BRIAN
(DAIZEN) A.
VICTORIA

# ZEN AT WAR

New York • WEATHERHILL • Tokyo

CHAPTER TWO:

# Early Buddhist Social Ferment

In reality the Meiji government had granted the Japanese people only a nominal guarantee of religious freedom. State Shinto, the government's artificial construct, was purposely designed as a cult of national morality and patriotism, to which followers of all religions must subscribe. The Meiji government's policy was, in fact, "nothing but an ingenious and dangerous attempt at superimposing 'immanental theocracy' on the constitutional guarantees of religious freedom."[1]

There were still many influential people both within and without the government who remained highly suspicious of, if not directly opposed to, religion in any form. Representative of these was Professor Inoue Tetsujirō (1855–1944) of Tokyo University. In his opinion, religion was inherently "prejudicial to peace and order," and furthermore those who practiced it could not escape being "antagonistic to their duties as subjects."[2] Inoue's opinions are significant in that the Meiji government looked to him for the philosophical groundwork of its 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education (Kyōiku Chokugo). This key document proclaimed loyalty to the throne and filial piety to be the cardinal virtues to which all imperial subjects should adhere.

It was under these circumstances that Japanese Buddhists, with their newly won yet limited religious freedom, attempted to develop what came to be known by the late 1880s as New Buddhism (Shin Bukkyō). New Buddhism was designed to answer the anti-Buddhist critique of the early and middle years of the Meiji period. Its first priority was to show that priests and temples could make a valuable contribution to the nation's social and economic life. Second, it insisted that although "foreign-born," Buddhism could still effectively promote loyalty to the throne, patriotism, and national unity. Last, the New Buddhism made the case that its basic doctrines were fully compatible with the Western science and technology then being so rapidly introduced into the country.

Some commentators such as Notto Thelle have compared the New Buddhist movement with the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation of Christianity.[3] To the extent that this analogy is valid, however, it must be noted that many of the activists in this movement were moderate reformers loyal to their respective sects. There were others, however, whose radical views would eventually lead them to break with traditional institutional Buddhism.[4]



*Sino-Japanese War (1894–95)* The Sino-Japanese War formally began in August 1894. In discussing the war, Ienaga Saburo, a noted historian of modern Japan, wrote: "Government leaders . . . started the quest for glory by fighting China for hegemony in Korea. Domination of Korea became a national goal shared by successive administrations and the public at large."[27] The public at large, of course, included Japan's Buddhist leaders. Not surprisingly, these leaders collaborated very closely with the ethnocentric nationalism that was by then so prevalent in society. For example, by this time Inoue Enryō had become a spokesman for the "imperial way" *(kōdō)*. In a work published in 1893 entitled "Treatise on Loyalty and Filial Piety" *(Chūkō Katsu Ron)*, he wrote that due to the existence of the imperial household, Japan, its land, and its people were, like the emperor himself, all "sacred and holy."[28]

Enryō went on to assert that in Japan, unlike China or the West, loyalty to the sovereign and filial piety were one and the same. This was because all Japanese were offspring of the imperial family. The imperial family was the "head family" of all Japanese, making the emperor and his subjects all part of "one large family."[29] This led Enryō to conclude:

> From ancient times, sacrificing one's physical existence for the sake of the emperor and the country was akin to discarding worn-out sandals. . . . It is this unique feature of our people which has caused the radiance of our national polity and produced the supreme beauty of our national customs.[30]

In 1894 Enryō also published an article on the "philosophy of war" which, echoing the preceding sentiments, was strongly militaristic in temper.[31]

The Nishi Honganji branch of the Shin sect was one of the first to comment on the war. As early as July 31, 1894, the sect's headquarters issued a statement that read in part:

> Since the occurrence of the recent emergency in Korea, the head of our branch has been deeply concerned about the situation, acting on the truth of repaying one's debt to the country through absolute loyalty to it. This is in accordance with the sect's teaching that the law of the sovereign is paramount. . . . Believing deeply in the saving power of Amida Buddha's vow, and certain of rebirth in

his western paradise, we will remain calm no matter what emergency we may encounter, for there is nothing to fear. . . . We must value loyalty [to the sovereign] and filial piety, work diligently, and, confronted with this emergency, share in the trials and tribulations of the nation.[32]

In 1895, the Jōdo (Pure Land) sect established the Assembly to Repay One's Debt to the Nation (Hōkoku Gikai). Its purpose was defined as follows: "The purpose of this assembly shall be, in accordance with the power of religion, to benefit both those in the military and their families, to conduct memorial services on behalf of fallen patriots, and to provide relief for their families and relatives."[33]

While there was almost no peace movement among Buddhists, there was no lack of Buddhist leaders who justified the war. One line of reasoning they adopted was based on Japanese Buddhism's supposed preeminent position within all of Asian Buddhism. An editorial entitled "Buddhists During Wartime" appeared in the August 8, 1894 issue of the newspaper *Nōnin Shimpō*. It asserted that Japanese Buddhists had a duty to "awaken" Chinese and Korean Buddhists from their indifference to the war, an indifference which allegedly stemmed from the pessimistic nature of the Buddhism in those two countries.

Only a few days later, in the August 16–18 issue of the same newspaper, Mori Naoki expanded on this theme in an article entitled "The Relationship of Japanese Buddhists to the Crisis in China and Korea." He claimed that both Indian and Thai Buddhists were indifferent to the development of their own countries, once again because of the pessimistic nature of the Buddhism found there. Mori then went on to advocate that Japanese Buddhists consider the battlefield as an arena for propagation of the faith, holding high the banner of "benevolence and fidelity."

Coupled with the above was the viewpoint represented in an editorial, entitled "Buddhism and War," appearing in the July 25, 1894 issue of the newspaper *Mitsugon Kyōhō*. This editorial began by acknowledging that the destruction of all weapons of war was the Buddhist ideal. It then went on to assert, however, that when a war was fought for a "just cause," it was entirely appropriate for Buddhists to support it.

Another proponent of this point of view was Shaku Unshō (1827–1909), a Shingon-sect priest and pioneer of Meiji-period Buddhist charitable activities. In an article entitled "A Discussion on the Compassionate Buddhist Prohibition Against Killing," which appeared in the preceding



newspaper on January 25, 1885, he stated that there were two types of war: a "just war" and a "lawless war." While Buddhists should oppose the second type of war, they should support, as in this case, a just war because such a war prevents humanity from falling into misery.

In a short but none the less prophetic reference to a Zen connection to the war, the Buddhist reformer Katō Totsudō (1870–1949) wrote the following in the February 1895 issue of *Taiyō* magazine:

> The Zen that philosophers and poets are well acquainted with has [due to the war] also become familiar to military men. Even though the principle of transcending life and death is the basis of all Buddhist schools, Zen has a quality that is most welcomed by soldiers, for it possesses a special kind of vigor.[34]

Despite all the preceding declarations of Buddhist war support, it was actually Japanese Christians who took the lead in such practical activities as providing medical help for wounded soldiers and relief for families who had become poverty stricken as a result of the war. The patriotic fervor of the Christians naturally had a favorable effect on public opinion, and even Buddhists reluctantly expressed admiration for their strenuous efforts. On the other hand, because of their own slow and rather passive response, Buddhist leaders were themselves criticized for their lack of patriotic spirit.[35]

The fervent patriotism of Japanese Christians became the catalyst for not only a new and positive relationship with the state but with institutional Buddhism as well. Specifically, Christian patriotism brought a new climate which promoted, on the one hand, Buddhist-Christian cooperation, while emphasizing Christianity's spiritual solidarity with the East. The end result was that both religions succeeded, in varying degrees, in entrenching themselves in the same citadel of nationalism.[36]

In light of the Christian emphasis on love and the Buddhist emphasis on compassion, it is highly ironic that it was war-generated patriotism and the resulting death and destruction that provided the initial stimulus for a reconciliation between these two religions, long bitter foes.

Institutional Buddhism's support for the Russo-Japanese War had not been confined to ideological support and providing military chaplains. At home it had expressed itself in everything from the conduct of special sutra-recitation ceremonies believed to ensure victory in battle to such social-welfare activities as providing financial and in-kind assistance to soldiers' families, especially the families of those who had fallen on the battlefield. Numerous Buddhist temples had even become detention centers for Russian prisoners of war.

Paralleling these domestic activities were equally ambitious missionary efforts on the Asian mainland, efforts that did not end with the war's conclusion. If anything, these missionary efforts only increased in the postwar years. The Japanese government itself had recognized the political importance of these efforts as early as the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese War, when Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909) demanded that China allow the establishment of Japanese Buddhist missions in that country.

It will be recalled that the Higashi Honganji branch of the Shin sect established a temple in Shanghai as early as 1876 and a further mission in Korea in 1877. With Japan's expansion onto the Asian continent firmly established as a result of its victories in both the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, these pioneering efforts of the Shin sect multiplied many times over. By 1918 the Nishi Honganji branch of the Shin sect had a total of thirty-four missions in Korea, while the Higashi Honganji branch had fifty-eight. By 1941 these same two branches had a total of fifty-three and eighty missions in Manchuria respectively.

Nor, of course, were these continental missionary efforts limited to the Shin sect. The Sōtō Zen sect, for example, established its first mission in Korea in 1904, a number which grew to more than twenty-one by 1912 and more than one hundred by war's end. In Manchuria, its evangelization efforts began in 1907 and reached a total of thirty-seven missions by 1940. The year 1907 also marked the founding of the first Nichiren-sect mission in Manchuria. This number grew to more than twenty by war's end. The Jōdo sect established its first temple in China in 1905, while the esoteric Shingon sect had over three hundred priests stationed in various areas of Manchuria and China proper during the war years.



*D. T. Suzuki* It was against this backdrop that D. T. Suzuki once again entered the picture. By this time he had written widely in both English and Japanese and established himself as a scholar of Buddhism in general, and Zen in particular. Suzuki had in fact begun to write about Zen in English as early as 1906, when his essay entitled "The Zen Sect of Buddhism" appeared in the *Journal of the Pali Text Society*. From this very first English-language effort, Suzuki sought to make his readers aware of the connection between Zen and Bushido, and the inspiration the combination of these two had provided Japan's victorious soldiers in the Russo-Japanese War:

> The Lebensanschauung of Bushido is no more nor less than that of Zen. The calmness and even joyfulness of heart at the moment of death which is conspicuously observable in the Japanese, the intrepidity which is generally shown by the Japanese soldiers in the face of an overwhelming enemy; and the fairness of play to an opponent, so strongly taught by Bushido—all these come from the spirit of the Zen training, and not from any such blind, fatalistic conception as is sometimes thought to be a trait peculiar to Orientals.[23]

Despite this early effort, Suzuki did not make his best-known statement on the relationship of Zen and Bushido until 1938, when he published a book in English entitled *Zen Buddhism and Its Influence on Japanese Culture*. This work was later revised and republished in 1959 by Princeton University Press as *Zen and Japanese Culture*.

p.105

D.T.

