

# A Brief History of Japanese Buddhism & Particular Characteristics in Japanese Thought & Culture

Jonathan S. Watts  
Keio University  
Tokyo, Japan



# Beginnings of Japanese Buddhism

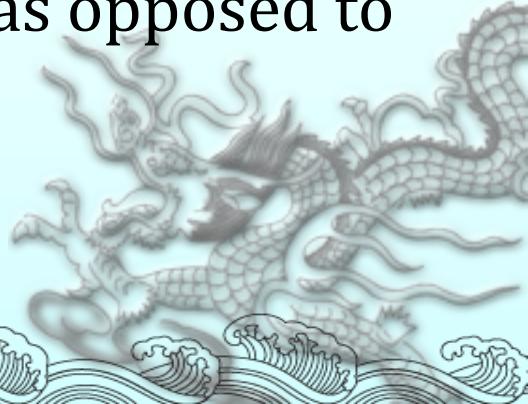
- ❖ Introduced in 552 from Korea by the leader of the Paekche Kingdom as a part of a political alliance.
- ❖ *Prince Shotoku (574-622), regent to the imperial throne, is an unusual and extremely important historical figure for attempting to introduce universalistic ideas to the insular concept of society as clan or tribe (氏 uji) under a divine emperor.*
- ❖ His 17 Article Constitution introduced and assimilated a number of key Buddhist ideas:
  - 1) the concept of universal law from Dharma;
  - 2) emphasis on lay Buddhism and practical use for society;
  - 3) respecting harmony (和 wa);
  - 4) repaying the benefits of parents and the Emperor (報恩 *ho-on*) as well as the Buddha and all sentient beings
- ❖ Shotoku created first embassy with China in 607 which began contact with Chinese Buddhism.

# Beginnings of Japanese Buddhism

- ❖ Buddhism had to adapt to Japan's particular spiritual tendencies, like prayer, ritual, and exorcism for “this worldly benefit” (現世利益 *gen-se riyaku*)
- ❖ Nara Period (646-794) established Buddhism as a state religion under 6 principle “schools”, not independent sects, which prayed for the well being of the nation. Ordination of priests and nuns was strictly controlled by government.
- ❖ A large number of Buddhist nuns in the Nara era—and new urban Buddhist sects in the 1900s with female leaders who were faith healers from ancient female shamanic tradition
- ❖ Idealistic schools of Indian (Ritsu 律 based on monastic precepts) and Chinese Buddhism (Sanron 三論 for Madhyamaka & Hosso 法相 for Yogacara) quickly decline after Nara period.

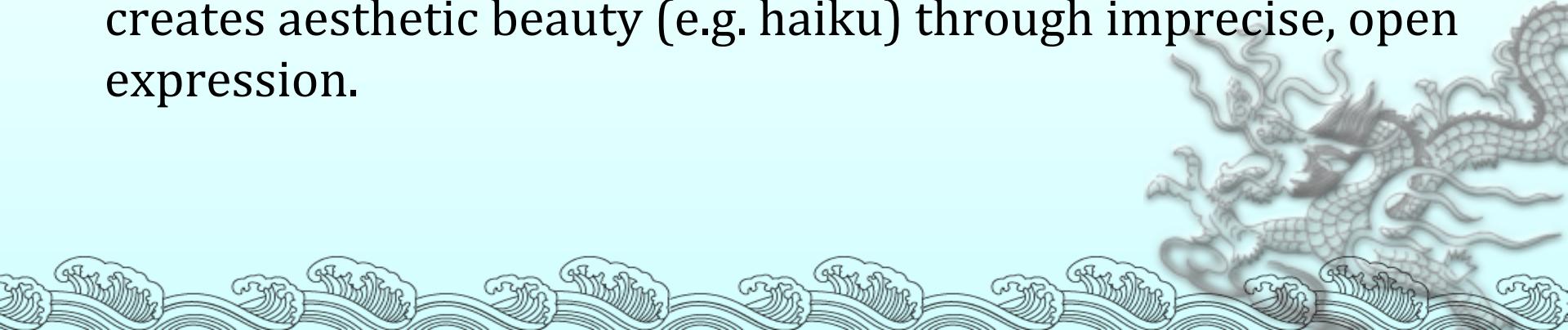
# Japanese Thought #1: Faith & Intuition

- The ethical logic and psychological focus on meditation in early Indian Buddhism gave way to *more faith oriented and mystical practice* in East Asian Mahayana Buddhism
- Japanese Buddhist thought is similarly “mystical” (e.g. the unspeakable truth of Zen, the “mantra” of the *Lotus Sutra*) in contrast to Indian and Greek thought which explores all logical propositions.
- Japan’s largest Buddhist groups are centered around faith: Jodo Shin (16 million), Jodo (6 m), Nichiren (3.5 m), Soka Gakkai (8 m), Rissho Koseikai (3 m) as opposed to Zen (4 m), Shingon (4 m), Tendai (1.3 m)



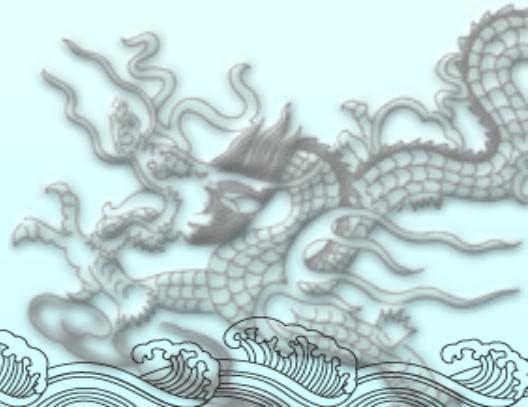
# Japanese Thought #1: Immanent, Intuitive, This Worldly

- “The Japanese are willing to accept the *phenomenal world as Absolute* because of their disposition to lay a greater emphasis upon intuitive sensible concrete events, *rather than universals.*” (Nakamura Hajime p.350)
- Logic, as based on a universal or ultimate form of principles, is not emphasized in Japanese language or thought, where intuition and emotion is primary.
- Vagueness (in gender, number, lack of personal subjects, etc.) is a hallmark of Japanese language and communication, which creates aesthetic beauty (e.g. haiku) through imprecise, open expression.



