

Expanding Notions of Buddhism: Influences beyond Meiji Japan

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FOLLOWING CENTURIES of relative stability, Buddhism in Japan faced significant challenges in the turbulent Meiji era. The persecution of Buddhism in the late 1860s and early 1870s was the most dramatic instance of disruption and provided a serious threat to the tradition as it was castigated as foreign by the nascent Shinto nationalism and as antiquated by the advocates of rapid modernization. Although the persecution threatened to diminish Buddhism in Japan, subsequent reactions, reforms, and reformulations of Buddhism sought to expand its scope in Japan and beyond.

In addition to domestic forces, cross-cultural influences shaped ideas, practices, and views of Buddhism. Ambiguities in the title of this article are intended to reflect both how influences from beyond Japan, such as Western scholarship about Buddhism and interest in the Theravāda tradition, expanded notions of Buddhism in Japan and how Japanese Buddhists in turn exerted influence beyond their nation by reforming the representation of their tradition abroad. In order to illustrate both directions of influence and types of expansion, I will make reference to Kiyozawa Manshi and Shaku Sōen. There are significant differences between these well-known Meiji Buddhist figures, but each exemplifies a keen awareness of religious and intellectual movements beyond Japan—of both other schools of Buddhism and Western traditions—and each forges rhetorical links between science and Buddhism in order to propel Japanese Buddhism through the tumultuous cross-cultural currents of the Meiji era.

In the late nineteenth century, Japanese Buddhist apologists became considerably more aware of and interested in non-Mahayana teachings and practices. This awareness was fueled by unparalleled ac-

cess to a variety of Buddhist texts and travel beyond East Asia to countries where Theravāda Buddhism predominated.¹

The variety of texts included a geographical and chronological diversity of sources from early Indian sutras to very recent works about Buddhism written by both Asian and Western scholars. Western publications included academic treatises and popular works, such as the influential poetic account of the Buddha's life, *The Light of Asia*, written by Edwin Arnold in 1879. The Mahayana tradition was not well represented in the early Indian or contemporary Western cases.

Greater access to texts followed currents of modernization and globalization from the remarkable rise in printed materials to the global dissemination of information that accompanied "opening" Japan in the middle of the nineteenth century. Admittedly, Japan was never completely "closed" to the outside world during the Tokugawa era. Japan continued to trade with Asian neighbors, but interaction with the West was severely regulated with negligible influences beyond limited trade and the transfer of medical knowledge and technology from the Dutch. The "opening" of Japan from the mid-nineteenth century brought spectacular change in the quantity and variety of Western information, technology, and influence.

In addition to the influx of foreign materials, currents of change in the Meiji period brought some once-obscure Japanese Buddhist works to the surface. For example, Kiyozawa Manshi (1863–1903), the Jōdo Shin founder of the journal *Seishinkai* (Spiritual World) and first president of what is now known as Ōtani University, awakened renewed interest in the Kamakura text, *Tannishō*. This posthumous account of the teachings of Shinran (1173–1262), the founder of the Jōdo Shin school, had been closely guarded by high Pure Land officials.

Tokunaga Michio notes that although this text "has come to be quoted in sermons far more than any other work of Shinran," there was little interest in it or knowledge of its existence until the Meiji period.² Limited access to the text was due to warnings by both the compiler, Yuien, and the great fifteenth-century head of the order, Rennyo, that this text "should not be shown about" as this "razor-edged scripture" (*kamisori shōgyō*) was dangerously prone to misinterpretation for those lacking purity of heart/mind (*shinjin*).³

Among Japanese Buddhist reformers, Kiyozawa Manshi epitomized how access to a wider variety of texts in an increasingly global intellectual milieu led to new juxtapositions of religious perspectives. He

listed the following as the religious works that exercised the most influence over his own thought: the Shin classic *Tannishō*, the *Āgama* sutras—particularly depictions of the historical Buddha’s early life—and the writings of the Greek stoic philosopher Epictetus.⁴

Shaku Sōen embodied the broader sphere of Buddhist influences by traveling to Theravādin Buddhist countries and then later to the World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago. He traveled to Ceylon and lived there for two years early in his illustrious career in order to learn from and practice with Buddhist communities from other traditions. A few Theravādin monks, such as fellow future Parliament delegate Anagārika Dharmapāla, reciprocated by traveling to Japan from Ceylon when the American Theosophist and Buddhist convert Colonel Henry S. Olcott made the same trip during his attempts to rally the Buddhist world around his own core Buddhist creed.