Kirita's conclusions notwithstanding, Suzuki laid out in the above the fundamental positions that Buddhist leaders would collectively adhere to until Japan's defeat in 1945: (1) Japan has the right to pursue its commercial and trade ambitions as it sees fit; (2) should "unruly heathens" *(jama gedō)* of any country interfere with that right, they deserve to be punished for interfering with the progress of all humanity; (3) such punishment will be carried out with the full and unconditional support of Japan's religions, for it is undertaken with no other goal in mind than to ensure that justice prevails; (4) soldiers must, without the slightest hesitation or regret, offer up their lives to the state in carrying out such religion-sanctioned punishment; and (5) discharging one's duty to the state on the battlefield is a religious act.

Suzuki, it should be noted, was not necessarily the originator of the preceding ideas, for they can also be found in the writings of Shaku Sōen, Suzuki's Zen master. It was Sōen who demonstrated just how easy it was to

put Suzuki's theory into practice. He did this by going to the battlefield as a Buddhist chaplain attached to the First Army Division shortly after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in February 1904. He described his reasons for doing so:

> I wished to have my faith tested by going through the greatest horrors of life, but I also wished to inspire, if I could, our valiant soldiers with the ennobling thoughts of the Buddha, so as to enable them to die on the battlefield with the confidence that the task in which they are engaged is great and noble. I wished to convince them of the truths that this war is not a mere slaughter of their fellow-beings, but that they are combating an evil, and that, at the same time, corporeal annihilation really means a rebirth of [the] soul, not in heaven, indeed, but here among ourselves. I did my best to impress these ideas upon the soldiers' hearts.[46]

While on the battlefield Sōen even found time to compose a number of poems. Representative of these is the following:

> Here, marching on [Mount] Nanshan,
> Storming its topmost crest,
> Have thousands of brave men
> With dragon valor pressed.
> Before the foe my heart
> Is calmed, composure-blessed,
> While belching cannons sing
> A lullaby of rest.[47]

Sōen also promoted the idea of a close relationship between Buddhism and war. He wrote:

> Buddhism provides us with two entrances through which we can reach the citadel of perfect truth. One is the gate of love *(karuna)* and the other the gate of knowledge *(prajna)*. The former leads us to the world of particulars and the latter to realm of the absolute. By knowledge we aspire to reach the summit of spiritual enlightenment; by love we strive to rescue our fellow-creatures from misery and crime. View the vicissitudes of things from the unity and eternity of the religious standpoint, the Dharmadhatu, and everything is one, is on the same plane, and I learn to neglect the worldly distinction made between friend and foe, tragedy and comedy, war and peace, samsara and nirvana, passion *(kleça)* and enlightenment *(bodhi)*. A philosophical calm pervades my soul and I feel the contentment of Nirvana. For there is nothing, as far as I can see, that does not reflect the glory of Buddha. . . . In this world of particulars, the noblest and greatest thing one can achieve is to combat evil and bring it into complete subjection. The moral principle which guided the Buddha throughout his twelve years of preparation and in his forty-eight years of religious wanderings, and which pervades his whole doctrine, however varied it may be when practically applied, is nothing else than the subjugation of evil. . . .
>
> War is an evil and a great one, indeed. But war against evils must be unflinchingly prosecuted till we attain the final aim. In the present hostilities, into which Japan has entered with great reluctance, she pursues no egotistic purpose, but seeks the subjugation of evils hostile to civilization, peace, and enlightenment. She deliberated long before she took up arms, as she was aware of the magnitude and gravity of the undertaking. But the firm conviction of the justice of her cause has endowed her with an indomitable courage, and she is determined to carry the struggle to the bitter end.
>
> Here is the price we must pay for our ideals—a price paid in streams of blood and by the sacrifice of many thousands of living bodies. However determined may be our resolution to crush evils, our hearts tremble at the sight of this appalling scene. . . . Were it not for the consolation that these sacrifices are not brought for an egotistic purpose, but are an inevitable step toward the final realization of enlightenment, how could I, poor mortal, bear these experiences of a hell let loose on earth?[48]

The significance of the individual soldier in this "hell let loose on earth" became, as might be expected, a recurrent theme in Buddhist discussions on warfare from this time onwards. About this Sōen had the following to say:

> There is but one great spirit and we individuals are its temporal manifestations. We are eternal when we do the will of the great spirit; we are doomed when we protest against it in our egotism

and ignorance. We obey, and we live. We defy, and we are thrown into the fire that quencheth not. Our bodily existences are like the sheaths of the bamboo sprout. For the growth of the plant it is necessary to cast one sheath after another. It is not that the body-sheath is negligible, but that the spirit-plant is more essential and its wholesome growth of paramount importance. Let us, therefore, not absolutely cling to the bodily existence, but when necessary, sacrifice it for a better thing. For this is the way in which the spirituality of our being asserts itself.

This being the case, war is not necessarily horrible, provided that it is fought for a just and honorable cause, that it is fought for the maintenance and realization of noble ideals, that it is fought for the upholding of humanity and civilization. Many material human bodies may be destroyed, many humane hearts be broken, but from a broader point of view these sacrifices are so many ph[o]enixes consumed in the sacred fire of spirituality, which will arise from the smouldering ashes reanimated, ennobled, and glorified. . . . We Buddhists are not believers in fiction, superstition, or mythology. We are followers of truth and fact. And what we actually see around us is that the departed spirits are abiding right among ourselves, for we have the most convincing testimony of the fact in our inmost consciousness which deceives not. They descend upon us, they dwell within us; for are we not being moved by their courage, earnestness, self-sacrifice, and love of country? Do we not feel supernaturally inspired and strengthened in our resolution to follow them and to complete the work they have so auspiciously started. . . ?

I am by no means trying to cover the horrors and evils of war, for war is certainly hellish. Let us avoid it as much as possible. Let us settle all our international difficulties in a more civilized manner. But if it is unavoidable, let us go into it with heart and soul, with the firm conviction that our spiritual descendants will carry out and accomplish what we have failed personally to achieve. . . . Mere lamentation not only bears no fruit, it is a product of egotism, and has to be shunned by every enlightened mind and heart.[49]

We must bear in mind, as we evaluate Sōen's words, that they represent the thought of a fully enlightened Zen master recognized by the Rinzai Zen tradition. Sōen had completed his Rinzai-style Zen training, based on the



meditative use of koan, at the unusually early age of twenty-four. He had received Dharma transmission in the form of *inka shōmei* (seal of approval), signifying his complete enlightenment, from his master, Imakita Kōsen (1816–92).[50] (Incidentally, the clear echo of Suzuki's thinking in Sōen's words can be traced to the facts that Suzuki was not only the latter's disciple but also the translator of the above passages.)

One passage of Sōen's writing that Suzuki did not translate comes from a somewhat surprising source, the great Russian writer Leo Tolstoi. Because of his own pacifist views, Tolstoi had hoped to enlist the aid of a noted Japanese Buddhist leader to join with him in condemning the war between the two nations. He therefore asked Sōen to join him in this effort, only to receive the following reply:

> Even though the Buddha forbade the taking of life, he also taught that until all sentient beings are united together through the exercise of infinite compassion, there will never be peace. Therefore, as a means of bringing into harmony those things which are incompatible, killing and war are necessary.[51]

Sōen was not, of course, the only Buddhist priest to go to the battlefield. All of the major Buddhist sects assigned chaplains to the military, and by the 1930s they were found attached to every regiment. In addition, the sects provided medics to accompany the troops abroad. Similarly, Sōen was not the only Buddhist leader to justify the war from a purported Buddhist viewpoint. Inoue Enryō, the noted Meiji-period Buddhist scholar-priest, had this to say shortly before the formal outbreak of hostilities:

> Buddhism is a teaching of compassion, a teaching for living human beings. Therefore, fighting on behalf of living human beings is in accord with the spirit of compassion. In the event hostilities break out between Japan and Russia, it is only natural that Buddhists should fight willingly, for what is this if not repaying the debt of gratitude we owe the Buddha?
>
> It goes without saying that this is a war to protect the state and sustain our fellow countrymen. Beyond that, however, it is the conduct of a bodhisattva seeking to save untold millions of living souls throughout China and Korea from the jaws of death. Therefore Russia is not only the enemy of our country, it is also the enemy of the Buddha.