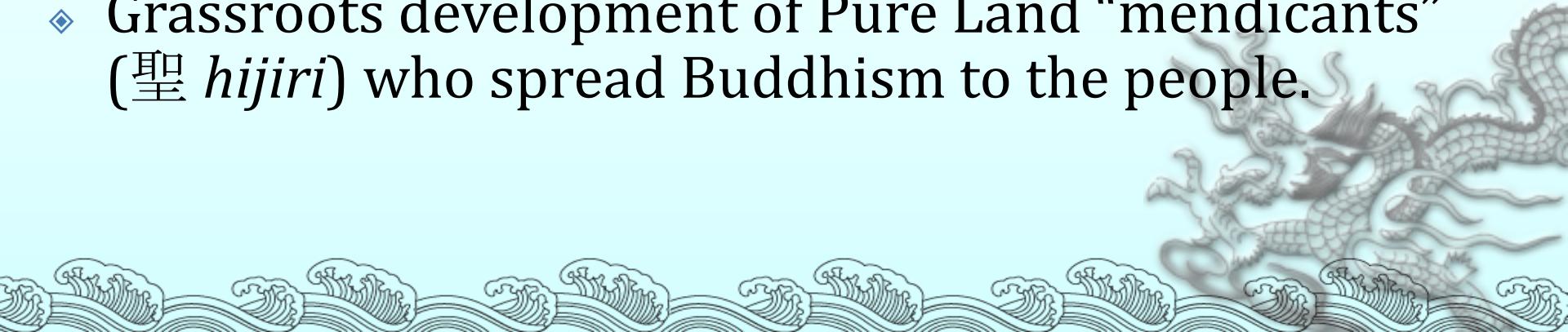
# Heian Buddhism (794-1185)

- ❖ During the height of the spread of *Buddhism's third major school, the Vajrayana*, seen in the beginning of Tibetan Buddhism and the ancient sites of Borobudor in Indonesia and Angkor Wat in Cambodia
- ❖ Establishment of two major denominations which became dominant: Shingon 真言(esoteric) by Kukai and Tendai 天台 (exoteric) by Saicho.
- ❖ Esoteric Buddhism meant rituals and prayers for “worldly benefit” (現世利益 *gense ryaku*) and avoiding calamities.
- ❖ Exoteric Buddhism focused on study and developed the key Japanese Buddhist ideas of:  
“innate enlightenment” (本覚 *hongaku*) and  
“buddha nature” (佛性 *bussho*)



# Heian Buddhism (794-1185)

- ❖ Saicho, the founder of Tendai, rejected the core 227 monastic precepts in favor of the less formal 58 “perfect and immediate precepts” (円頓戒 *endon-kai*) *paving the way for the alcohol, meat eating, and marriage for most Japanese priests today.*
- ❖ These denominations were supported by the aristocracy, but became themselves major centers of political power with bands of mercenary “soldier priests” (僧兵 *sohei*).
- ❖ Grassroots development of Pure Land “mendicants” (聖 *hijiri*) who spread Buddhism to the people.



# Japanese Thought #2: Immanent & This Worldly

- Ancient Japanese believed spirits (神 *kami*) reside in all kinds of things like mountains, rivers, forests, trees or stones → Shinto
- In mainstream Buddhism, *enlightenment* came to mean a transcendental state beyond the world. In Japanese Buddhism, especially Tendai, it refers to *understanding things in the phenomenal world*. Appearances of things in the phenomenal world are aspects of the Buddha. 本覚 *hongaku* = “innate enlightenment”, always present, sudden realization
- Dogen, founder of Japanese Soto Zen: “A single stalk of grass and a single tree are both the mind and body of us and the buddhas.”
- Nichiren felt the *Lotus Sutra* 法華經 was superior because of its recognition of the eligibility of the grass and trees to become buddhas.
- ❖ There is no sense that the natural world is cursed or gruesome as the Indians do in *dukkha* and *samsara* or the Abrahamic religions do in sin.

# Japanese Thought #1: Immanent & This Worldly

- The Indian emphasis on the transcendental rejection of the world is seen in the value of the religious sage who is a beggar not involved in productive work. *In East Asia and especially in Japan, work is seen as sacred.*
- Zen monks traditionally grew their own food and built and repaired their own temples. The great Chinese Chan/Zen master Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海 said, "A day without work is a day without food" 一日不做一日不食
- Today, it is common that Japanese priests take typical secular jobs to earn income to support their families and livelihoods. Such salaried employment for monks is generally forbidden in all other Buddhist countries.



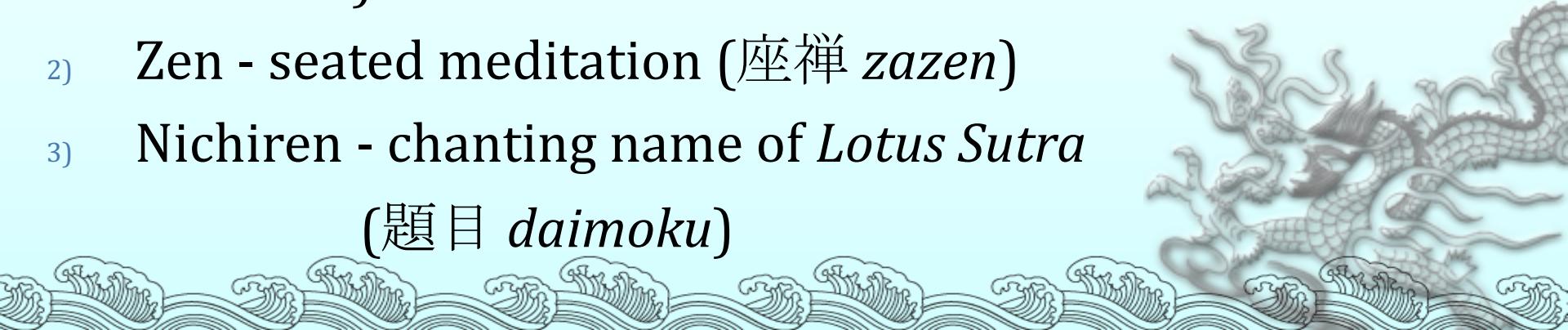
# Kamakura Buddhism (1185-1333) & Its Formative Influence

