense of the nation and love of the truth” by his friend Inoue Enryō, which entails that no philosophical or religious quest can be authentic without patriotism.<sup>67</sup> This is where the shoe begins to pinch.

Sueki has also noted that, at a certain point, the apparently seamless logic of Murakami gets out of control.<sup>68</sup> Regarding his erudition, Murakami had no knowledge of Sanskrit, ignored Buddhist research conducted outside Japan, and based all his scholarship on Chinese sources. Yet, unaware of possible limitations, he had his opinion about the historical dates for the birth and death of Śākyamuni and did not hesitate to assert:

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 1. Concerning the position of Murakami in the debate regarding this publication, the understanding of Sueki is that “in his *Bukkyō chūkō hen* Murakami stood on the side of Inoue Tetsujirō” (Sueki 2004, p. 99). This can be discussed, but I rather get the impression that Murakami was more open to including Christianity in the circle of religions that could demonstrate their loyalty to the emperor.

<sup>67</sup> See the discussion of this slogan by Staggs 1979, pp. 182–6 and Snodgrass 1997, pp. 184–9.

<sup>68</sup> Sueki 2004, p. 97.

I pay no attention to whatever theories have been transmitted to foreign countries, I neither pay attention to whatever Europeans and Americans may have found as evidence.<sup>69</sup>

Concerning Murakami's political views, further indication is provided by a conference he gave in early 1904 at the Yuiitsukan 惟一館 (Unitarian Hall).<sup>70</sup> In his talk concerning the very broad topic of *Jinrui no shikaku* 人類の資格 ("Qualifications of Man" in the original English table of contents), he mentions the "sense of being a citizen" (*kokumin teki kannen* 国民的観念) as one of the prerequisites for being a "true human being." Speaking of the "Russo-Japanese problem,"<sup>71</sup> he then expresses gratitude to his listeners for coming despite the fact that at that time "whatever one sees or hears, little attention is given to subjects other than war." Murakami adds "we feel happy that the Japanese have such an open and developed sense of being citizens, [something shown by] today's popularity [for this] among Japanese, and [by] the fact that the tendency towards war is heightening (*sensō teki kiun no takabutta* 戦争の気運の昂った)."<sup>72</sup>

Here again, we should not overstate the weight of such statements, which probably reflected the public opinion prevalent at that time. However, this gives some idea of Murakami's position in regard to contemporary events, and allows us to ascertain that he was certainly not advocating pacifism.

#### IV. Extra-Buddhist Inspiration

It appears relatively easy to discover shortcomings in the erudition of another scholar, especially if a century has elapsed. Let me therefore turn to self-

<sup>69</sup> *Bukkyō shirin* 1:2, p. 15; also quoted by Sueki 2004, p. 97.

<sup>70</sup> This building was completed in March 1894, in Mita Shikokuchō 三田四国町, an area also known as Shibazonobashi 芝園橋. See Serikawa 1989, p. 85.

<sup>71</sup> The Russo-Japanese War broke out in February 1904, starting with the rupture of diplomatic relations on February 6. Murakami's speech at the conference was published in the April 1904 issue of *Rikugō zasshi*, but it probably had been given before the outbreak of the war, since Murakami only speaks of "the Russo-Japanese problem." The same issue of *Rikugō zasshi* no. 280 also contains the article *Yoga sensōkan no ippan* 予が戦争観の一斑 ("My View on War," according to the original English table of contents) by the Christian minister Ebina Danjō 海老名弾正 (1856–1937). In this article, he argues for the "inevitability" of the Russo-Japanese War, saying "it is my conviction that our whole country has no choice but to fight at the risk of dying, and must assure victory" (*Rikugō zasshi* no. 280, April 1904, p. 17).