Sōen went on to state that this "spirit of Japan," or *Yamato damashii*, had come from "a single spiritual teaching," which he identified as having developed out of an amalgamation of Confucianism, Shinto, and Buddhism. In a meeting with President Theodore Roosevelt during his sojourn in the United States, Sōen described the Buddhist contribution to the spirit of Japan as being centered on the concept of "self-sacrifice":

> To sacrifice the self, seen from the inside, is centered around the abandoning of what Buddhism calls the small self, so as to serve the greater cause. . . . I believe that the readiness for self-sacrifice is found in the peoples of all other countries, but never is it so clearly manifest as in the Japanese. This spirit is one of the factors contributing to the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War. There are many other factors, but among the more intangible ones is this readiness to give up one's life.[8]

Sōen was equally clear about what this spirit of self-sacrifice should be directed toward. On the one hand, those imbued with this spirit ought "to work for justice and the common good." On the other hand, they should also "serve the State" and recognize "that it is increasingly important that everyone make an effort to serve the Emperor."[9]

In general it can be said that Sōen's Western lectures on Buddhism had two major purposes. The first was to justify Japan's military and colonial efforts. Second, Sōen wished to demonstrate his interest in the popular intellectual pastime of theories concerning the uniqueness of the Japanese.[10]

Even after his return to Japan in 1906, Sōen continued to develop these themes. This in turn led to yet another invitation to travel abroad, though this time the invitation came from the Japanese-owned South Manchuria Railway Company.[11] Thus, Sōen delivered a series of lectures in 1912 entitled "The Spirit of the Yamato Race" to members of the Japanese colonial administration in both Korea and Manchuria. There was nothing particularly unusual about Sōen's trip, for all of Japan's traditional Buddhist sects were committed to a general policy of "[maintaining] Buddhism's reputation as 'protector of the country.'"[12]

Although Sōen's and Kaiten's views may be considered representative of the era following the Russo-Japanese War, not all Buddhist leaders were in agreement with them. One notable voice of dissent came from Ōtani Sonyū (1886–1939), the administrative head of the Nishi Honganji branch of the Shin sect. His was not simply a dissenting voice but, in his conclusion, a prophetic voice as well:



> There was a time when the phrase "for the sake of the state" wielded such a power as to suppress all other considerations, making the people subservient to the despotic will of statesmen, and even the spiritual leaders had meekly to submit to their sometimes arrogant and inflexible orders. This was all right if the state was representative of things that are good, just and humane; but as history tells us, no state has ever proved in the past to be such a symbol. In fact, every one of the states that prospered and disappeared, or that are now prospering, has been anything but symbolic of justice and love and liberty. Hence the history of the world has been the record of constant struggles and untold suffering. But fortunately, since the termination of the recent war, the world seems to be realizing the enormity of the loss and the foolishness of the greed for power. We are now growing more conscious than ever of the imperative necessity of emphasizing the spiritual side of human life and the fact that our lives are so closely interrelated that whatever things good or bad happen to one nation are sure to affect another. The time is come when we have to abandon the narrow conception of the state which puts one nation's welfare, especially material welfare, above that of the friendly neighbors. . . .
>
> Statesmen have been wont to urge us to sacrifice our personal interest for the state, to abandon our individual claims and even affections for upholding the state as the highest expression of human life. This is all right if the state is also the perfect and most rational symbol of all that we, as individuals, can conceive as good and just and lovable. If the state, on the contrary, betrays our thoughts of justice and freedom and countermands the dictates of love and humanity, it has no right to continue its existence. If it does not fall by itself, other states will not suffer its ever menacing existence. To obey blindly whatever is claimed by the state, good or bad, just or unjust, is to enslave oneself and to lose one's moral and spiritual individuality. . . .
>
> I believe in the existence of the state, for I think it necessary to the enhancement of real human welfare. But I cannot subscribe to the ideas stoutly upheld by some people who, taking the state for an absolute form of human life, believe in its power to do anything for its own maintenance, regardless of the consequences either to its own members or to the neighboring states. Inasmuch as no one absolute state can exist by itself and in itself, it requires other states to be its friendly neighbors, for no state can ignore the claims of other states, just as in the case of individuals. If it does this and goes on its own way ignoring its fellow organizations, it is sure to meet a sad fate and lose its own existence before long.[13]

observed in the reminiscences of Sawaki Kodo (1880–1965), one of Japan's best-known modern Sōtō Zen masters and scholars. For many Western Zen practitioners, Kōdō is familiar as the founder of a lay Zen training center at Antaiji, located in Kyoto. In a book entitled *Recollections of Sawaki Kōdō (Sawaki Kōdō Kikigaki)*, Kōdō first talked of the hardships he endured as a draftee in the military just prior to the Russo-Japanese War. With the war's outbreak, however, Kōdō went to the battlefield, where:

> My comrades and I gorged ourselves on killing people. Especially at the battle of Baolisi temple, I chased our enemies into a hole where I was able to pick them off very efficiently. Because of this, my company commander requested that I be given a letter of commendation, but it wasn't issued.[56]

Kōdō records the following conversation among his comrades, describing what they thought about his accomplishment:

> "Who the hell is that guy?"
> "He's only a Zen priest."
> "I see. Just what you'd expect from a Zen priest. A man with guts."[57]

In this simple conversation we find what is perhaps the first modern reference to the effectiveness of Zen training on the battlefield. Although Kōdō himself never fought again, he continued to support the unity of Zen and war. For example, in 1942 he wrote an article entitled "On the True Meaning of the Zen Precepts" for the Buddhist magazine *Daihōrin*. It contained the following passage:

> The Lotus Sutra states that "the Three Worlds [of desire, form, and formlessness] are my existence and all sentient beings therein are my children." From this point of view, everything, including friend and foe, are my children. Superior officers are my existence as are their subordinates. The same can be said of both Japan and the world. Given this, it is just to punish those who disturb the public order. Whether one kills or does not kill, the precept forbidding killing [is preserved]. It is the precept forbidding killing that wields the sword. It is this precept that throws the bomb. It is for this reason that you must seek to study and practice this precept.[58]

p. 35

The idea that Kōdō advanced here, that killing and bomb-throwing are done independently of the individual's will, was to become a popular position advocated by Zen adherents, including D. T. Suzuki. If these violent acts are performed independently of the human will, there can of course be no individual choice or responsibility in the matter. It may well be said that in this instance Zen truly "transcends reason."

*Furukawa Taigo* If the preceding comments provide a basic conceptual link among selfless Zen, Bushido, and the imperial military, it was left to Furukawa Taigo to present a detailed exposition of the doctrinal relationship among these entities. Furukawa, it will be recalled, was the popular commentator on Buddhism who had written the book *Rapidly Advancing Japan and the New Mahayana Buddhism* in 1937. According to Furukawa, Bushido had eight major characteristics: (1) great value placed on fervent loyalty; (2) a high esteem for military prowess; (3) an abundance of the spirit of self-sacrifice; (4) realism; (5) an emphasis on practice based on self-reliance; (6) an esteem for order and proper decorum; (7) respect for truthfulness and strong ambition; and (8) a life of simplicity.[21]

What, then, was the relationship between the above and Zen doctrine? Furukawa noted six points, which I paraphrase below, though there is considerable repetition and overlap among them.

(1) The doctrine of emptiness is the foundation of all Buddhism. It is, furthermore, the fundamental principle of Zen, providing Zen with its practical orientation. For this reason Zen was able to become the driving force behind the self-sacrificing spirit of Bushido, grounded, as the latter is, on the emptiness of self.

(2) The realistic, this-worldly nature of Zen is based on the teaching that our ordinary world of life and death is identical with Nirvana. Zen takes the position that the ordinary world, just as it is, is the ideal world, and it does not seek salvation in the hereafter. This simple, frank, and optimistic spirit of Zen has enabled it to exert a profound influence on the down-to-earth and patriotic spirit of Japan's warriors.

(3) Within the Mahayana branch of Buddhism, the Zen sect alone has faithfully transmitted the thoroughgoing atheism and self-reliance of early Buddhism. Zen abjures reliance on the assistance of Buddhas or gods. Its goal is to see deeply into one's nature and become a Buddha through the single-minded practice of zazen. Zen thus resonated deeply with the independent, self-reliant, and virile spirit of Japan's warriors.

(4) Zen takes a very practical stance based on its teaching of the transmission of enlightenment from master to disciple. This transmission takes place independent of the sutras and cannot be expressed in words. Having discarded complicated doctrines, Zen maintains that the Buddha Dharma is synonymous with one's dignified appearance and that proper decorum is the essence of the faith. This is identical to the silent practicality of Bushido, which rejects theoretical argument and instead urges the accomplishment of one's duty.

(5) In leading a plain and frugal life, Zen practitioners maintain a tradition dating back to Buddha Shakyamuni and his first disciples. This life style appealed to the straightforward and unsophisticated warrior temperament, further promoting the development of these qualities among the warrior class.

(6) Unlike Zen in India and China, Japanese Zen was able to transcend the subjective, individualistic, and passive attitude toward salvation that it inherited and become an active, dynamic force influencing the entire nation. It thereby became the catalyst for warriors to enter into the realm of selflessness. This, in turn, resulted in self-sacrificial conduct on behalf of their sovereign and their country. It was the imperial household that made all of this possible, for the emperor was the incarnation of the selfless wisdom of the universe. It can therefore be said that Mahayana Buddhism didn't simply spread to Japan but was actually created there.[22]

Furukawa's final point concerning Bushido was that it was wrong to say that the samurai had disappeared at the time of the Meiji Restoration. On the contrary, all Japanese men became samurai at that time. Up to the Restoration, only members of the samurai class were allowed to carry weapons in order to fulfil their duty to protect their sovereign and the country. Now that duty had passed to all enfranchised citizens, and all Japanese men were now samurai, bound to uphold the code of Bushido.

As previously noted, Furukawa wrote the above in 1937, some ten years after Seisen published *A Zen Primer* and immediately preceding the outbreak of full-scale war with China. At that time all Japanese males were subject to military conscription. This was also a period marked by increasing tension between Japan and the United States and Britain, which, if only to protect their own economic interests in China and throughout Asia, were unwilling to ignore Japanese expansionism.

As Japan's situation gradually grew more critical, Zen priests were called upon to do more than just engage in what was popularly called "thought war" *(shisōsen)*. In January 1944, Zen priests who had not been drafted, or were not serving as military chaplains or continental missionaries, were called upon to abandon their "Dharma castles," take up factory work, and "aid in the increased production of military goods."[49] This call appeared in the February 1, 1944 issue of *Sōtō Shūhō*, but had been issued by the multisect Great Japan Buddhist Federation (Dainihon Bukkyō Kai). It applied to all Buddhist priests between the ages of sixteen and forty-five. The heart of the announcement read:

> As has been said, "The buildup of military power comes from spiritual power." It is for this reason that we ask for a total of approximately ten thousand leading priests from each of the sects to come forth as volunteers and directly engage in production in important industrial factories. At the same time they will be expected to provide spiritual training and guidance to the industrial warriors [in these factories].[50]

To the war's bitter end, the Way of the Warrior played an important role in all aspects of Japanese society. As the spiritual advocates of this code, Zen priests and the priests of other sects continued to discharge their duties even as they joined the ranks of the "industrial warriors."

*Shiio Benkyō Nation-Protecting Buddhism* contained one more seminal essay, which is the most complete exposition of imperial-way Buddhism extant. It was written by Dr. Shiio Benkyō (1876–1971), a Jōdo sect priest who later became president of Taishō University. He entitled his one-hundred thirty-two-page essay simply "Imperial-way Buddhism."