- ❖ Establishment of Buddhism for the masses through the reformation movements of Honen & Shinran (Pure Land 浄土 *Jodo*), Dogen (曹洞禪 *Soto Zen*), and Nichiren (法華經 *Lotus Sutra*)
- ❖ Each of these teachers stressed *a single, simple practice available to all people* which had the same or stronger power for salvation than a monk's ascetic practice.

1) Pure Land - chanting of Amida Buddha's name (念佛 *nenbutsu*)

2) Zen - seated meditation (座禪 *zazen*)

3) Nichiren - chanting name of *Lotus Sutra*  
(題目 *daimoku*)



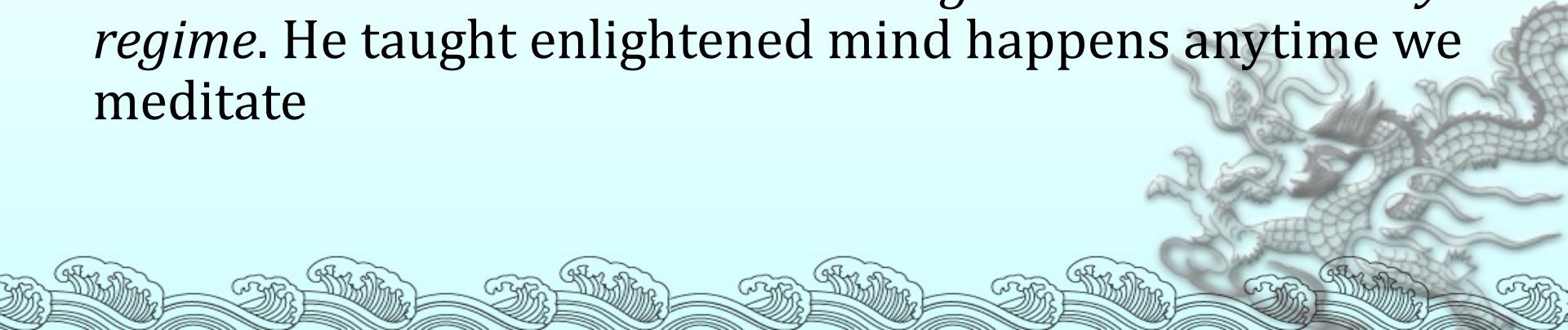
Kamakura Buddhism further developed basic Japanese instincts towards no separation between sacred and profane

- ❖ Pure Land teachers, especially Shinran, gave further doctrinal basis for monks to abandon monastic lifestyle (celibacy, no alcohol and meat, always in robes with shaven head).
- ❖ Zen meditation and practice influenced fine arts (tea ceremony, calligraphy, flower arrangement) and martial arts (archery, swordsmanship, samurai and military culture), especially Rinzai Zen 臨濟禪
- ❖ Lotus Sutra emphasized “this worldly benefits” and became most popular form among merchants and of modern Buddhism in the industrial, material age

# Kamakura Buddhism

represents a counter ethnic-national and pro-universalistic trend

- ◆ *Pure Land was anti-establishment spiritually, socially and politically*; the worst person can gain salvation; ascetics walked among the people not socially withdrawn; faith in Amida transcended filial piety and faith in Emperor.
- ◆ *Nichiren confronted political authorities*; promoted the universal nature of Lotus Sutra above state and imperial law
- ◆ *Dogen repudiated the fusion of esoteric ritualism with Rinzai Zen which sacralized the Shogun and new military regime*. He taught enlightened mind happens anytime we meditate



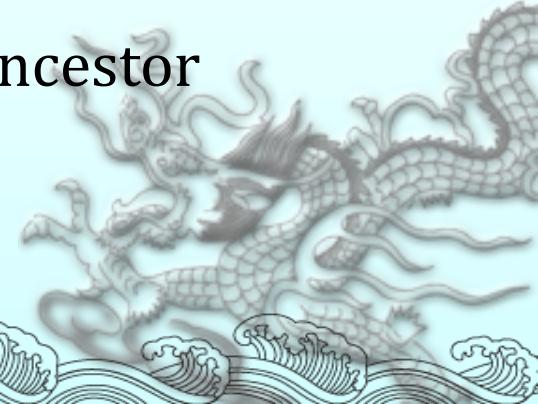
# Muromachi & Warring States Periods (mid 1300s to 1600)

- ❖ New Kamakura Buddhist movements grew into major socio-political institutions which rivaled the size and power of the Shingon and Tendai denominations.
- ❖ Shinran's True Pure Land denomination launched major peasant rebellions (*ikko ikki* 一向一揆) against the powerful warlords. Nichiren based Lotus militias (*hokke ikki* 法華一揆) protected merchant classes in Kyoto. Soto Zen became closely aligned with the local warrior classes  
→ *a rare instance of Japanese using (Buddhist) ideology for active social change*
- ❖ Warlord Oda Nobunaga rejected them all, burnt Mt. Hiei, the sacred mountain of the Tendai, to the ground and destroyed the *ikko ikki* movement.
- ❖ This period is like the Wars of Religion during the 1500s after the Protestant Reformation in Europe