Olcott’s conversion to Buddhism was emblematic of a budding fascination with Buddhism in Europe and America. Western scholars and practitioners generally evaluated early Buddhism to be superior to the later “degenerations” of the tradition by which many of them described the Mahayana. This privileging of the “Southern Buddhism” in the West spoke to intellectual currents characterized by ascertaining origins and associating antiquity with authenticity.

Moreover, the views of many Protestant scholars betrayed analogical preferences for the Theravāda. They associated their descriptions of early Buddhism—a philosophical system modeled on the life and teachings of the Buddha free of later clergy or superstition—with their own Protestant Christianity. Conversely, through this analogy their polemical wariness of Catholicism cast distrust, if not disdain, on to the Mahayana for what the Protestant interpreters perceived to be excesses of intermediaries and ritual.

Philip Almond explains how Protestant polemics were imposed onto scholarship of Theravāda and Mahayana Buddhism in his work *The British Discovery of Buddhism*.⁵ Almond addresses how Victorian Christians were generally very impressed by Buddhist ethics and morality though they argued about the extent to which they were put into practice. Mahayana, in particular, was seen to be wanting in this regard. Meiji Buddhists were, therefore, simultaneously defending their Mahayana tradition in the West even among those who were sympathetic to the more esteemed Theravāda, promoting Buddhism more generally among those with little or negative understandings of the

tradition, and securing the position of their tradition in Japan against other religions and anti-religious sentiments.

Meiji Buddhists found a very useful ally in science and the theory of evolution. Portraying Buddhism as consistent with science worked domestically to link Buddhism to the modernization of Japan and to mitigate the criticism that it was an antiquated drag on this nation-building project. Moreover, science in general came to be perceived as a potent weapon in Buddhist-Christian polemics at home and abroad. The theory of evolution was perceived to support the Mahayana claim of being a culmination of Buddhism, rather than a later degeneration, even while it elevated Buddhism as a whole relative to Christianity, which was seen to be vulnerable on this point and under attack in the West.

SCIENCE AND BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN POLEMICS IN JAPAN

The popularity of Christianity among reform-minded Japanese intellectuals fluctuated according to their understanding of its consonance with modernization. Even while officially proscribed for Japanese, until early in the Meiji era, Christianity appealed to a number of “civilization and enlightenment” advocates of modernization and openness to the West. Many of these adherents thought that Christianity was a necessary component of Western progress.

Such an understanding was promoted by the new Protestant missionaries and some Japanese who had extensive contact with the West. However, counter-evidence from the West could as easily dispel the centrality of Christianity to modernization. Robert Schwantes describes this reversal as follows:

Beyond that, the legal system, literature, and whole culture of the West were so permeated by religious elements that many thinking Japanese reluctantly concluded that it was impossible to become modern without becoming Christian. Escape from this dilemma was to be provided by Western thought itself, through new materialistic philosophies based upon science, and through the historical relativism of the higher Biblical criticism. The battle between science and theology, evolution and revelation, then raging in England and America was fought again in the Japanese press and lecture hall.⁶

Japanese Buddhists seized upon the scientific critiques of Christianity that countrymen had encountered abroad. Western professors at Jap-

anese universities reinforced the idea that various modes of modern scholarship—including the turn to scientific empiricism—challenged core doctrines of Christianity. Both sources fed into a domestic discourse influenced by Japanese intellectuals, religious reformers, and the increasingly numerous journals and newspapers of the era. These interconnected cross-cultural critiques informed intriguing polemics between Buddhist and Christian apologists. Buddhist apologetics emphasized the perceived consonance between Buddhism and science and advanced the idea that evolution could serve as another tool to undermine Christianity.

A life-altering career suggestion made by Kiyozawa Manshi to an admiring friend provides a fascinating domestic Japanese example of the perceived power of evolutionary theory to combat Christianity. Kiyozawa Manshi, Inaba Shōmaru, and others were pursuing studies and meeting in discussion groups in Tokyo when Nanjō Bunyū joined their group six months after returning from England in May of 1884. Their meetings led Kiyozawa to pursue philosophy and Inaba to study zoology—both choices were understood as means to help promote Buddhism.⁷ Inaba Shōmaru's reminiscence of this decision reveals the underlying logic of his determination to embark upon a scientific career path.