Benkyō began his essay with a discussion of the life and teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni. He then went on to declare that as far as contemporary Buddhism was concerned, the limited amount of Buddhism left in India was a "failure," as was that in China. "On the contrary," he wrote, "it can be said that it is in Japan where it is possible to draw near to a Buddhism like that of the time when Buddha Shakyamuni was alive."[8]

In explaining the purity of Japanese Buddhism, Benkyō also went back to Prince Shōtoku, for whom "building one great Sangha in this land was of the greatest importance."[9] Shōtoku was motivated to do this because he viewed the Sangha as "a great harmonious body."[10] Later founders of Japanese Buddhist sects, including Hōnen (1133–1212), Nichiren (1222–82), and Eisai (1141–1215) were, despite their sectarian differences, united in the belief that the Sangha was "synonymous with the state."[11]

The third section of Benkyō's essay was entitled "The Superior National Character of Japan" *(Takuetsu seru Nihon no Kunigara)*. As the title suggests, Benkyō continued to develop his theme of the superiority of Japanese Buddhism over that found in other Asian countries.

> Buddhism in India collapsed due to [the nature of] Indian culture. Buddhism in China collapsed because it ran directly contrary to the history and nature of the Chinese state, and was therefore only able to produce a few mountain temples. On the other hand, thanks to the rich cultivation Japanese Buddhism received on Japanese soil, it gradually developed into that which the Buddhist teaching was aiming toward.[12]

Why and how had this all come about? Benkyō's answer was as follows:

> The priceless customs and manners of our country are the fundamental reasons for this occurrence. These customs and manners are to be found throughout the land, but their heart lies with the emperor and the imperial household, through whose efforts they have been guided and fostered.[13]

In the following, fourth section of the essay, Benkyō came at last to a definition of imperial-way Buddhism:

> The reason that Buddhism was able to develop in Japan was completely due to the imperial household, especially to the fact that each of the successive emperors personally believed in and guided Buddhism so that it could accomplish its task. Although it is true that Japanese Buddhism has developed through the power of devotion of illustrious priests and lay persons, the fact that such persons were able to believe and practice their faith was due to the imperial household and emperors who fostered its development through the continual issuance of imperial edicts and their own personal example. This is something that cannot be seen in other countries. It is for this reason it ought to be called imperial-way Buddhism.[14]

For Benkyō the fundamental historical characteristic of Japanese Buddhism was its "nationalism" *(kokkateki)*. Since the emperor was the state, and Buddhism and the state were one, then the emperor and Buddhism were also one. Benkyō described the nature of the imperial household as follows:



> Within the imperial household lives the great life of the universe. Within this true life lives true [religious] faith, and within true faith is the power to detect the path of true faith. Those who truly seek righteousness will find righteousness. Within our imperial household can be found the truest of true righteousness which is itself the righteousness of the universe . . . which is the truth-seeking power of the universe. . . . Or said in a different way, if one seeks the location of this enduring imperial power, that is, the location of the spirit of Japan, it is found in the imperial household.[15]

Benkyō went on to explain that it was the imperial edicts which gave expression to true righteousness. The imperial edicts also gave expression to the spirit of Japan. He continued:

> Thus, the imperial edicts are the national polity. They are the life of the nation. If issued, these edicts must be revered. . . . In looking at the past we see that imperial edicts from successive emperors taught us the proper way to make offerings of even a single flower [to the Buddha], or offer even one stick of incense, or read the sutras with the correct pronunciation, or worship in the Buddha Hall. The power to select and protect each of the sects, to determine each and every temple observance—all have their roots in imperial edicts. Japanese Buddhism acts on the basis of imperial edicts. This is what distinguishes it from the Buddhism of foreign countries.[16]

Benkyō concluded his essay by describing what the true purpose of imperial-way Buddhism was. He did this by first noting that during the Meiji period there were a number of "august edicts" issued by the emperor. At that time, he noted: "The power of the people to revere these edicts without question was very strong."[17] The problem was that with the passing of Emperor Meiji there had been a gradual decrease in the people's ability to properly revere the edicts of the emperors who followed, especially those of the current emperor, Hirohito. The people had become "very lax" and "careless" in their attitudes.

Imperial-way Buddhism, then, was designed to address these alleged deficiencies in the national character:

> The Buddha Dharma is nothing other than modestly doing one's duty while upholding righteousness. This is the meaning of the

Buddha Dharma that successive emperors have taught. Seen in this light, it must be admitted that during the Taishō [1912–26] and Shōwa [1926–89] periods, the people have been careless in their unquestioning reverence of imperial edicts. This means that they have also been careless in their attitude toward the national polity. This is the reason that Japanese Buddhism must rise to the occasion.

When we think about this situation, we recognize that it was truly due to the power of the imperial household that Japanese Buddhism in the past was able to expand. Not only that, I believe that it will only be possible for Buddhism to accomplish its task in the future if we take the lead in obeying the will of the imperial household, thereby guarding and maintaining the prosperity of the imperial Throne evermore. To venerate the Three Treasures [of Buddhism] means to revere imperial edicts without question. This is the attitude we should have as we reflect deeply on the reality before us.[18]

In identifying veneration of the Three Treasures with unquestioning obedience to imperial edicts, Shiio's imperial-way Buddhism represents the most intimate connection of Buddhism and the imperial state conceivable.

*Nichiren Sect* Imperial-way Buddhism quickly evolved into a broad-based, pan-Buddhist movement. For example, in April 1938, only three months after the publication of *Nation-Protecting Buddhism,* a number of leading clerics in the Nichiren sect formed the "The Association for the Practice of Imperial-Way Buddhism" (Kōdō Bukkyō Gyōdō Kai). The association was led by the administrative head of the sect, Takasa Nichikō and claimed to have more than eighteen hundred members nationwide.[19]

The association's principles asserted that:

> Imperial-way Buddhism utilizes the exquisite truth of the Lotus Sutra to reveal the majestic essence of the national polity. Exalting the true spirit of Mahayana Buddhism is a teaching which reverently supports the emperor's work. This is what the great founder of our sect, Saint Nichiren, meant when he referred to the divine unity of Sovereign and Buddha. . . . That is to say, imperial-way Buddhism is the condensed expression of the divine unity of Sovereign and Buddha . . . put into contemporary language. For this reason the principle image of adoration in imperial-way Buddhism is not Buddha Shakyamuni who appeared in India, but his majesty, the emperor, whose lineage extends over ten thousand generations.[20]

*Shin Sect* While it took the Shin sect a little longer to formally join the imperial-way Buddhist movement, it did so as early as June 1942, when the Nishi Honganji branch distributed a pamphlet entitled "A Unitary View of the Debt of Gratitude [Owed to the Emperor]—The Essence of Imperial-Way Buddhism" *(On Ichigen Ron: Kōdō Bukkyō no Shinzui).* This pamphlet included the following:

> The Shin sect . . . takes the Law of the Sovereign as its basis, teaching to reverently and faithfully follow imperial commands without question. Therefore, should there be any who commit high treason, Amida would also exclude them from salvation. In the Shin sect there can be no teaching that does not advocate submission to the imperial national polity. That is to say, it is because one is anchored in Amida's salvation that it is possible to be a good imperial subject. Without question, it is the Shin sect that is in accord with the imperial national polity.[21]

In March of the following year, the Higashi Honganji branch also chose to participate in this movement. The occasion was the meeting of the branch's Twenty-Fourth General Assembly. The branch's organ, *Shinshū,* trumpeted the following headline about the assembly: "The Imperial Way Shin Sect Establishes the Path for Public Service."

For the Higashi Honganji branch, the term "imperial-way Shin sect" meant the absolute recognition of the power and authority of the emperor. It must be stressed, however, that there was nothing fundamentally new in this development. The contemporary Shin scholar, Daitō Satoshi, recognized this when he wrote:

> During the fifteen years of war [1931–45] the content, the actual activities of the sect, can be said to have been those of the "imperial-way Shin sect." In fact, to be precise, it can be said that the imperial-way Shin sect was only the completion of what had been passed down from the Meiji and Taishō periods.[22]

Daitō's remarks about the Shin sect can be said to apply to institutional Buddhism as a whole,

The conflict between Japan and China, the authors admitted, was one that had deep historical, even geographic, roots. It also involved the national characters of the two peoples. Fundamentally, however, it was a question of how Buddhism viewed war. The remaining ninety-six pages of their book were devoted to answering this question.

They began by pointing out that Buddhism saw war as being neither inherently good nor bad. This was because according to the Buddhist world view there is nothing, including war, which has its own "self-nature" *(jisshō)*. This lead them to the following conclusion:

> The reason that Buddhism hasn't determined war to be either good or bad is that it doesn't look at the question of war itself but rather to the question of the war's purpose. Thus, if the war has a good purpose it is good, while if it has a bad purpose it is bad. Buddhism doesn't merely approve of wars that are in accord with its values; it vigorously supports such wars to the point of being a war enthusiast.[27]

Having established that war is neither intrinsically good nor evil, the authors went on to develop one of the central themes of their book, that war was a method of accomplishing Buddhist goals. Thus they wrote that "Buddhist war is always war used as a means toward an end. The end is to save sentient beings and guide them properly."[28]

The role of "saving and the guiding" falls to the long-term "protector" of Buddhism in Japan, the emperor. In fact, the authors wrote that the emperor of Japan was actually a "Golden Wheel–Turning Sacred King" *(konrin jōō)*, one of the four manifestations of the ideal Buddhist monarch or *cakravartin-raja*. "The reason Japanese Buddhism regards the emperor as a Golden Wheel–Turning Sacred King" they wrote, "is because he is the Tathagata [fully enlightened being] of the secular world."[29]

One of the characteristics of a Golden Wheel–Turning Sacred King is that due to a "lack of wisdom of his subjects" he is unable to rule by his virtue alone and must resort to such things as laws, taxes, and, significantly, weapons. The same holds true for his relationships with other countries. When "injustice" and "lawlessness" abound in these countries, he must "grasp the weapons of force."[30]

When the Golden Wheel–Turning Sacred King wields force, however, it is not the force of hatred and anger. Rather, it is the force of compassion, the same force that parents use when, out of love, they strike their children. That is to say, it is a compassionate act designed to "perfect their children's character and bring them happiness."[31]

The authors did admit that when the Golden Wheel–Turning Sacred King actually employs force it may not appear to be an act of compassion. Nevertheless, because a war conducted by a Golden Wheel–Turning Sacred King is for the purpose of achieving Buddhism's goals, "it can be seen that, from a Buddhist viewpoint, it is working as a force to promote the advancement of society."[32]

Concluding their discussion of the emperor as an ideal Buddhist monarch, the authors argued that Buddhism's protection of life does not mean that life is protected for its own sake. Rather, it is protected merely as one aspect of compassion. Therefore Buddhism does not reject the killing of masses of people that takes place in war, for it sees such warfare as an inevitable part of creating an ever stronger and more sublime compassion.