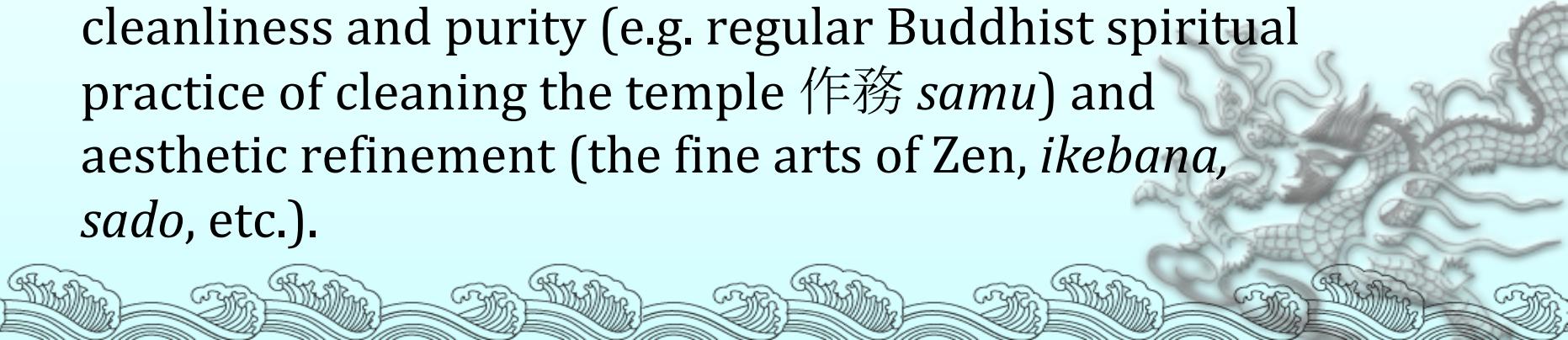
# Tokugawa Era (1603-1868)

- ❖ Tokugawa Ieyasu established his dynasty, unified Japan, and created a system to control all Buddhist groups.
- ❖ The temple parishioner system (檀家制度 *danka seido*) was a *means to use temples to monitor and control the population* through enforced membership to a local temple and to prevent the spread of Christianity. *The number of Buddhist temples more than doubled.* The Buddhist temple became firmly established as the center of the community.
- ❖ *Confucian influence was strong and helped create a national ideology/theology of family ancestor worship which extended up to veneration of the state and emperor.*
- ❖ Buddhist temples became the center for this ancestor worship and “Funeral Buddhism” (葬式仏教 *soshiki bukkyo*) was born.



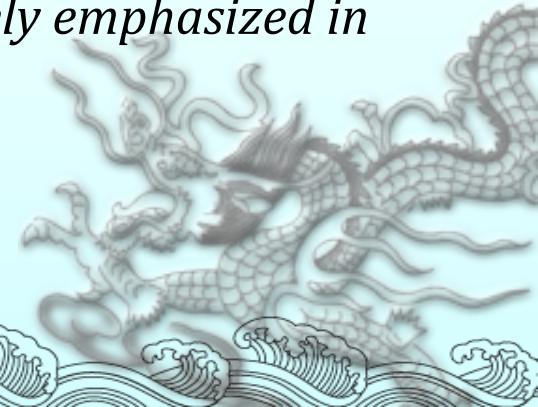
# Japanese Thought #3: Emphasis on Impurity over Sin

- Shinto, like early Hinduism (Vedic Brahmanism), *emphasizes impurity (of form) rather sin (of principle)*
- However, as Indian thought and spirituality developed, *purity became a metaphysical state of cleansing the soul (Upanishadic asceticism) or a psychological state of purifying the mind (Buddhist meditation & precepts)* through disregarding form/the body (e.g. wearing rags, walking barefooted, begging for leftover food)
- Japanese spirituality has always held fast to physical cleanliness and purity (e.g. regular Buddhist spiritual practice of cleaning the temple 作務 *samu*) and aesthetic refinement (the fine arts of Zen, *ikebana*, *sado*, etc.).



# Japanese Thought #3: This Worldly Salvation

- Early Shinto recognizes the intrinsic value of life in this world - the Japanese people as descendents of gods. Weak or vague sense of other world (あの世 *ano-yo*). *There is little reflection on the transcendent possibility of the soul or spirit or on death or the afterlife*, which seemed to not worry or cause fear in traditional Japanese. *Death is a form of impurity*.
- The classical six realms of Buddhist reincarnation are rarely recognized and even Amida's Pure Land becomes an ancestral realm. *Karma as a metaphysical system of cause and effect and rewards and punishments is not an important belief. Buddhist funeral rituals are the means to a good afterlife*.
- Japanese Buddhism does teach that the individual possesses transcendental or universal potentials, like nirvana or heaven or enlightenment, but many core Japanese Buddhist values -- like honesty, self-sacrifice 無私, harmony 和, repaying benefits to elders 報恩 -- *emphasize a collective social nexus. These values are rarely emphasized in Buddhism outside of Japan or East Asia*.



# Japanese Thought #3: This Worldly Salvation

- *In China, ancestor worship was tied to Taoism but in Japan it was tied to Buddhism*, in part because Shinto's high regard for purity meant it did not want to be tied to death and funeral rites
- As “Funeral Buddhism” 葬式仏教 developed historically in Japan, the veneration of the Buddha, a universal or trans-national figure, and his relics (仏舍利 *busshari*) was replaced by veneration of one's own ancestors and their relics/ashes (遺骨 *ikotsu*)
- When a family member dies and receives a *Buddhist funeral* ceremony, they receive ordination as a monk/nun with a special name (戒名 *kaimyo*), are *said to have attained Buddhahood* (成仏 *jobutsu*), and become literally a Buddha (仏 *hotoke*) or ancestral spirit. The cause for “salvation” or a good afterlife is *the proper performance of funeral ritual rather than the karmic merit of one's ethical actions*.