In order to follow Kiyozawa Manshi's advice, I came to master zoology. At that time, in Kiyozawa Manshi's words, if one was to cast off Christianity, one would have to crush it somehow. The quickest way to crush it is by means of the theory of evolution. To master the theory of evolution was the reason I had to master zoology; [he said] you be sure to master zoology. I followed this and mastered zoology, but people were not attending lectures on evolutionary theory. We were doing things like dissecting rats. . . . Clearly the order of things even up to today is that I continue to spend my days in a similar ordinary way without crushing Christianity.⁸

This career decision indicated that the polemical potential of evolutionary theory for religious apologetics could be a sufficient motivation to undertake the study of zoology. Inaba's experience acknowledged that such a serious pursuit of science proved to be less of a crushing blow against Christianity than did the more general and varied attacks on Christian legitimacy, of which evolution was but one weapon. This example also demonstrates the difficulty of differentiating domestic currents of thought from foreign influences.

Nanjō's influence upon the decision represents a domestic voice trained, in part, in Europe under Max Müller. Kiyozawa never left Japan, but he read widely and studied under an American professor of philosophy at Tokyo University, Ernest Fenollosa. Fenollosa was sympathetic to Buddhism (and, in fact, converted according to some accounts) and shared significant skepticism concerning Christianity with his fellow American ex-patriots in Japan, such as Edward Morse and Lafcadio Hearn. The Japanese who had studied in the West, the Americans whose lives were in Japan, and the Japanese students who studied with them were all submerged in the confluence of cross-cultural currents. Sorting out separate influences might be problematic. However, we can locate a shared critique of Christianity.

Schwantes reports on the shared interest in evolutionary thought, religious applications of social Darwinism, and preference for Buddhism over Christianity among these Western professors, as well as how for "many Japanese a materialistic philosophy seemed to solve the problem of how to become Westernized and modern without becoming Christian."⁹ Morse popularized the theory of evolution as the first professor of zoology at Tokyo University. His first lecture on the subject "was headed by this motto: 'To study the truth of things and not to follow the doctrines of religion.'" Fenollosa attacked biblical authority in a lecture series on "The Evolution of Religions," and Lafcadio Hearn "habitually told his students at Tokyo Imperial University that no European scientist or philosopher of note believed any longer in Christianity."¹⁰

SCIENCE AND BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN POLEMICS IN EUROPE AND AMERICA

Asian Buddhists who came to the West and Western sympathizers throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century found in Buddhism scientific, positivistic, and humanistic traits. Their characterizations of Buddhism—with particular focus on the exemplary life, humanity, and philosophy of the Buddha—proved resistant to many modern critiques of Christianity, miracles, superstition, and religion itself. The scientific theory of evolution was especially challenging to the Western religious traditions that emphasized God as Creator and looked to biblical accounts of creation as authoritative. Portrayals of Asian religious traditions as consistent with Darwinian evolution ap-

pealed to Westerners who were unconvinced by biblical explanation. Moreover, social implications of evolution found expression in various forms of cultural comparison, including the new field of comparative religion.

Christopher Clausen addresses reactions to Buddhism and the new line of scholarly inquiry in his essay, "Victorian Buddhism and the Origins of Comparative Religion."¹¹ His description of the battle lines of Victorian religious reform highlights the displacement of religion by science for some and the call taken up by others to form a "new religion of the future"—an idea that appealed to many Japanese reformers as well as to their Victorian contemporaries.

On one side were the conservatives in religion and philosophy, the missionaries, and most of the clergy—roughly the same alliance that opposed Darwin. On the other was a heterogeneous group of scholars, travelers to the East (many of them the military and civil servants of Empire), philosophers, and at least one poet. Some of them were genuinely looking for a religion to replace Christianity; others had done away with all religions except that of science; still others called themselves Christians but were also looking for a field for disparate materials with which to construct a new religion of the future.¹²

Buddhism was not only "far afield," but proved a popular "other" to Christianity. It was perceived to be similar in terms of morality but different in important doctrinal ways, including an orientation to both natural law and metaphysics that avoided some of Christianity's perceived transgressions. Clausen cites examples of Westerners sympathetic to Buddhism connecting Buddhist doctrine with later European scientific theories of evolution. For example, Edwin Arnold, in the 1896 work *East and West*, claims, "If we will see it, we have in this doctrine of transmigration an anticipatory Asiatic Darwinism, connoting evolution."¹³