The theme of war as an act of compassion was a central theme in both *The Buddhist View of War* and the statements of the Myōwa Kai, but it is described in much greater detail in the book. Hayashiya and Shimakage pointed out, first of all, that the critical aspect of a Buddhist-sanctioned war is that "it gives life to the state."[33] While admitting that wars are costly in terms of both money and lives, "the most important question is the clear, steadfast continued existence of the state itself."[34]

When war was necessary to give life to the state, then "the best war possible should be fought without hesitation."[35] In this situation, individual citizens have to recognize that they are "of one body and mind with the state," admitting that "they cannot exist without the state."[36] While it may be true that war destroys individual lives, it is not, the authors claimed, that it offers no good to individuals. This is because Buddhist-sanctioned wars are not aimed solely at the perfection of the state but at the perfection of individuals as well. In fact, "if individuals were perfected, wars would not occur."[37]

The authors saw in these exchanges an indication of the difference between Chinese and Japanese Buddhists. This difference was described as follows:

> In general it can be said that Chinese Buddhists believe that war should absolutely be avoided no matter what the reason. Japanese Buddhists, on the other hand, believe that war conducted for a [good] reason is in accord with the great benevolence and compassion of Buddhism.[26]

CHAPTER TEN:

# The Postwar Zen Responses to Imperial-Way Buddhism, Imperial-State Zen, and Soldier Zen

Japan's surrender on August 15, 1945, marked the end of imperial-way Buddhism, imperial-state Zen, and soldier Zen. In the wake of Japan's defeat and the Allied Occupation, the sects of institutional Buddhism quickly changed aspects of their daily liturgies to reflect the demise of these movements. Buddhist leaders were faced with the question of how to explain their wartime conduct. Had their actions been a legitimate expression of Buddha Dharma or a betrayal of it?

## D. T. Suzuki's Response

D. T. Suzuki was probably the first Buddhist leader in the postwar period to address the moral questions related to Buddhist war support. He first broached the topic of Buddhist war responsibility in October 1945, in a new preface for a reprint of *Japanese Spirituality (Nihonteki Reisei)*, originally published in 1944. He began by assigning to Shinto the blame for providing the "conceptual background" to Japanese militarism, imperialism, and totalitarianism. He then went on to discuss the Buddhist role as follows:

> It is strange how Buddhists neither penetrated the fundamental meaning of Buddhism nor included a global vision in their mission. Instead, they diligently practiced the art of self-preservation through their narrow-minded focus on "pacifying and preserving the state." Receiving the protection of the politically powerful

figures of the day, Buddhism combined with the state, thinking that its ultimate goal was to subsist within this island nation of Japan.

As militarism became fashionable in recent years, Buddhism put itself in step with it, constantly endeavouring not to offend the powerful figures of the day. Out of this was born such things as totalitarianism, references to [Shinto] mythology, "imperial-way Buddhism," and so forth. As a result, Buddhists forgot to include either a global vision or concern for the masses within the duties they performed. In addition, they neglected to awake within the Japanese religious consciousness the philosophical and religious elements, and the spiritual awakening, that are an intrinsic part of Buddhism.

Although it may be said that Buddhism became "more Japanese" as a result of the above, the price was a retrogression in terms of Japanese spirituality itself. That is to say, the opportunity was lost to develop a world vision within Japanese spirituality that was sufficiently extensive or comprehensive.[1]

Suzuki also attached a large portion of the blame for the militarization of Zen to both Zen priests and the Zen establishment. In an article written in 1946 for the magazine *Zengaku Kenkyū* entitled "Renewal of the Zen World" *(Zenkai Sasshin),* Suzuki called for a "renewal" of Japanese Zen: "Generally speaking, present-day Zen priests have no knowledge or learning and therefore are unable to think about things independently or formulate their own independent opinions. This is a great failing of Zen priests."[2] One result of this "great failing" had been Zen's collaboration with the war, including mouthing government propaganda during wartime and then suddenly embracing world peace and democracy in the postwar era. As far as Suzuki was concerned, "it would be justifiable for priests like these to be considered war criminals."[3]

Interestingly, Suzuki did not deny that the Zen priests he criticized were enlightened, but rather that being enlightened was no longer sufficient for Zen priests:

> With *satori* [enlightenment] alone, it is impossible [for Zen priests] to shoulder their responsibilities as leaders of society. Not only is it impossible, but it is conceited of them to imagine they could do so. . . . In *satori* there is a world of *satori.* However, by itself *satori* is unable to judge the right and wrong of war. With regard to disputes in the ordinary world, it is necessary to employ intellectual discrimination. . . . Furthermore, *satori* by itself cannot determine whether something like communism's economic system is good or bad.[4]

One reason Suzuki gave for this regrettable state of affairs was that Zen had developed under the "oppression" of a feudal society and had been forced to utilize that oppression in order to advance its own interests. It is only human nature, Suzuki pointed out, "to lick the hand that feeds you."[5] In addition, Japanese Zen priests had failed to realize that a world existed outside of their own country. Suzuki concluded his article as follows:

> In any event, today's Zen priests lack "intellectuality" *(J. chisei).* . . . I wish to foster in Zen priests the power to increasingly think about things independently. A *satori* which lacks this element should be taken to the middle of the Pacific Ocean and sent straight to the bottom! If there are those who say this can't be done, those persons should confess and repent all of the ignorant and uncritical words they and others spoke during the war in their temples and other public places.[6]

In all the passages above Suzuki seems to except himself from the need to confess or repent, but in the preface to *Japanese Spirituality,* he alludes obliquely to his own responsibility: "I believe that a major reason for Japan's collapse was truly because each one of us lacked an awareness of Japanese spirituality."[7] If Suzuki accepts any personal responsibility for Japan's collapse, it is responsibility shared equally with each and every Japanese.

Suzuki apparently regarded his active promotion of the unity of Zen and the sword, the unity of Zen and Bushido, as having had no connection to Japan's militarism, and he had very little to say about the possibility that any of his wartime writings may have influenced the course of events. He did, however, refer rather mysteriously to a deficiency in *Japanese Spirituality:* "This work was written before Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allies. I was therefore unable to give clear expression to the meaning of Japanese spirituality."[8] Is Suzuki suggesting that he distorted or censored his own writings in order to publish them under Japan's military government? Apparently not, since later in the same preface he explains the lack of clarity was due to the book's "academic nature," coupled with its "extremely unorganized structure."

Japan must evaluate more calmly and accurately the awesome reality of America's industrial productivity. Present-day wars will no longer be determined as in the past by military strategy and tactics, courage and fearlessness alone. This is because of the large role now played by production capacity and mechanical power.[15]

Some observers, including Suzuki's former student Hidaka Daishirō, who recorded these remarks, interpret them as "antiwar" statements. Another way to view them is as simple common sense, without any moral or political intent: Don't pick a fight with someone you can't beat! Suzuki did not continue to make such statements of common sense after Pearl Harbor, when Japan had already engaged the United States in combat. Much more important, however, is the fact that he never criticized Japan's long-standing aggression against the peoples of Asia. Suzuki thought that punishing the "unruly heathens" was all right as long as Japan was strong enough to do so.

## Declarations of War Responsibility by Japanese Buddhist Sects

In the postwar years there have only been four declarations addressing war responsibility or complicity by the leaders of traditional Buddhist sects in Japan's war effort. None of these statements was issued until more than forty years after the end of the war. By comparison, Japan's largest Protestant organization first issued a statement, "A Confession of Responsibility During World War II by the United Church of Christ in Japan," in 1967, twenty years before any Buddhists spoke up—though even that statement was more than a generation in the making. Most leading Japanese Buddhist sects remain silent to this day. None of the branches of the Rinzai Zen sect, for example, has formally addressed this crucial issue, which institutional Japanese Buddhism is only beginning to face.

The first of the four Buddhist sects to make an admission of war responsibility was the Higashi Honganji branch of the Shin sect in 1987. Koga Seiji, administrative head of the branch, read the statement aloud as part of a "Memorial Service for All War Victims" held on April 2, 1987. It read in part:

> As we recall the war years, it was our sect that called the war a "sacred war." It was we who said, "The heroic spirits [of the war dead] who have been enshrined in [Shinto's] Yasukuni Shrine have served in the great undertaking of guarding and maintaining the prosperity of the imperial throne. They should therefore to be revered for having done the great work of a bodhisattva." This was an expression of deep ignorance and shamelessness on our part. When recalling this now, we are attacked by a sense of shame from which there is no escape. . . .
>
> Calling that war a sacred war was a double lie. Those who participate in war are both victims and victimizers. In light of the great sin we have committed, we must not pass it by as being nothing more than a mistake. The sect declared that we should revere things that were never taught by Saint [Shinran]. When we who are priests think about this sin, we can only hang our heads in silence before all who are gathered here.[16]

The Nishi Honganji branch followed suit four years later, in 1991. The following statement was issued by the administrative assembly of the Nishi Honganji branch on February 27, 1991. It was entitled "The Resolution to Make Our Sect's Strong Desire for Peace Known to All in Japan and the World." The central focus of this declaration, however, was the Gulf War coupled with the question of nuclear warfare mentioned in the second and third paragraphs. The sect's own wartime role did not rate mention until the fourth paragraph:

> Although there was pressure exerted on us by the military-controlled state, we must be deeply penitent before the Buddhas and patriarchs, for we ended up cooperating with the war and losing sight of the true nature of this sect. This can also be seen in the doctrinal sphere, where the [sect's] teaching of the existence of relative truth and absolute truth was put to cunning use.[17]

In 1992 the Sōtō sect published a "Statement of Repentance" *(sanshabun)* apologizing for its wartime role. If the Rinzai Zen sect has been unwilling to face its past, it cannot be claimed that the postwar leadership of the Sōtō Zen sect was any more anxious to do so. Yet, a series of allegations concerning human rights abuses by this sect had the cumulative effect of forcing it to do so in spite of its reluctance. Unquestionably, the single most important event in this series of allegations was the sect headquarters' publication in 1980 of *The History of the Sōtō Sect's Overseas Evangelization and Missionary Work (Sōtō Shū Kaigai Kaikyō Dendō Shi).*