# Meiji Era (1868-1912)

- ❖ End of Tokugawa Dynasty meant Buddhism was removed as a state religion and briefly persecuted. *Monks were legally allowed to abandon the monastic lifestyle, unprecedented in Asian Buddhist history.*
- ❖ In order to survive, all major denominations sought to *prove their usefulness by supporting national development* and the official national ideology based on worship of the emperor.
- ❖ Buddhist Enlightenment movement (仏教啓蒙活動 *Bukkyo keimo katsudo*) of the early Meiji & the New Buddhist movement (新仏教運動 *Shin-Bukkyo undo*) of the late Meiji sought to bring *combine western liberal and scientific ideas with Buddhism* to show Buddhism's "modern" qualities and appropriateness to the modern state.

# Meiji Era (1868-1912)

- ❖ By the end of the Meiji, *the new modern state was being run by an elite group of bureaucrats* mostly from Tokyo Imperial University. They *marginalized the individualistic liberalism*, promoted by Keio founder Fukuzawa Yukichi 福澤諭吉 (1835-1901), and replaced with it *scientific and material utilitarianism*.
- ❖ Intellectuals, like Nishi Amane 西周 (1829-1897), created a distinctive East Asia “collective utilitarianism” (集團功利主義 *shudan kori-shugi*), *replacing the implicit Christian values behind liberalism with Neo-Confucian morals*. Utilitarian principles were used to show that “expertise is synonymous with impartiality” and that “universally applied administrative rules and routines” achieve the highest form of decision making, even above political ones.
- ❖ This Bureaucratic State where politicians are the face of authority but bureaucrats are the real power in crafting social policies is *a system that is largely in tact today*, although both the LDP and DPJ have tried to curtail bureaucratic power in the last decade.
- ❖ This has created a type of “firewall” in which *civil society movements have not been able to engage in social change*. Even if they are able to engage in electoral change, they fail to access the real seat of power in the system.

# Japanese Thought #4: Community/Tribal vs. Civilizational/Universal Ethics

- The foundations of modern Japanese social ethics are found in the Tokugawa era adaptation of Neo-Confucian ideas of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200):
  - 1) the universal Principle 理 is subsumed or collapsed into the phenomenal 事  
--> this world is the only reality and the “truth”  
*so one should adapt themselves to it rather than seek to change it.*
  - 1) five social virtues (五常 *gojo*) of discipline, loyalty, harmony, filial piety, and perseverance and the five hierarchical relationships (五倫 *gorin*) emphasized a “tribal” ethical focus on immediate social relationships, subordination of individual rights to the collective, and veneration of authority that fed into veneration of the Emperor as the inscrutable moral value.
- The Imperial Rescript on Education (教育勅語 *Kyoiku Chokugo*), issued in 1890, made *this Confucian-Shinto moral system public morality*, while other moral perspectives like *Buddhism and Christianity were confined to private morality*. This tendency is still perpetuated today through the American concept of the *separation of church and state* in which “religion” *cannot enter the public sphere*.

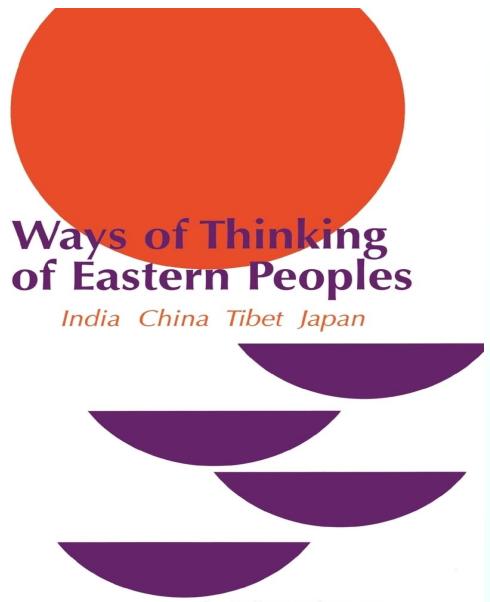
# Japanese Thought #4: Community/Tribal vs. Civilizational/Universal Ethics

- Morals are not bound to a set of universal principles like the 10 Commandments or the 5 Precepts (*pancasila*) of Buddhism but to a *complete and willing dedication of self to others in a specific human collective ("tribe")*.
- In Japan, this "tribe" was originally the clan 氏 system but then became extended to family (Confucianism), lord (Feudalism), and Imperial State
- *Devotion and sacrifice to an ideal or a universal value is unusual.* e.g. Buddhism (Pure Land/Lotus Sutra rebellions of Warring States period) or Christianity (Martyrs of Japan 日本の殉教者 of Edo period).
- This helps to explain *the high number of Buddhist sub-sects*: 105 official traditional sects and some 60 or more new sects in which *devotion to teacher and community is emphasized over common teaching* (ref. Buddhist sects in Sri Lanka 4, Thailand 2, Myanmar 4).
- Ultimately, *the specific teaching of each group is less important* as all traditional groups practice the basic form of ancestor worship through funerals and memorial services.



# Japanese Thought #4: Community/Tribal vs. Civilizational/Universal Ethics

- “Although Buddhism has been the flesh and blood of Japanese culture for more than the past ten centuries, *the people by and large still regard it as ‘an imported system of thought’*. In this respect, our attitude differs from those of Western nations in regard to Christianity and from those of southern Asiatic nations in regard to Buddhism. As for those nations, universal world religions are conceived to be such *integral parts of their own culture that they are linked to the formation of respective norms themselves*. But for the Japanese, in contrast, such a *conception is totally absent.*” (p.489 Hajime Nakamura)



by Hajime Nakamura  
edited by Philip P. Wiener

# *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples*

Hajime Nakamura

(University of Hawaii Press, 1964)