The academic comparison of religions was itself deemed to be a scientific enterprise. Max Müller led the new "science of religion," strongly defending the scientific basis of the comparative study of religion. Curiously, the evolutionary analysis of its practitioners often favored earliest forms rather than later developments in an exercise of philology and high criticism strikingly different from the conclusions of Darwin's biological theory. The chief method of the new discipline would be the study of ancient religious documents, both comparatively and philologically. This technique would enable the student to peel

away the layers of accretion and priestly corruption that hid the original form of the religion from view, and also assist in restoring his own faith to its original purity.¹⁴

The philological process advocated by Müller resembles the careful digging of the archeologist or paleontologist down through layers of accretion to reveal the earliest skeletons and to restore original forms. In the case of the “science of religion,” Müller emphasized the purity and, to an extent, the superiority of the oldest forms, whereas evolutionary theory posits a progression from less to more evolved through accidental mutation and natural selection. The random element of natural selection rarely appears in social Darwinian adaptations, including late-nineteenth century descriptions of comparative religion that adopted the language of evolution.

Whatever the scientific legitimacy of Müller’s comparative religion, disputes arose as to whether Buddhism could be characterized as scientific. Douglas Brear notes a number of dissenting opinions:

For Hardy “among all the numerous efforts that have been made to explain the phenomena of existence, that of the Buddhist is the least logical or conclusive,” whilst Scott considered that “it was evidently a theory of continuity as unscientific as it was unphilosophic” and “a superstition and nightmare.”¹⁵

An example from the 1876 *Contemporary Review* was less condemning of Buddhism as “superstitious,” but commented on the variety of interpretation:

Much diversity of opinion appears still to exist respecting the teaching of Buddhism. According to one it is a system of barren metaphysics, according to another it is sheer mysticism; a third will tell you that it is a code of pure and beautiful morality; while a fourth looks upon it as a selfish abstraction from the world, a systematic repression of every impulse and emotion of the heart.¹⁶

An issue of the same journal one year later returned to the topic of Buddhism and highlighted teachings more conducive to the evaluation of Buddhism as scientific. The article by T. W. Rhys Davids, the well-known scholar of Buddhism, indicated that Buddhism avoids certain metaphysical speculation such as attempting “to solve the problem of the primary origin of all things.”¹⁷ He cited the Buddha’s refusal to answer “whether the existence of the world is eternal or not eternal,” as the “inquiry tended to no profit.”¹⁸ He then made reference to the Bud-

dhist “law of cause and effect” that operates without a divine power, miracles, or exceptions for heaven and hell:

Buddhism takes as its ultimate fact the existence of the material world and of conscious beings living within it; and it holds that everything is subject to the law of cause and effect, and that everything is constantly, though perhaps imperceptibly, changing. There is no place where this law does not operate; no heaven or hell therefore in the ordinary sense.¹⁹

These comments by Rhys Davids, and most others by Westerners who supported the scientific, moral, or other perceived strengths of Buddhism, were primarily directed at the early Buddhism of the historical Buddha.

The Japanese Buddhists who attended the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago attempted to ameliorate the negative view of later Mahayana Buddhism by reconnecting interpretations of their tradition with scientifically and philosophically pleasing teachings, such as the law of cause and effect. Diversity of views on the scientific consistency of Buddhism—compounded by accusations that “superstition” was most pervasive in later Mahayana branches of Buddhism—required a proactive and consistent response from the Japanese delegates.

Apologists at the 1893 Parliament sought to convince skeptics about the consonance between Buddhism and science—both of which were characterized as universal reflections of truth—and thereby to raise the status of Buddhism. For the Japanese Buddhist delegates, claims of alliance between science and their tradition offered the added potential to rise above other religions in Japan, including Christianity, and to elevate their nation as a whole—where, they claimed, Buddhism reached its Mahayana culmination.

SCIENCE AS APOLOGETIC ALLY

The Japanese Buddhist delegation at the Parliament asserted that Buddhism was authentically ancient, pragmatically modern, and pre-eminently capable of becoming a universal future religion for the world. As a result, Japan, and Asia more generally, could provide spiritual sustenance to the troubled West. The strategy of portraying Buddhism as consistent with science recurs in the delegates’ presentations.