<sup>72</sup> *Rikugō zasshi* no. 280, April 1904, p. 35.

examination, and repent of the imperfections of my first working hypothesis. When I began to examine Murakami's theory concerning the essential "oneness" of Buddhism and the necessity of "reunifying" it, his thesis suggested two contradictory reactions. On one hand, it seemed remarkable that he was able to expose such a radical vision only a hundred years ago, while it would be inconceivable today. On the other hand, the hermeneutics of suspicion<sup>73</sup> suggested that his ideas could be related to the rising Japanese imperialist ideology, so conspicuous at the time of the Russo-Japanese War. In the end, despite Murakami's patriotic leanings the later supposition proved largely insufficient, because his search for "unity" could not be reduced to political thought.

What were, then, the sources for Murakami's inspiration? A close reading of his work concurs to indicate two main components: philosophical and religious sources. Concerning philosophical insight, it is no surprise that Murakami was mainly indebted to his colleague Inoue Enryō. When Murakami arrived in Tokyo in 1887, his discovery of a place where Western philosophical ideas were already being taught and discussed constituted a real "culture shock." He recalls that while teaching at Tetsugakkan he attended all the lectures he could as a student, struggling to understand the foreign concepts that were completely new to him. Miyake Yūjirō 三宅雄二郎 (Setsurei 雪嶺; 1860–1945) was teaching a course on the history of Western philosophy, but his explanations of Kantian ideas were so obscure that Murakami resorted with other students to ask a senior student to give them a private course on Kant in exchange for a small tuition.<sup>74</sup> This student's name was none other than Tokunaga Manshi 徳永満之, who later changed his name to Kiyozawa Manshi.

At that time, German Idealism was a fad—indeed it remained for a long period the mainstream of Western thought studied in Japan—conducting to Hegel, whose political philosophy seemed more accessible. In his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Lectures on the Philosophy of History), Hegel declared "Reason is the substance of the Universe" and further reached the conclusion that "Truth is the unity of the universal and subjective will; and the Universal is to be found in the State, in its laws, its universal and rational arrangements. The State is the Divine Idea

<sup>73</sup> This expression coined by Ricœur refers specifically to the reductive interpretation of religion by Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. See Ricœur 1970.

<sup>74</sup> Murakami 1914, pp. 266–9.

as it exists on earth.”<sup>75</sup> No doubt, this astonishing identification of the truth with the State galvanized Inoue Enryō and made him reach the conclusion that “loving the truth” is necessarily linked with “the defense of the nation.”

Murakami was, in turn, deeply moved by Inoue’s discoveries, and as soon as *Bukkyō katsuron joron* appeared in 1887, he devoured the new book “in one day and one night.” Dumbfounded by this reading, he describes himself as being so affected that he “deeply lamented” (*tansa suru koto fukashi* 歎嗟すること深し).<sup>76</sup> Murakami is not explicit about what he deplored, but we can guess that it was the inertia of Buddhism. He adds “one can say that, at that time, among Buddhists as well as among non-Buddhists, there was not a single person who would remain unmoved by *Bukkyō katsuron joron*. It was really a masterpiece.”<sup>77</sup> Although Murakami later became more critical of Inoue’s claims, seeds for further reflection had been sown, and Inoue’s premises based on Hegelian philosophy gained ground. As noted above, the exchanges between both thinkers unfolded over the years, but Inoue Enryō and the time spent at his Tetsugakkan certainly contributed to Murakami’s discovery of Hegel’s ideas. Among them, the emphasis on the Absolute Spirit manifesting itself in history, the dialectic march towards “progress,” or the discovery of “the unity of opposites” had left its mark on Murakami’s thought and constituted the main source of his philosophical inspiration.

Murakami’s interest in philosophy nevertheless appears rather marginal and, after all, results from a relatively late discovery in his life. The religious dimension looks predominant. Concerning sources that nourished Murakami’s religious insight, we have surveyed his background in the Shinshū tradition, in Yogācāra, and in Indian logic, but another non-Buddhist approach seems to have inspired his idea of “unification.” There is concrete evidence that Murakami was exposed to Unitarian ideas, and they could have triggered his dream of reconstructing unity from the scattered pieces of Buddhist doctrine.