In the January 1993 issue of *Sōtō Shūhō,* the sect's administrative headquarters announced that it was recalling all copies of the publication:

> The content of this book consists of the history of the overseas missionary work undertaken by this sect since the Meiji period, based on reports made by the persons involved. However, upon investigation, it was discovered that this book contained many accounts that were based on discriminatory ideas. There were, for example, words which discriminated against peoples of various nationalities. Furthermore, there were places that were filled with uncritical adulation for militarism and the policy to turn [occupied peoples] into loyal imperial subjects.[18]

Immediately following the above announcement was the Statement of Repentance issued by the administrative head of the sect, Ōtake Myōgen. The statement contained a passage which clearly shows how the preceding work served as a catalyst for what amounted to the sect's condemnation of its wartime role. The statement's highlights are as follows:

> We, the Sōtō sect, have since the Meiji period and through to the end of the Pacific War, utilized the good name of overseas evangelization to violate the human rights of the peoples of Asia, especially those in East Asia. This was done by making common cause with, and sharing in, the sinister designs of those who then held political power to rule Asia. Furthermore, within the social climate of ceasing to be Asian and becoming Western, we despised the peoples of Asia and their cultures, forcing Japanese culture on them and taking actions which caused them to lose their national pride and dignity. This was all done out of a belief in the superiority of Japanese Buddhism and our national polity. Not only that, but these actions, which violated the teachings of Buddhism, were done in the name of Buddha Shakyamuni and the successive patriarchs in India, China, and Japan who transmitted the Dharma. There is nothing to be said about these actions other than that they were truly shameful.
>
> We forthrightly confess the serious mistakes we committed in the past history of our overseas missionary work, and we wish to deeply apologize and express our repentance to the peoples of Asia and the world.



> Moreover, these actions are not merely the responsibility of those people who were directly involved in overseas missionary work. Needless to say, the responsibility of the entire sect must be questioned inasmuch as we applauded Japan's overseas aggression and attempted to justify it.
>
> To make matters worse, the Sōtō sect's publication in 1980 of the *History of the Sōtō Sect's Overseas Evangelization and Missionary Work* was done without reflection on these past mistakes. This meant that within the body of the work there were not only positive evaluations of these past errors, but even expressions which attempted to glorify and extol what had been done. In doing this, there was a complete lack of concern for the pain of the peoples of Asia who suffered as a result. The publication involved claimed to be a work of history but was written from a viewpoint which affirmed an imperial view of history, recalling the ghosts of the past and the disgrace of Japan's modern history.
>
> We are ashamed to have published such a work and cannot escape a deeply guilty conscience in that this work was published some thirty-five years after the end of the Pacific War. The reason for this is that since the Meiji period our sect has cooperated in waging war, sometimes having been flattered into making common cause with the state, and other times rushing on its own to support state policies. Beyond that, we have never reflected on the great misery that was forced upon the peoples of Asia nor felt a sense of responsibility for what happened.
>
> The historian E. H. Carr has said: "History is an endless conversation between the past and the present." Regretfully, our sect has failed to engage in that conversation, with the result that we have arrived at today without questioning the meaning of the past for the present, or verifying our own standpoint in the light of past history. We neglected to self-critically examine our own war responsibility as we should have done immediately after having lost the war in 1945.
>
> Although the Sōtō sect cannot escape the feeling of being too late, we wish to apologize once again for our negligence and, at the same time, apologize for our cooperation with the war. . . . We recognize that Buddhism teaches that all human beings are equal as children of the Buddha. And further, that they are living beings with a dignity that must not, for any reason whatsoever, be impaired by others. Nevertheless, our sect, which is grounded in the belief of

the transference of Shakyamuni's Dharma from master to disciple, both supported and eagerly sought to cooperate with a war of aggression against other peoples of Asia, calling it a holy war.

Especially in Korea and the Korean peninsula, Japan first committed the outrage of assassinating the Korean Queen [in 1895], then forced the Korea of the Lee Dynasty into dependency status [in 1904–5], and finally, through the annexation of Korea [in 1910], obliterated a people and a nation. Our sect acted as an advance guard in this, contriving to assimilate the Korean people into this country, and promoting the policy of turning Koreans into loyal imperial subjects.

All human beings seek a sense of belonging. People feel secure when they have a guarantee of their identity deriving from their own family, language, nationality, state, land, culture, religious belief, and so forth. Having an identity guarantees the dignity of human beings. However, the policy to create loyal imperial subjects deprived the Korean people of their nation, their language, and, by forcing them to adopt Japanese family and personal names, the very heart of their national culture. The Sōtō sect, together with Japanese religion in general, took upon itself the role of justifying these barbaric acts in the name of religion.

In China and other countries, our sect took charge of pacification activities directed towards the peoples who were the victims of our aggression. There were even some priests who took the lead in making contact with the secret police and conducting spying operations on their behalf.

We committed mistakes on two levels. First, we subordinated Buddhist teachings to worldly teachings in the form of national policies. Then we proceeded to take away the dignity and identity of other peoples. We solemnly promise that we will never make these mistakes again. . . .

Furthermore, we deeply apologize to the peoples of Asia who suffered under the past political domination of Japan. We sincerely apologize that in its overseas evangelism and missionary work the Sōtō sect made common cause with those in power and stood on the side of the aggressors.[19]

Of all the Japanese Buddhist sects to date, the Sōtō sect's statement of apology is certainly the most comprehensive. Yet, it almost totally ignores the



question of the doctrinal and historical relationship between Buddhism and the state, let alone between Buddhism and the emperor. Is, for example, "nation-protecting Buddhism" an intrinsic part of Buddhism or merely a historical accretion? Similarly, is the vaunted unity between Zen and the sword an orthodox or heretical doctrine? Is there such a thing as a physical "life-giving sword" or is it no more than a Zen metaphor that Suzuki and others have terribly misused?

The most recent statement by a Japanese Buddhist sect concerning its wartime role was issued on June 8, 1994 by the Jimon branch of the Tendai sect, the smallest of that sect's three branches. Its admission of war responsibility amounted to one short phrase contained in "An Appeal for the Extinction of Nuclear [Weapons]." It read: "Having reached the fiftieth anniversary of the deaths of the atomic bomb victims, we repent of our past cooperation and support for [Japan's] war of aggression."[20]

In spite of the positive good that has issued from the Sōtō sect's statement of apology, including the posthumous reinstatement of the priestly status of Uchiyama Gudō in 1983, Zen scholars such as Ichikawa Hakugen make it clear that the rationale for Zen's support of state-sponsored warfare in general, and Japanese militarism in particular, is far more deeply entrenched in Zen and Buddhist doctrine and historical practice, especially in its Mahayana form, than any Japanese Buddhist sect has yet to publicly admit.

## Ichikawa Hakugen and Other Commentators

Far more has been written on the relationship of the Zen school to war than on any other school or sect of Japanese Buddhism. This is due to the voluminous writings of one man, the late Zen scholar and former Rinzai Zen priest, Ichikawa Hakugen (1902–86). In the postwar years he almost singlehandedly brought this topic before the public and made it into an area of scholarly research. His writing, in turn, has sparked further investigation of this issue within other sects as well.

Before examing Ichikawa's writings, however, it would be helpful to look at comments made by other Zen adherents to get some idea of the overall tenor of the discussion and to bring the breadth and depth of Ichikawa's contribution into clearer focus. Several Zen scholars after Ichikawa continued to pursue this theme, coming to some remarkable conclusions, and a review of their writings closes out this chapter.

*Yanagida Seizan* Yanagida Seizan (b. 1922) started life as the son of a Rinzai Zen priest in a small village temple in Shiga Prefecture. As an adult he became the director of the Institute for Humanistic Studies at Kyoto University. Following retirement, he founded and became the first director of the International Research Institute for Zen Buddhism located at Hanazono University. In 1989 he presented a series of lectures on Zen at both Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley.

In 1990 Seizan published a book entitled *Zen from the Future (Mirai kara no Zen)*. This book, containing a number of lectures he had presented in the United States, included material that was both personal and confessional in nature, making it relatively unusual among Zen scholarship. In the book Seizan speaks of his experience as a young Rinzai Zen priest during and immediately after the war:

> When as a child I began to become aware of what was going on around me, the Japanese were fighting neighboring China. Then the war expanded to the Pacific region, and finally Japan was fighting the rest of the world. When Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945, I had experienced two major wars. As someone who was brought up while these wars were expanding, I did not have the luxury of thinking deeply about the relationship between the state as a sovereign power engaged in war and Zen Buddhism. No doubt this was largely due to the fact that I had neither the opportunity to go to the battlefield nor directly engage in battle. Furthermore, having been brought up in a remote Zen temple, I was completely ignorant of what was happening in the world. In the last phase of World War II, I was training as a Zen monk at Eigenji, proud of being away from the secular world and convinced that my total devotion to Zen practice would serve the state.
>
> At any rate, with Japan's defeat I became aware of my own stupidity for the first time, with the result that I developed a deep sense of self-loathing. From 1945 to 1950 I did not see any point to human life, and I was both mentally and physically in a state of collapse. I had lost many of my friends; I alone had been left behind. We had fought continuously against China, the home country of Zen. We had believed, without harboring the slightest doubt, that it was a just war. In a state of inexpressible remorse, I could find rest neither physically nor mentally, and day after day I was deeply disturbed, not knowing what to do.
>
> There is no need to say how complete is the contradiction between the Buddhist precepts and war. Yet, what could I, as a Buddhist, do for the millions upon millions of my fellow human beings who had lost their lives in the war? At that time, it dawned on me for the first time that I had believed that to kill oneself on the state's behalf is the teaching of Zen. What a fanatical idea!
>
> All of Japan's Buddhist sects—which had not only contributed to the war effort but had been one heart and soul in propagating the war in their teachings—flipped around as smoothly as one turns one's hand and proceeded to ring the bells of peace. The leaders of Japan's Buddhist sects had been among the leaders of the country who had egged us on by uttering big words about the righteousness [of the war]. Now, however, these same leaders acted shamelessly, thinking nothing of it. Since Japan had turned itself into a civilized [i.e., democratic] nation overnight, their actions may have been unavoidable. Still, I found it increasingly difficult to find peace within myself. I am not talking about what others should or should not have done. My own actions had been unpardonable, and I repeatedly thought of committing suicide.[21]

Seizan did not, of course, commit suicide, but it is bracing to meet a Japanese Buddhist who was so moved by his earlier support for the war that he entertained the idea of killing himself. The irony is that by comparison with the numerous Zen and other Buddhist leaders we have heard from so far, Seizan bore very little responsibility for what had happened. Yet in the idealism of youth he felt obliged to take the sins of his elders on his own shoulders. He neither sought to ignore what had happened nor place the blame on anyone else.