For example, the Zen abbot Shaku Sōen presented “The Law of Cause and Effect, as Taught by Buddha.” This paper explained a core concept of Buddhism, indicated the essential unity within Buddhism on this teaching, and allied Buddhist cosmology with the laws of nature. Sōen contrasted this Buddhist law, which does not rely on supernatural interference, with Western religious notions of creationism, an active divine agent, and divinely meted out teleological possibilities. Sōen stated that

Buddhism considers the universe as no beginning, no end. Since, even if we trace back an eternity, absolute cause cannot be found, so we come to the conclusion that there is no end in the universe. . . . [T]he causal law is in a logical circle changing from cause to effect, effect to cause.²⁰

Sōen also identified this causal law as the source of moral authority, and repeatedly insisted that there is no divine agency at work in the law of cause and effect. Buddha does not make it happen, he is just a man who discovered with clarity how it works. Sōen noted that according “to the different sects of Buddhism more or less different views are entertained in regard to the law of causality, but so far they agree in regarding it as the law of nature, independent of the will of Buddha, and still more of the will of human beings.”²¹

Shaku Sōen’s presentation on the “Law of Cause and Effect” resonated with Paul Carus (1852–1919) and his religion of science. Sōen spent a week with Carus after the Parliament, and from that point Carus’s journal, *The Monist*, and his press, Open Court Publishing Company, provided an outlet for Shaku Sōen’s representation of Buddhism to the West. The connection between Sōen’s activities in Japan and the Zen that became ascendant in the West came to be most recognizably embodied by his lay Buddhist student, Daisetsu Teitaro “D. T.” Suzuki (1870–1966).

Suzuki was extremely influential in later representations of Buddhism, and his interaction with both Japanese and Western thinkers and audiences exemplifies ongoing cross-cultural influences. However, for this article the focus remains on the earlier Meiji discourse for which Suzuki served first as a translator; only after the turn of the century did his voice emerge as one of the forces forming the discourse about Buddhism in Japan and the West. In this last section, correspondences between Paul Carus and Shaku Sōen, translated by Suzuki, il-

illustrate the relationship between these figures and ideas concerning Buddhism, science, and religious reform.

BUDDHIST APOLOGETICS, TRUTH,
AND THE “RELIGIONS OF SCIENCE” AFTER 1893

Letters, books, and journal articles provide evidence of connections between science, ideas of truth, and religious reform internationally and domestically. In his first letter to Carus upon returning to Japan, Shaku Sōen applauded Carus’s “religion of science” and indicated its accord with his own Buddhist reformation movement.

My Dear Dr Carus—

It was certainly a good fortune that through the light of Buddha we met together in the hall of Truth while I sojourned at Chicago to attend the Parliament of religions. I am very glad to see your impartiality—which inspired you to establish a new word of the religion of science, without any bigot allegiance to Christianity or to Buddhism. As for my part, I am a Buddhist, but far from being a conservative religionist, my intention is rather to stir a reformation movement in the religious world. In other words, I am one who insists on the genuine and spiritual Buddhism to renovate that formal and degenerate Buddhism. And I believe that if the present Christianity be reformed it will become the old Buddhism, and if the latter be reformed it will become the future religion of science. . . .²²

Shaku Sōen positioned Christianity, the formal and degenerate old Buddhism, and the future religion of science in an evolutionary hierarchy. According to this continuum, Christianity required reforms to advance to the level of the old Buddhism. Shaku Sōen stated that if old Buddhism is reformed it will become the future religion of science—the culmination of the evolution of religion. Thus, his own activity of insisting “on the genuine and spiritual Buddhism to renovate the formal and degenerate Buddhism” was equated with the very “religion of science” described by Carus.

This nexus of religion, science, and social Darwinian evolution served the polemical purpose of situating Christianity beneath Buddhism. In the spirit of brotherhood and connection among religions, Shaku Sōen allowed that Christianity too can be reformed and attain the lowest rung of Buddhism—that of old Buddhism. From that position, one can logically assume that Christianity could in time reach the level of reformed Buddhism and the religion of science.