One of the rare indications of this is found in a small article entitled “Kirisutokyō zasshi ni okeru bukkyō” 基督教雑誌に於ける仏教 (Buddhism as Seen in Christian Journals), which Murakami wrote for *Bukkyō shirin* in the summer of 1894.<sup>78</sup> He mentions in particular the Christian journals *Shinri* 真

<sup>75</sup> Hegel 1956, p. 39.

<sup>76</sup> Murakami 1914, pp. 261–2.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

<sup>78</sup> Murakami 1894.

理 (The Truth), *Nichiyō sōshi* 日曜叢誌 (Sunday Magazine), and *Rikugō zasshi* (Cosmos). Murakami further quotes a piece he had just read in *Rikugō zasshi* about “Buddhism and philosophy,”<sup>79</sup> where the author lists three main points he sees central for clarifying the relationship between Buddhism as a religion and philosophy. The author asks the Buddhists themselves to consider these issues carefully before pretending to engage in rational discussion. The second point is described as follows in the original *Rikugō zasshi* article:

(Secondly) From the perspective of historical criticism of the Buddhist scriptures, a difficult problem for the Buddhists will necessarily arise: what the Buddhists said to be the teachings of Śākyamuni, are they really so? The theory that Mahāyāna was not taught by the Buddha must be vigorously debated again. Some may say that Mahāyāna doesn’t constitute the Buddha’s teachings.

*However, should this be publicly recognized, what influence will it bear on the reputation of Buddhism up to now? At any rate, the Buddhists feel greatly embarrassed by these issues, and they will also certainly come under heavy attack [because of them].*<sup>80</sup>

The first part is faithfully quoted by Murakami, but understandably he omits the second part (in italics above). What is particularly interesting is that Murakami adds the comment “I would like to express my gratitude for this warning” (*wagahai wa sono chūi o shasemu to su* 吾輩は其注意を謝せむとす). This quote and the following remark first reveal that Murakami was open to suggestions by non-Buddhist intellectuals, even before the 1896 Shūkyōka Kondankai. Secondly, his famous endorsement of the idea that “Mahāyāna was not taught by the Buddha,” which became widely known through the publication of his *Bukkyō tōitsuron* in 1901, is the result of a long reflection that was at least partially prompted by the reading of this Christian journal.

This also suggests that Murakami’s whole project of rediscovering the fundamental unity of Buddhism was most likely linked with his immersion in the particular intellectual climate of the 1890s, where Unitarian ideas played a central role. To be precise, in 1894 the journal *Rikugō zasshi* had not yet become fully dominated by the Unitarian perspective—it was only when

<sup>79</sup> Anonymous 1894a. From nos. 161 to 171, the journal’s editor-in-chief was Nakamura Rokutarō 中村録太郎 (n.d.), who succeeded Harada Tasuku 原田助 (1863–1940). See Sugii 1984, p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> Anonymous 1894a, p. 52.

Kishimoto Nobuta became chief redactor in 1898 that it merged with the journal *Shūkyō*—but a large number of its contributors were already Unitarian sympathizers or adherents. Regarding *Rikugō zasshi*, the eight years between 1890 and 1898 are considered a period of transition, during which the redaction passed from the hands of the YMCA founders to those of the Unitarians.<sup>81</sup> This period also coincides with the peak of the Unitarian’s popularity among Japanese intellectuals. Such popularity is no accident, because the Unitarian ideas matched particularly well the aspiration of Buddhist reformers.