Seizan's disdain for the way in which the previously prowar leaders of the various sects had so abruptly abandoned their war cries and become "peacemakers," coupled with his overall dissatisfaction with Rinzai Zen war collaboration, led him to stop wearing his robes in 1955:

> I recognized that the Rinzai sect lacked the ability to accept its [war] responsibility. There was no hope that the sect could in any meaningful way repent of its war cooperation. . . . Therefore, instead of demanding the Rinzai sect do something it couldn't do, I decided that I should stop being a priest and leave the sect. . . . As far as I'm concerned, [Zen] robes are a symbol of war responsibility. It was those robes that affirmed the war. I never intend to wear them again."[22]

Seizan's return to lay life did not, however, signal a lessening of his interest in Zen, for he became one of Japan's preeminent contemporary scholars of Buddhism, earning an international reputation for his research into the early development of Chinese Zen, or Chan Buddhism.

Motivated by his awareness of his wartime complicity, Hakugen tenaciously uncovered layer after layer of factors that had facilitated or caused Buddhism, and Zen in particular, to unite with militarism. Nowhere is this clearer than in his examination of the historical character of Japanese Buddhism that was included in his book *The War Responsibility of Buddhists.* Hakugen outlined twelve historical characteristics which, developing over the centuries, produced in Japanese Buddhism a receptiveness to authoritarianism.[53]

The first of these characteristics was the subservience of Buddhism to the state. Hakugen pointed out that there were a number of Mahayana sutras originating in India that emphasized the role of Buddhism as "protector of the state." These sutras had been particularly welcomed in Japan, where this aspect of Buddhism became even more pronounced. During the Edo period Buddhism came under complete government control and, mixed together with Shinto, evolved into what was essentially a state religion.

As a state religion, Buddhism became a mere shell of its former self. Its attention was now focused on ancestor veneration in the form of funerals and memorial services, making it a religion with a limited social nexus, the extended family. It was antagonistic to Christianity because of the latter's transnational and modern character. Furthermore, the Meiji government's opposition to Christianity and socialism only reinforced Buddhism's opposition to those movements. Buddhism sought to protect itself by ever greater subservience to the state, including opposition to any group or movement that threatened nationalism based on the emperor system and military expansionism.

Hakugen's second characteristic concerned Buddhist views on humanity and society. On the one hand, Buddhism emphasizes the equality of human beings based on their possession of a Buddha nature, the innate potential to realize Buddhahood. On the other hand, the doctrine of karma, with its corollary belief in good and bad karmic retribution, tends to serve as a kind of moral justification for social inequality. Differences in social



status, wealth, and happiness are seen as just rewards for good or bad conduct both in this and previous lives, having nothing to do with the political or social structure of society.

Understood in this light, social inequality is not only just, but represents true equality. It is, furthermore, only natural for Buddhism to protect a society with clear differences in social status since such a society facilitates the working out of past karma. Socialism, on the other hand, advocates the purposeful leveling of these social differences, thus becoming the proponent of "evil equality." As such, it must be rejected.

The third characteristic was concerned with the question of social morality, the encouragement of good and the punishment of evil. In this context Hakugen discussed one of Japan's oldest quasi-legal documents, the Seventeen Article Constitution of Prince Regent Shōtoku, allegedly promulgated in 604. This Constitution contained the following warning: "If you receive an imperial command, it must be obeyed without fail. The sovereign is heaven, and imperial subjects are the earth. . . . Should the earth seek to overthrow heaven, there will only be destruction."

Hakugen maintained that as a semistate religion from this period onwards, Buddhism sought to protect not only the state but its hierarchical social structure as well. On the basis of having completely internalized this essentially Confucian logic over the centuries, Buddhism readily became a faithful servant of the Meiji government's conservative social policies, working to create the ideal imperial subject.

The fourth characteristic concerned both human rights and justice. Hakugen first introduced the Buddhist doctrine of dependent co-arising or causality, explaining that all phenomena are regarded as being in a constant state of flux, born and dying without any permanent substance to them, empty. When this doctrine is applied to the self, it produces the concept of egolessness or no-self, leaving no room for the independence of the individual.

According to Hakugen, this doctrine prevented the development of the Western principle of Natural Law within Buddhism, leaving the modern concepts of human rights and justice without a foundation. In the Seventeen Article Constitution, there is an admonition to "turn one's back on self-interest and embrace the public good." Hakugen believed there existed a direct connection between this and the wartime slogan "exterminate the self and serve the public" *(messhi hōkō).* The "public" referred to, he maintained, was none other than the state and the emperor. Thus, "The teaching of 'no-self' became both a theory and ethic serving mikado imperialism."[54]

status, wealth, and happiness are seen as just rewards for good or bad conduct both in this and previous lives, having nothing to do with the political or social structure of society.

Understood in this light, social inequality is not only just, but represents true equality. It is, furthermore, only natural for Buddhism to protect a society with clear differences in social status since such a society facilitates the working out of past karma. Socialism, on the other hand, advocates the purposeful leveling of these social differences, thus becoming the proponent of "evil equality." As such, it must be rejected.

The third characteristic was concerned with the question of social morality, the encouragement of good and the punishment of evil. In this context Hakugen discussed one of Japan's oldest quasi-legal documents, the Seventeen Article Constitution of Prince Regent Shōtoku, allegedly promulgated in 604. This Constitution contained the following warning: "If you receive an imperial command, it must be obeyed without fail. The sovereign is heaven, and imperial subjects are the earth. . . . Should the earth seek to overthrow heaven, there will only be destruction."

Hakugen maintained that as a semistate religion from this period onwards, Buddhism sought to protect not only the state but its hierarchical social structure as well. On the basis of having completely internalized this essentially Confucian logic over the centuries, Buddhism readily became a faithful servant of the Meiji government's conservative social policies, working to create the ideal imperial subject.

The fourth characteristic concerned both human rights and justice. Hakugen first introduced the Buddhist doctrine of dependent co-arising or causality, explaining that all phenomena are regarded as being in a constant state of flux, born and dying without any permanent substance to them, empty. When this doctrine is applied to the self, it produces the concept of egolessness or no-self, leaving no room for the independence of the individual.

According to Hakugen, this doctrine prevented the development of the Western principle of Natural Law within Buddhism, leaving the modern concepts of human rights and justice without a foundation. In the Seventeen Article Constitution, there is an admonition to "turn one's back on self-interest and embrace the public good." Hakugen believed there existed a direct connection between this and the wartime slogan "exterminate the self and serve the public" *(messhi hōkō)*. The "public" referred to, he maintained, was none other than the state and the emperor. Thus, "The teaching of 'no-self' became both a theory and ethic serving mikado imperialism."[54]



The lack of Buddhist dogma was the fifth characteristic Hakugen identified. Lacking a transcendent, personal God who had to be worshiped and defended, Buddhism failed to establish the type of compelling basic dogma a believer would fight to preserve. In Japan, this resulted in the neglect of both discursive thought and logical theory. Instead, Buddhism concentrated on the inner self, giving the central role to the individual's subjective feelings. There was little concern for the results of external actions.

The sixth characteristic was the concept of *on*. Forming the heart of Mahayana Buddhist ethics, *on* is the teaching that a debt of gratitude is owed to those from whom favors are received. Traditionally, *on* was owed to four classes or types of individuals: (1) one's parents; (2) the ruler; (3) all sentient beings; and (4) either heaven and earth, or the Three Treasures of Buddhism, the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Hakugen argued that in Japan the debt of gratitude owed one's parents had converged with that owed one's sovereign, the emperor, who assumed the role of the head of the entire Japanese family. This produced a corresponding weakening of the sense of universal indebtedness to all sentient beings.

The Buddhist belief in the mutual interdependence of all things was the seventh characteristic. Hakugen stated that this belief led in modern Japan to an organic view of the state coupled with a feeling of intimacy towards it. Encompassed within this viewpoint was the recognition of the preeminence of the state, with the individual being no more than a constituent element. In similar fashion, it meant that capitalists, too, were preeminent, with workers being subsumed beneath them in an extended family system that emphasized harmony and cooperation.

Hakugen's eighth characteristic focused on the doctrine of the Middle Way. He maintained that the Middle Way doctrine of early Buddhism in India had become the operating principle for social development in modern Japanese Buddhism. This did not manifest itself as some type of compromise between extreme left-wing and right-wing political ideology. Instead, it took the form of a constant search for compromise with the aim of avoiding confrontation before it occurred. This lead to an unwillingness to take clearcut positions on social issues as well as very hazy ideas about social reform.

The ninth characteristic centered on the tradition of ancestor veneration. As "nation-protecting Buddhism" assimilated itself to Japan, it promoted the customs and virtues of ancestor veneration. The entire nation came to be regarded as one large family in which loyalty between subject and sovereign was the chief virtue. This logic was extended and employed

as a support mechanism for the sacred war as voiced by the wartime slogan "the whole world under one roof" *[hakkō ichiu]*.

The tenth characteristic was the idea of "aging." The Middle Ages in Japan gave rise to a culture in which old and mature things were valued. Out of this came such aesthetic concepts as *wabi* (rustic antiqueness) and *sabi* (ancient solitariness). According to this way of thinking, society was based on a set of ancient and immutable laws, especially as regarded its hierarchical structure. To challenge those laws and to suggest new social structures was seen as the act of an immature person who had not fully grasped the laws. The mature person, in contrast, would dismiss proposals for social change, especially those threatening the existing social order, while remaining accepting, obedient, and uncritical of the status quo.

The eleventh characteristic involved Buddhism's emphasis on inner peace rather than justice. Lacking a God as the author of transcendental principles, Buddhism was not compelled to build a Kingdom of God based on justice here on earth. Furthermore, because Buddhism is a religion based on the idea of the emptiness of things, it had almost no basis for maintaining an antagonistic attitude towards State Shinto. Buddhism's focus on the inner peace of the individual also contributed to its failure to encourage and justify the will to reorganize society.