Subsequent letters continue the discourse of Truth with a capital “T” in opposition to unscientific myth, superstition, and dogma. In his letter written in March of 1894, Shaku Sōen complimented Carus on his “theories which I have many reasons to approve” and flattered Carus in terms that recall their shared endeavors at the Columbian Exposition:

I think you may well be said to be a second Columbus who is endeavoring to discover the new world of Truth. I earnestly hope your valuable work will soon be put into my hand. I have often thought on sending you some sacred books of Buddhism, which may be of some service on your study of it. But I am sorry our books are written all in Chinese, and they may fail to interest you. . . .²³

Even as Shaku Sōen conceded that East Asian books of Buddhism may not be of much use to Carus without translation, he mentioned in this same letter that the ideas of Carus are being translated by D. T. Suzuki into Japanese and “published in some Buddhist magazines.”

Shaku Sōen wrote in his next letter to Carus on April 18, 1894, “I deeply sympathize with your intention to continue the work of the Parliament of Religions. In my opinion the present century is the period of preparation for a religious reformation, and it is our duty to destroy false opinion . . . that the light of Truth may shine brighter and brighter.” He warned: “Some bigots dream to act against the general tendency of the world, which called into existence the late World’s Religious Parliament.” In defense of the Parliament’s aims, Shaku Sōen continued to invoke science and truth in a struggle of religious reform:

We have now to fight a religious battle against an old and superstitious faith by taking the spirit of science and philosophy as shield and the principle of universal brotherhood as sword. There is no such distinction as Christianity, Mohammadanism and Buddhism before the altar of Truth.²⁴

Furthermore, in his third letter in as many months, Shaku Sōen wrote on May 17 that “Buddha who lived three thousand years ago, being named Gautama, now lies bodily dead in India; but Buddha in the twentieth century being named Truth is just to be born at Chicago in the New World.”²⁵ This was a striking statement on several levels. It exalted the importance of the World’s Parliament and the reform efforts of Shaku Sōen as well as Carus’s science of religion. And it exuded the optimism of the late nineteenth century—a sense of confidence in the progressive unfolding of history diametrically opposite to the Bud-

dhist idea of *mappō*, the latter days of the Buddhist law where enlightenment becomes increasingly difficult in the degenerative movement away from the time of the last historical Buddha.

Shaku Sōen's confident evaluation of progress and the promise of the coming age was consistent with the tenor of social evolutionism and the positive portrayal of Mahayana Buddhism as the culmination of Buddhism. In this same May letter, he addressed the "real, positive, altruistic, and rather optimistic . . . sense of Nirvana taught in the Mahāyāna." Such an emphasis upon the altruistic and optimistic interpretation of nirvana distinguished the Mahayana from other forms of Buddhism criticized for what had been described in the West as a nihilistic religious ideal. Along with the positive characterization of nirvana and an optimistic sense of progress, there is the assertion of "Buddha in the twentieth century being named Truth." The attribution of "Truth" permeated his correspondences with Carus and was frequently linked with science and philosophy as well as religion properly reformed.

Shaku Sōen's representation of Buddhism was calculated to communicate his ideas consistent with the current language and concerns of his time, but he was not constructing Buddhism out of whole cloth. The contrasting identifications of "Buddha" with "Truth" and with the historical and corporeal Gautama, who "now lies bodily dead in India," were not new to Buddhism. Buddhist thought had long made distinctions between the emanation body (*nirmāṇakāya*) of the historical Buddha (Guatama, or Śakyamuni Buddha, as well as buddhas before him) and the truth body (*dharmakāya*), which is identified with ultimate reality. However, *dharmakāya* is understood to be ever present, existing before the physical manifestation of Guatama and other buddhas, much less the twentieth century. Thus, the idea of "Buddha in the twentieth century being named Truth is just to be born at Chicago in the New World" was a strikingly different twist from the typical *trikāya* theological formulations.

What does this mean? It seems that this correspondence was yet one more instance of the dynamic exchange between a Japanese representative of Buddhism, in this instance Shaku Sōen, and developments in the West, in this case Carus and his ideas about Truth, Buddhism, and the religion of science. That is, rather than merely presenting Buddhism to the West as a hermetically sealed package of Asian beliefs and history, Shaku Sōen was instead interpreting developments in the West

and elsewhere through the Buddhist and nineteenth-century lenses of flux, interconnection, and evolution. Carus's ideas of Truth and the religion of science were simply cast as new emanations of Buddha.