For instance, the Unitarians proclaimed a list of main principles, which are discussed by the Buddhist reformer Furukawa Rōsen 古河老川 (1871–99). He summarizes the seventh principle in the following terms:

The Unitarians believe that, although there are differences in the relative merits of the various religions, since originally *their source is identical* (*hongen dōitsu* 本源同一) and since actually their goal is also identical they consider each other as good friends.<sup>82</sup>

The expression “good friends” (*ryōyū* 良友) is an addition by Furukawa, a further indication of his personal commitment to implement true cooperation between the progressive factions of both religions. Another figure, even more attracted to Unitarianism was Nakanishi Ushio 中西牛郎 (1859–1930). He wrote books such as *Shūkyō kakumeiron* 宗教革命論 (On Religious Revolution, 1889), or *Shin bukkyōron* 新仏教論 (On New Buddhism, 1892) early enough to have inspired Murakami. I will leave the description of the Japanese ramifications of Unitarianism to Yamaguchi Aki’s article in this issue, but the fact that Fukuzawa Yukichi 福沢諭吉 (1835–1901) provided support to them, and that Ōuchi Seiran was closely associated with Unitarianism is a sufficient indication of its importance for understanding Murakami’s context. As Yamaguchi Aki also suggests in her article, the importance of the Unitarian movement was not so much its presence as a Christian denomination, but the fact that its emergence coincided with the crucial awareness that the truth cannot be monopolized by any particular religion.

Obviously, such awareness also prompted responses reasserting the

<sup>81</sup> Suzuki 1988, pp. 10–11.

<sup>82</sup> “Yunitariankyō o ronzu” ユニテリアン教を論ず in the April 1894 issue of the journal *Bukkyō* 仏教. Included in Furukawa 1901, pp. 118–9, quoted in Serikawa 1989, p. 87. The original seven fundamental teachings were written on the back cover of the journal *Yunitarian*, and can be found in Suzuki 1979, pp. 53–54.

superiority of each tradition—and Murakami undoubtedly engaged in such apologetic task of demonstrating the rationality of Buddhism—but at least the religious arena had become open to a form of competition where rivals were considered with respect, and the adoption of strategies for coexistence was becoming unavoidable. Of course, there is plenty of room for exploring this topic further, but for now I will just indicate one more direction that may prove fruitful for future research.

### *Similarity with the Indian Case*

Comparing the earlier success of Unitarianism in India with the Japanese case might be useful for analyzing similar convergences among traditions in a different Asian context. Among the new spiritual movements emerging under the British rule, the Brahma Samaj founded by Ram Mohun Roy (1774–1833) on Unitarian premises occupies an important place.<sup>83</sup> This association proclaimed the fundamental unity of Christianity (devoid of dogmas such as the Trinity) with the essence of Hinduism. The further development of the Brahma Samaj under the leadership of Keshab Chunder Sen (1838–84) is also indirectly related to the rise of Indian nationalism. Vivekānanda (Narendranath Datta, 1863–1902) was among the young Indian intellectuals attracted by the Brahma Samaj, before his appearance on the stage of the World’s Parliament of Religions made him famous. What is less known is that Vivekānanda made a brief stopover in Japan on his way to Chicago, and that he had a strong Japanese supporter in the person of Okakura Tenshin 岡倉天心 (Kakuzō 覚三, 1862–1913), who had been the Japanese Consul in Calcutta.<sup>84</sup>

At first sight, this may seem only remotely related to the study of Meiji religions, but Japanese intellectuals were surprisingly well informed of what was going on in neighboring countries. This is shown by a series of articles on contemporary religious reformers in India, which was also published in *Rikugō zasshi*. This series, entitled “Indo kinsei shūkyō kaikakusha” 印度近世宗教改革者 (Religious Reformers in Pre-modern India), includes eight articles published between January and December 1895. After a long preamble introducing the different systems of Indian philosophy, the role of the historical Buddha, and some early reformers, the seventh article in the series mentions the role of the above-mentioned Ram Mohun Roy, while the last one

<sup>83</sup> See Basu 2002 and Lavan 1977.

<sup>84</sup> See Sumi Barnett 2004 and Nihon Vedānta Kyōkai 2001, p. 99.



focuses on Keshab Chunder Sen.<sup>85</sup> These articles, included in the “Miscellaneous section” (*Zakki* 雜記) of the journal, are not signed, but the choice of these Indian figures is not surprising since Ōnishi Amane 大西祝 (1864–1900), Harada Tasuku, and Kishimoto Nobuta, all with a strong leaning towards Unitarianism, were among the editors-in-chief. At any rate, I think that the role of Unitarian missionaries behind the scenes in India as well as in Japan definitely deserves more attention.