Hakugen's twelfth and final characteristic concerned the Buddhist logic of *soku*, a copula that means "just as it is" and is related to the Buddhist concepts of suchness and nonduality. Ichikawa contended that the logic of *soku*, appearing as it does throughout Buddhist thought, leads to a static, aesthetic perspective, a detached, subjective harmony with things. In Hakugen's view, Japanese Buddhism lacks a dynamic theoretical basis for either confronting reality or promoting social change.

Each one of the twelve characteristics identified by Hakugen is, certainly, open to debate. Nevertheless, his critique strongly suggests that the issue of Buddhism's collaboration with Japanese militarism is one with very deep roots in Buddhist history and doctrine, by no means limited to Japan alone. For this insight, and much more, future students of this topic will remain indebted to this pioneering scholar.

*Hakamaya and Matsumoto* The Sōtō Zen sect has made a beginning in addressing some of the many issues involved in the modern historical relationship between the sect and the Japanese state and militarism. This work continues even now through the ongoing research and writings of such contemporary Sōtō Zen scholars at Komazawa University as Hakamaya Noriaki (b. 1943) and Matsumoto Shirō (b. 1950). Both of these scholars, like Ichikawa Hakugen before them, have undertaken an in-depth look at some of the doctrinal underpinnings of Zen which facilitated, if not prompted, its support for Japanese militarism. They have reached some surprising and radical conclusions.

Matsumoto discusses the relationship of patriotism to Buddhism:

> I believe that to love Japan is to love one's self. To me "Japan" is an extension of my own mind and body. As I love my own body, so I love Japan. Self-love, or narcissism, is very enticing and sweet. . . . However, love is something which should be directed to others; if it is directed at one's self, it becomes self-attachment.
>
> On the basis of the Buddhist teaching of no-self, I have come to the following conclusions: (1) one should disdain oneself; and (2) one should love only the absolute other (God or Buddha). Therefore, as a Buddhist, based on the teaching of no-self, I must not love Japan, since it is an extension of my self.
>
> Even if I believe I should not love myself, it is certainly true that I am always loving myself; even if I believe I should not love Japan, I cannot avoid loving Japan. However, the teaching of the Buddha is absolute. . . . A Buddhist must not love Japan [i.e. one's own country].[55]

Hakamaya's conclusions are no less dramatic. In his 1990 book *Critical Buddhism (Hihan Bukkyō)*, Hakamaya echoed Ichikawa Hakugen's earlier critique of the Buddhist concept of "harmony" *(wa)*:

> True Buddhists must, having disavowed the Law of the Sovereign, believe in the Law of the Buddha. They must draw a sharp distinction between Buddhist teachings and anti-Buddhist teachings, using both intellect and language to denounce the latter. . . .
>
> In the present age dominated by a harmony which is ever ready to compromise, to be opposed to war means to reject harmony.[56]

Hakamaya also directed his attention to those Sōtō Zen masters who supported Japan's war effort. He had the following to say about Sawaki Kōdō, whose wartime writings have been previously introduced:

> When one becomes aware of Sawaki Kōdō's [wartime] call to "Invoke the power of the emperor; invoke the power of the military

banner," it is enough to send shivers down one's spine.... Not only was Sawaki not a Buddhist, but he took up arms against [Sōtō Zen Master] Dōgen himself....[57]

This is very strong criticism coming from a Sōto Zen–affiliated scholar, for even today that sect continues, on the whole, to regard Kōdō as one of its great scholar-priests of this century. But Hakamaya is driven by the belief that Buddhists "must draw a sharp distinction between Buddhist and anti-Buddhist teachings."

Even more surprising, Hakamaya and Matsumoto are ready and willing to subject traditional, nearly sacrosanct Zen doctrines to the test of Buddhist versus anti-Buddhist teachings. Nowhere is this better seen than in Hakamaya's assertion that the doctrine of the original or inherent enlightenment of all sentient beings, which forms a crucial part of East Asian Buddhism in general and Zen in particular, is not a Buddhist concept at all. It is this assertion that serves as the basis of his attack on harmony, claiming that it, too, is "not Buddhism."[58]

Hakamaya's basic position is that the doctrine that all beings are inherently, therefore originally enlightened *(hongaku shisō)*, violates the fundamental Buddhist teaching of causality, the twelvefold chain of dependent arising said to have been discovered by Buddha Shakyamuni through his enlightenment experience. Hakamaya sees the doctrine of original enlightenment as affirming an eternal, substantial, underlying essence, often referred to as Buddha nature, on which everything else in the phenomenal world depends or arises from. The teaching of causality, on the other hand, describes a temporal sequence from cause to effect, and is predicated on the logic that if B exists, then A has existed; if A does not exist, then B will not exist. In other words, each precondition is dependent on the one before it, with a total of twelve preconditions linked together and forming an indivisible circle, typically represented in Buddhist art as the Wheel of Life. In this scheme, there is no place for an unchanging substratum such as original enlightenment beneath or behind the phenomenal world.

For a similar reason both Hakamaya and Matsumoto criticize the doctrine of *tathagatagarbha (J. nyoraizō)*, a second foundation of East Asian Buddhism. Unlike original enlightenment, which lacks a Sanskrit equivalent and may well be a later Chinese creation, the latter doctrine is a clear if relatively minor part of the Indian Mahayana tradition.[59] In this compound term, *tathagata* denotes the Eternal Buddha and therefore can also be translated as "suchness," "thusness," or "the absolute." The word *garbha* literally means a "seed" or "embryo," and refers to the receptacle or womb in which the absolute resides. As a compound, this term refers to the absolute residing as a constituent element, though in embryonic form, within sentient beings—the universal potential for enlightenment waiting to be realized. While the phenomenal world is regarded as ultimately unreal (i.e. non-existent), being devoid of any unchanging self-nature, the realm of the unconditioned absolute, of suchness, is real (existent).

In Japan the doctrine of original enlightenment was expanded over time to embrace the idea that all things, animate and inanimate alike, were inherently enlightened. Hence the famous phrase, often encountered in Japanese literature, that "mountains and rivers, plants and trees, all attain Buddhahood" *(sansen sōmoku shikkai jōbutsu)*. On the surface this appears to an optimistic, even democratic idea, for enlightenment becomes equally and inherently open to all, regardless of wealth, sex, age, education, or nationality, and embraces even the objects of the inanimate world.

The question is, of course, what these abstract doctrinal arguments have to do with Hakamaya's and Matsumoto's social critiques. They discovered that in historical practice these two doctrines produced what they regard as very undesirable consequences, a major one of which is a philosophy of discrimination. They argue that if a single, unchanging reality underlies all phenomena, then everything in the phenomenal world becomes essentially the same. This includes, of course, such moral distinctions as right and wrong and good and bad, and such social distinctions as rich and poor and strong and weak. Accordingly, there is no longer any need or reason to fight injustice or to right wrongs. Discrimination and injustice come to be regarded as no more than the way things are and ought to be. The moral imperative to act selflessly, to reach out to those in need, disappears.

Hakamaya further argues that original enlightenment functions as an authoritarian idea because suchness is seen as being ineffable, with no place for either words or concepts, let alone faith or intellect. This in turn leads to those Zen terms so beloved by Suzuki and other Zen masters, terms such as "no reliance on words or letters" *(furyū monji)*, "direct intuition" *(chokkan)*, and especially, "no-thought" and "no-reflection." In this connection it may be helpful to recall Suzuki's comments concerning the way of the sword:

In the *Kendō* ("the Way of the Sword"), what is most essential to attain besides its technique is the spiritual element controlling the art throughout. It is a state of mind known as *munen* or *musō*, "no-thought" or "no-reflection." ... It means letting your natural

faculties act in a consciousness free from thoughts, reflections, or affections of any kind. . . . When this is understood, your art is perfect. Finally, Zen and the Sword's Way are one in this, that both ultimately aim at transcending the duality of life and death.[60]

Matsumoto identified this type of thinking as a philosophy of death and rejected it categorically.

Hakamaya rejected the idea of harmony, calling it an enemy of Buddhism because it inevitably promotes compromise and tolerance—tolerance that is exploited by the powerful in society to maintain the *status quo*, no matter how unjust it may be. At the same time, it is used to stifle internal dissent, thereby making people easy prey for political propaganda. In one of his strongest statements on this issue, Hakamaya said:

> The previous Greater East Asia War was prosecuted in accord with the concept of harmony utilizing [such slogans as] "The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" and "The Whole World Under One Roof." The sons of Japan, unable to become traitors, silently and obediently took their bodies to the battlefield, regarding it as a virtue to do so. If we reflect on this for but a moment, it is clear that it is through faith one becomes a true Buddhist. Should there be an occasion when the Law of the Sovereign and the Law of the Buddha come into conflict, then . . . the Law of the Buddha should be chosen. One must never allow oneself to be reduced to a mere physical entity. Instead, the intellect must be used to its utmost to clearly distinguish what is right, and words used to their utmost to criticize what is wrong. I believe this is the way in which faith becomes an activity opposed to war.[61]

Needless to say, statements like the above have not gone unchallenged within Japanese Buddhist circles. For one, critics want to know what these two scholars consider Buddhism *is* if the preceding doctrines are dismissed as invalid. Their reply has been to present what they consider to be true Buddhism's three defining characteristics. Briefly, they are: (1) Buddha Shakyamuni's teaching of the law of causality, which denies the existence of any underlying or unchanging substance in the world, including the self; (2) the duty of those who would call themselves Buddhist to act altruistically, or "selflessly," to benefit others; and (3) the use of words and the intellect in making a conscious decision to believe in the law of causality.



Though the positions set forth by Hakayama and Matsumoto are certainly not impervious to criticism (for example, the teaching of the universal possession of the Buddha nature, "with neither superior nor inferior," was a catalyst for Uchiyama Gudō's social activism, which battled social repression and discrimination), the willingness of these two scholars to call into question some long held and cherished tenets of both Japanese Buddhism in general and Zen in particular augurs well for an intellectual revitalization of Japanese Buddhist thought, not least of all within the Zen tradition. It also demonstrates how far Japanese Buddhism has come in the half century since its leaders claimed that it was the only Buddhist country in Asia, the country in which pure Mahayana Buddhism was to be found.

*Hirata Seiko* As noted above, not one of th