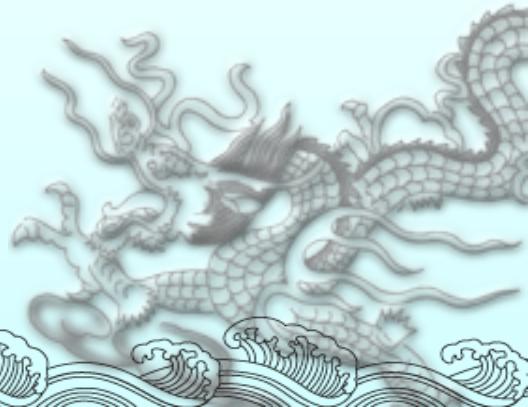
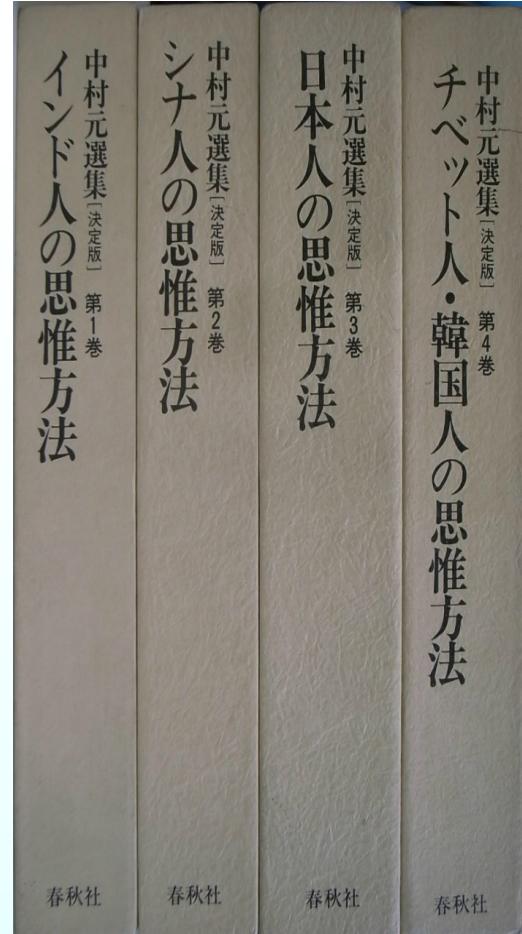
中村元「東洋人の思惟方法」

インド・中国・日本・チベット

第1-4巻

(春秋社)

Available in the Keio library



# Japanese Thought #4: Concepts of Public and Nation

- With the imperial system and original clan based society, *the notion of a public space or civil society has always been weak*. Originally, the people were defined as minor families (*koyake*) in relation to the Imperial Family or “principal family” (公 *ōyake*) which means “public”
- In Europe, monarchs were *emanations of God* and ruled by His Will, while in China, emperors ruled through “the mandate of heaven”. *But in Japan, the emperor was seen as a god, the God, himself with all Japanese being blood descendants. His decisions were this implicitly moral or ethical.*
- To rule immorally in Europe or China allowed the basis for overthrowing the monarch (i.e. to lose the basis of rule by divine mandate), but doing so in Japan would amount to patricide, the killing of one’s own father. Hence, *Japan has an unbroken lineage of emperors with no dynastic changes.*
- This helped form the basis of nationalism during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when *the idea of being against the state was as much as a religious betrayal or sin as an unpatriotic action.*



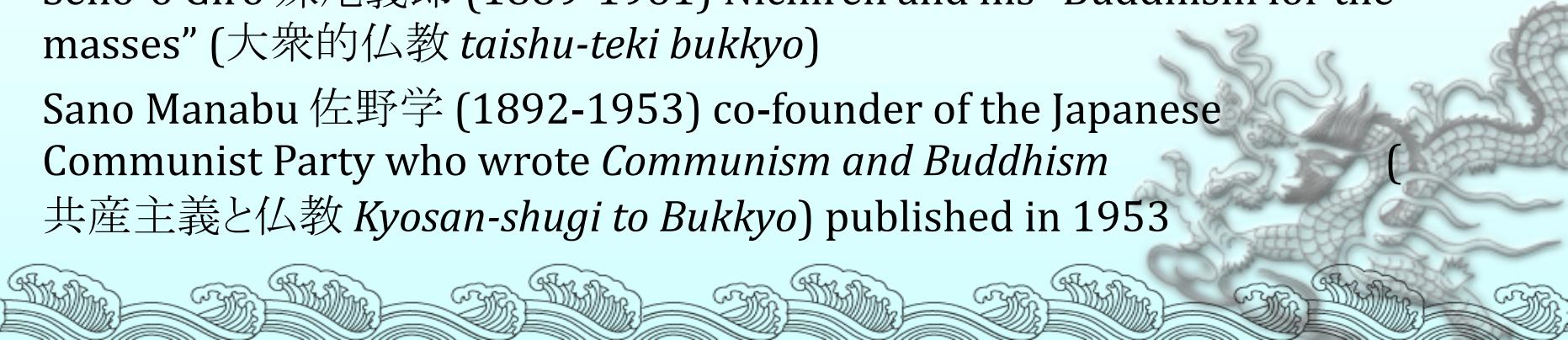
# Taisho Era (1912-1926) & Early Showa (1926-37)

1) Utopian and Existentialist Buddhist/Spiritual Movements, which *retreated from social engagement* and tried to find answers to suffering in spiritual, poetic, and intellectual liberation

- Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863-1903) Jodo Shin Pure Land and his concept of “spiritualism” (精神主義 *seishin-shugi*)
- Miyazawa Kenji 宮沢賢治 (1896-1933) poet and novelist inspired by the *Lotus Sutra*
- Nishida Kitaro 西田幾多郎 (1870-1945) founder of the Kyoto School and modern Zen existentialism

2) Marxist and Buddhist Socialist movements that *sought to change society*

- Uchiyama Gudo 内山愚童 (1874-1911) Soto Zen and his “anarcho-communist revolution” (無政府共産革命 *mu-seifu kyosan-kakumei*)
- Seno-o Giro 妹尾義郎 (1889-1961) Nichiren and his “Buddhism for the masses” (大衆的仏教 *taishu-teki bukkyo*)
- Sano Manabu 佐野学 (1892-1953) co-founder of the Japanese Communist Party who wrote *Communism and Buddhism* (共産主義と仏教 *Kyosan-shugi to Bukkyo*) published in 1953