### Conclusion

Murakami came to the awareness that sectarian categories and Buddhist studies informed only by sectarian concerns were one of the main obstacles to the “modernization” of this field and to its recognition within academic circles. In this regard, his insight was acute: more than a century later, the mainstream of Japanese Buddhist studies still seems far from having realized this point. Murakami’s project was to establish a “common ground” that would enable all Japanese denominations to present a “unified front,” in particular to resist the spread of Christianity, by promoting Buddhist values within the Japanese public and in the educational institutions. His evolutionary perspective of all Buddhist denominations unfolding from Śākyamuni while retaining the “single thread” of Suchness or *Nirvāna* as their essential focus<sup>86</sup> shaped the understanding of most Japanese buddhologists in the twentieth century.<sup>87</sup> The questions he raises about the link between later developments, especially in Mahāyāna schools, and teachings attributed to the historical Buddha remain of actuality and have yet to find satisfactory answers.<sup>88</sup> It also implies asking why it was, and still is, such a taboo to describe Buddhism as being one.

However, there seems to be one “twist” in his approach, which cannot be neglected. It is the premise that Japan detains the key to a “universal” message, resulting from the unique historical character of its imperial lineage.

<sup>85</sup> *Rikugō zasshi* No. 177, September 1895, pp. 43–51 and No. 180, December 1895, pp. 48–54.

<sup>86</sup> We have mentioned above (p. 91) Murakami’s emphasis on Suchness. The fact that he considered the various expressions of the Buddhist “Absolute” as equivalent is demonstrated in his article for the inaugural issue of the periodical *Bukkyō maishū shinbun* 仏教毎週新聞, where he lists “Suchness (*tathatā*), Dharma-nature, *Nirvāna*, the ultimate truth (*daiichigitai* 第一義諦), the original face, Mahāvairocana, and Amida” as different names for the same inexpressible reality (Murakami 1901).

<sup>87</sup> See Matsuoka 1991.

<sup>88</sup> On this issue, see, for instance, Aramaki 2003.

Like most contemporaries, Murakami was unaware of the danger lying in this restrictive interpretation of “universality” and in its use as a justification for hegemonic claims over Asia.

In this regard, one may additionally ask whether Murakami’s theory about the unity of Buddhism can be considered a genuine attempt to go beyond the sectarian horizon. The reply must, of course, be qualified and depends on the intent put on the adjective “genuine.” Through my readings of Murakami’s writings I got the impression that he was at least sincere in his attempt to promote a new type of scholarship based on non-sectarian premises. The temporary eviction from the Shin denomination certainly contributed to his expressed “distance” from Buddhist institutions. In this respect, his attempt was courageous, and the daunting task of trying to embrace Buddhist history in a synthetic manner is a challenge that could still prove meaningful for stimulating today’s finely divided Buddhist scholarship. As mentioned above, Japanese scholarship, especially studies dealing with Japanese Buddhism, is more informed than ever by sectarian categories. As a remedy to this fundamental flaw, reviving the study of Murakami may prove useful. However, much polishing is needed to refine his theories, in particular their philosophical premises, and one should beware of swallowing some of his statements in which priority is given to the Meiji State.

This article has examined the two main extra-Buddhist sources that appear to have inspired Murakami’s scheme to promote the unity of Buddhism. In particular, Hegelian concepts and the contacts Murakami had with Unitarian ideals seem crucial for understanding his inspiration. Such examples of intellectual symbiosis represent only the visible tip of the iceberg and point to the need for interdisciplinary research reaching far beyond the traditional boundaries of Buddhist studies.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

NBJ *Nihon bukk'yō jinmei jiten* 日本仏教人名辞典, edited by Nihon Bukkyō Jinmei Jiten Hensan Iinkai 日本仏教人名辞典編纂委員会, 1992. Kyoto: Hōzōkan.

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