Shaku Sōen simultaneously complimented Carus, linked together their ideas and shared vision for the future, and asserted the priority of Buddhism. Buddhism was presented as prior to Christianity in the evolution of religious insight, which would culminate in the Truth of the future religion of the world. Moreover, the realization to which the Buddha awoke was identified as fundamental reality and therefore the ultimate source of subsequent emanations of truth. Such an understanding allowed for the collapse of apparent distinctions between Buddhism, the religion of science, and Truth. As Sōen said, "We, the followers of Buddha, nay, of the truth. . . ."²⁶

Thus, in addition to the domestic use of science for Buddhist apologetics, rhetoric emphasizing the consonance between Buddhism and science was employed internationally to promote Japanese Buddhism as a modern, universal religion. Buddhist adherents and sympathizers from Japan and abroad promoted Buddhism through this understanding and helped to shape discourse about modern Buddhism in this way. Ideas about Buddhism not only expanded within Japan to include a greater understanding of other Asian traditions and Western scholarship about Buddhism, but currents beyond Meiji Japan—both flowing in from the West and out from Japan—influenced scientific and evolutionary rhetoric that propelled the idea of Buddhism as the preeminent modern religion and of Mahayana as the culmination of Buddhism.

NOTES

1. I am drawing from chaps. 5 and 6 of my dissertation, John Harding, "Mahāyāna Phoenix: Japan's Buddhists at the World's Parliament of Religions" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2003), for evidence of polemics between Mahayana and "Hinayana," Buddhism and Christianity, and the use of science as a rhetorical ally among Meiji Buddhists.
2. Tokunaga Michio, introduction to *Tannishō*, trans. Dennis Hirota (Kyoto: Ryukoku University, 1982), 15–18.
3. Ibid.
4. The *Āgamas* are essentially the Saravāstivādin school's version of the better known Pāli *Nikāyas* of the Theravādin school. For this connection and a discussion of Kiyozawa's *sambukyō*, the Buddhist tradition "that every thinker holds three texts in highest esteem," see Mark Blum, "Kiyozawa Manshi and the Meaning of Buddhist Ethics," *The Eastern Buddhist*, n.s., 21, no. 1 (1988): 62.
5. Philip Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
6. Robert S. Schwantes, "Christianity versus Science: A Conflict of Ideas in Meiji Japan," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1953): 123.
7. Wakimoto Tsuneya, "Kiyozawa Manshi," in *Jōdo Bukkyō no shisō*, vol. 14 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992), 26.
8. Ibid.
9. Schwantes, "Christianity versus Science," 124.
10. Ibid., 125–126, 130.
11. Christopher Clausen, "Victorian Buddhism and the Origins of Comparative Religion," *Religion* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1975): 1–15.
12. Ibid., 13.
13. Edwin Arnold, *East and West* (London: Longmans, Green, 1896), 162; as cited in Clausen, "Victorian Buddhism," 5.
14. Clausen, "Victorian Buddhism," 4.
15. Douglas Brear, "Early Assumptions in Western Buddhist Studies," *Religion* 5, no. 2 (Spring 1975): 147.
16. Robert Childers, *Contemporary Review* 27 (1876): 417, as cited in Clausen, "Victorian Buddhism," 7.
17. T. W. Rhys Davids, "On Nirvana, and on the Buddhist Doctrines of the 'Groups,' the Sanskara, Karma, and the 'Paths,'" *Contemporary Review* 29 (1877): 250.

18. Ibid. Rhys Davids excerpts the Buddhist passage from Spence Hardy's *Manual of Buddhism in Its Modern Development* (London: Partridge & Oakley, 1853), 375.
19. Rhys Davids, "On Nirvana," 250.
20. Shaku Sōen, "The Law of Cause and Effect, as Taught by Buddha," in *The World's Parliament of Religions*, ed. John Henry Barrows, vol. 2 (Chicago: Parliament Publishing Co., 1893), 830.
21. Ibid., 831.
22. Letter from Shaku Sōen written in Kamakura, Japan, to Paul Carus on December 16, 1893. I located this letter and other correspondences among these three at the Open Court Collection in the Special Collections archives at the Southern University of Illinois—Carbondale.
23. Ibid., March 9, 1894.
24. Ibid., April 18, 1894.
25. Ibid., May 17, 1894.
26. Ibid.