# Japanese Buddhist Support for the Pacific War

- ❖ Priests were drafted into the military as common foot soldiers and not just as chaplains by the general mobilization in 1937
- ❖ East Asian Buddhist teaching of “repaying benefits” (報恩 *ho-on*) to parents and all sentient beings was shifted to emperor and state.
- ❖ Zen teachings were fused with “the way of the warrior” (武士道 *bushi-do*) to teach giving up one’s life in battle; there is “no-self” that kills; and meditative fearlessness in the face of death. Bushi-do has become a 3<sup>rd</sup> component of public morality promoting citizens to work with total dedication and without complaint, to negate the self. From *kamikaze* to *karoshi*?
- ❖ Doctrine of Two Truths (眞俗二諦 *shinzoku nitai*), key to Pure Land Buddhists, was flipped to say that the absolute truth of the Buddha was expressed in the relative truth of the Emperor in this world.
- ❖ Nichiren Buddhists developed “Nichiren-ism” which raised the law of the emperor to the level of the universal law of the *Lotus Sutra* and emphasized Japanese Buddhism as the center of world civilization.

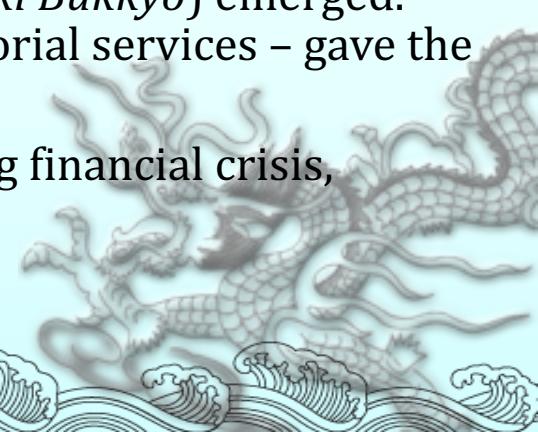


# The Potential of Buddhism for Japan

- *Violence not for ideological reasons but to preserve community.* War does not persist for ideological reasons. “Holy War” is not to preserve religion but clan/nation, nor to wipe out “evil” but to restore “harmony”.
- Allegiance to leaders and norms of community, not universal ethics or reason → *sudden change in community leads to sudden change in ethics.*
- The lingering effect of Meiji public morality: Nakamura:
- “Those who observed the moral confusion in Japan immediately after World War II may be led to doubt the proposition that the Japanese in the past were moralistically inclined ... *Little difference seems to discoverable between traditional and recent Japanese morality.* The difference seems to lie rather in the fact that what was considered to be morally tenable in Japan’s ‘closed-door’ past became untenable under rapidly changing worldwide social and economic conditions to which Japan is adapting itself. The traditional concepts of honesty as loyalty to the clan and Emperor is applicable only to *the conduct of man as a member of the particular and limited human nexus to which he belongs; it is not applicable to the conduct of man as a member of human society as a whole.*” (p.521)

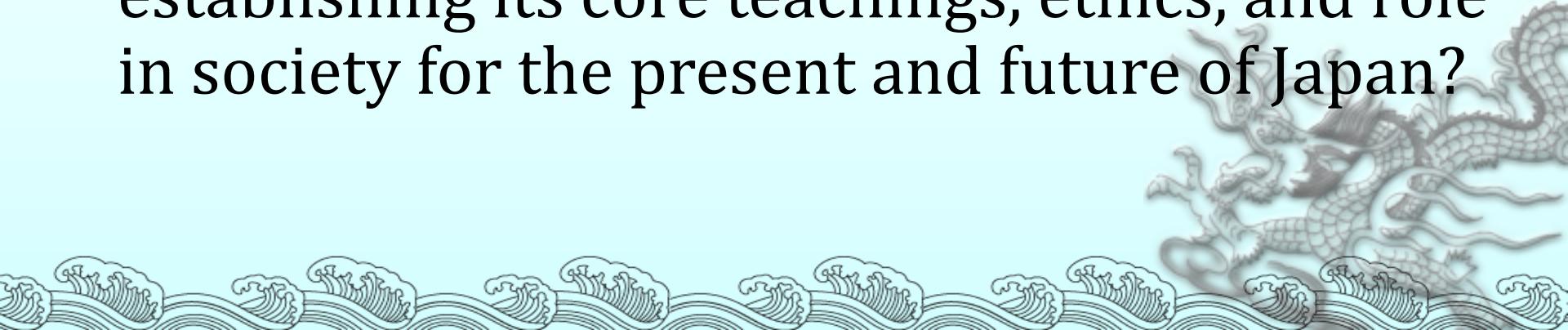
# Post War Era

- ◆ 1950s and 60s were a time of dynamic Engaged Buddhism thought and practice in Asia after monks had fought with the people against colonialization. *But in Japan, Buddhists were basically completely disconnected from the intellectual, civil society, and student activism for war responsibility, anti US-Japan Security Treaty (Anpo), and non-aligned peace movements.*
- ◆ Traditional Buddhist groups were tainted by war responsibility and increasingly marginalized as people moved into the cities and created urban, secular society
- ◆ Rise of *new, non-monastic Buddhist denominations*; mostly *Lotus Sutra* based and focused on “this worldly benefit”; fulfilled needs of new mass urban population; *focused on conservative middle-class values*
- ◆ Soka Gakkai 創価学会, controversial for their national conversion campaign, got involved in party politics with Komeito 公明党 and eventually became partner of LDP and its attempts to change Japan’s “peace constitution” and Article 9 renouncing war.
- ◆ Priests and temples became inward looking and socially passive. Amidst great economic development, “Funeral Buddhism” (葬式仏教 *Soshiki Bukkyo*) emerged. Priests only focus on performing rituals at funerals and memorial services – gave the image of priests and temples being wealthy and lazy.
- ◆ However, with economic downturn, they are also experiencing financial crisis, potential loss of tax-free status, and declining membership.



# The Potential of Buddhism for Japan

- Could Buddhism provide the universal ethic for Japan to overcome lingering resentment within Asia and better integrate into the global system, while still preserving many of its indigenous values?
- Can Socially Engaged Buddhism provide Japanese Buddhism a means for re-establishing its core teachings, ethics, and role in society for the present and future of Japan?



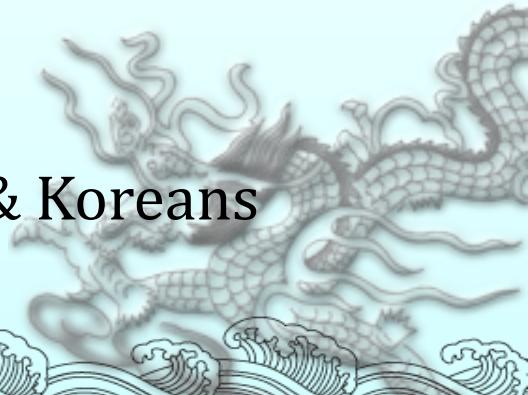
# Post War Internationalism by Japanese Buddhists

- ❖ Many of the new *Lotus Sutra* new Buddhist groups have engaged in *international peace dialogues since the 1970s* and now many traditional Buddhist groups also do under the Japan Buddhist Federation 全日本佛教界
- ❖ Early 1980s, priests from traditional groups tried to respond “funeral Buddhism” and social irrelevance by creating *Buddhist NGOs (NGO = “international cooperation activities”)*, especially in response to Indochina humanitarian crisis
- ❖ Activities have been *mostly emergency aid and financial resources for material development* in Indochina, South Asia, Africa, and Middle East
- ❖ Developed by independent priests without support of central denomination. Now has become mainstream activity of most denominations.
- ❖ *But “social welfare is not social transformation” and these activities did not change the domestic Buddhist crisis.*



# Socially Engaged Buddhism in Japan

- ◆ 1996 Hanshin Earthquake provided a major crisis for Buddhists and Buddhist NGOs to get involved in domestic welfare work.
- ◆ Since 2003, we see many new types of Buddhist social engagement.
  - 1) End-of-Life Care
  - 2) Suicide prevention
  - 3) Disaster relief and trauma care
  - 4) Poverty and homelessness
  - 5) Anti-nuclear activism & environmentalism
  - 6) 2<sup>nd</sup> stage peace, democracy, and civil disobedience movement
  - 7) Women & Gender
  - 8) LGBTQ+
  - 9) Human Rights & Disirimination: Burakumin & Koreans



# Socially Engaged Buddhism in Japan

transforming “Funeral Buddhism”

## **Association of Buddhist Priests Confronting Self-death and Suicide**

(A number of individual priests with a variety of different styles  
came together in 2007 to work on this problem)



## MAJOR DENOMINATIONS OF JAPANESE BUDDHISM

While Japanese Buddhism has literally hundreds of Buddhist sects, the ones listed below are the most prominent in historical influence and size in terms of priests/teachers (ordained men + women) and lay followers.

### Heian Period (794–1185) Vajrayana-influenced sects

#### Tendai 天台宗 (Ch. Tiantai)

3,319 temples (3,608 men & 319 women, 1.533m lay)

#### Shingon 真言宗 (Ch. Zhenyan)

Koyasan 高野山 3,586 temples (5,234 men & 790 women, lay numbers not available)

Chisan 智山派 2,899 temples (3,261 men & 195 women, 547K lay)

Buzan 豊山派 2,635 temples (2,840 men & 330 women, 1.42m lay)

Shinnyo-en (真如苑 modern lay sect) 14 temples and 1 center

(20,524 men & 87,414 women, 930,748 lay)

### Kamakura Period (1185–1333) Reform sects

#### Jodo PURE LAND

##### Jodo 浄土宗

6,870 temples (9,695 men & 980 women, 6m lay)

##### Jodo Shin 浄土真宗

Hongan-ji 本願寺派 10,117 temples (16,548 men & 2,833 women, 7,838m lay)

Otani 大谷派 8,470 temples (14,274 men & 2,788 women, 7,345m lay)

#### ZEN

##### Rinzai 臨濟宗 (Ch. Linji)

Myoshin-ji 妙心寺派 3,336 temples (3,165 men & 80 women, 794K lay)

##### Soto 曹洞宗 (Ch. Caodong)

14,501 temples (15,010 men & 432 women, 3.67m lay)

#### NICHIREN

##### Nichiren 日蓮宗

4,654 temples (6,862 men & 849 women, 3.25m lay)

### Modern Era (20th century) Lay Buddhist sects

#### Derived from the *Lotus Sutra* and Nichiren

Rissho Kosei-kai 立正佼成会 600 centers (17,432 men & 58,794 women, 2.22m lay)

Reiyu-kai 靈友会 2,865 centers (1,660 men & 1,121 women, 1.18m lay)

Myochi-kai 妙智会 11 centers (857 men & 2,292 women, 709K lay)

Kodosan 孝道山 5 centers (136 men & 262 women, 132K lay) affiliated as a lay Tendai sect

Sokka Gakkai 創価学会 (8.3m members) originally part of the Nichiren Sho-shu sect 日蓮正宗

Source: Japan Agency for Cultural Affairs (文化庁 Bunka-cho). Yearbook on Religion (宗教年鑑 Shukyo Nen-kan). 2021. [https://www.bunka.go.jp/tokei\\_hakusho\\_shuppan/hakusho\\_nenjihokokusho/shukyo\\_nenkan/index.html](https://www.bunka.go.jp/tokei_hakusho_shuppan/hakusho_nenjihokokusho/shukyo_nenkan/index.html)